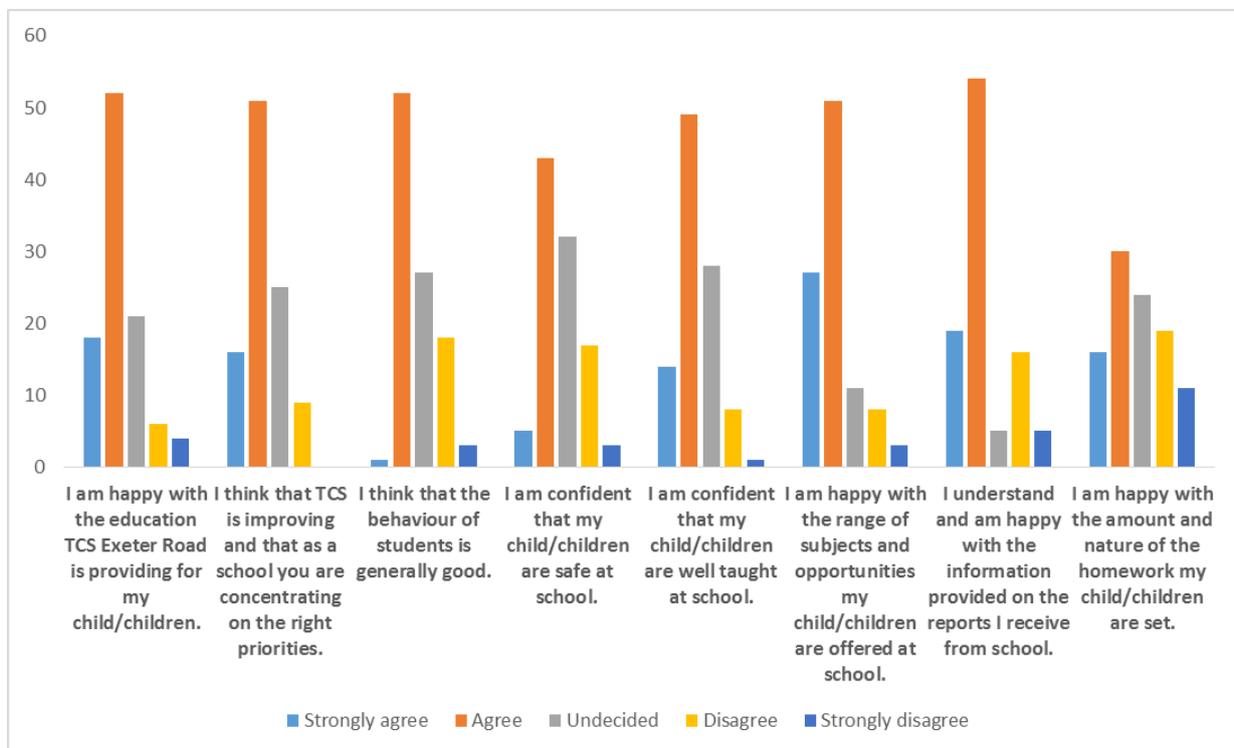


18<sup>th</sup> September 2019

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope that your sons and daughters have had a positive start to this new academic year. Now that we are a few weeks into the term, I thought it would be useful to summarise some of our developments and plans for this year.

Last July I gave parents an opportunity to complete a brief survey on their experiences and view of our school. Thank you very much to the hundred odd parents who provided feedback. Below is a graph showing your responses:



Much of your feedback was positive and reflected confidence in our school and the education we offer but there were of course critical comments and we recognise that we have much to improve on. We have surveyed students and staff as well and there are some consistent themes which we are already addressing.

The strongest message from parents (although students do not feel as strongly on this matter!) concerns homework. I agree and have become increasingly aware that we have been inconsistent in the setting of quality homework. This is a priority for this academic year. We have an excellent tool, 'Class Charts', which enables all homework to be set clearly, with support materials provided, and actually takes away some of the stress for students and parents trying to understand and stay on track with homework tasks. We are now using this tool across the school and it is a basic expectation that all homework is set

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using Class Charts and in line with departments' policies – in nearly all cases on a weekly basis. We are monitoring this and I would like you to let me or Heads of Faculty know if you do not feel your son/daughter is being set sufficient homework. This will be one of the topics on our agenda next Parents' Forum on 16<sup>th</sup> October. Your sons/daughters have all been issued with a Class Charts login and can be reminded of this by their tutor or from our IT Support. Year 7 parents will shortly be sent details of how they can login to and monitor their children's Class Charts accounts. Other parents should have previously received these details but if you do not have these, please contact: [helpdesk@teignmouth.devon.sch.uk](mailto:helpdesk@teignmouth.devon.sch.uk)

A second area for development is around behaviour. Some parents, like some of our staff and students, have expressed a concern that some behaviour in lessons and around the site out of lesson time is not good enough. This can affect other students' learning and well-being. I agree and another priority is to raise our standards of behaviour employing new, tightened procedures and practices. Your sons/daughters have probably mentioned this to you and we are confident that the general ethos and culture of our school is moving very much in the right direction. Our approach to behaviour can be summarised by what the educational press currently describe as 'warm-strict'. The approach is pretty much as the term suggests: Strict doesn't mean punitive, but the rules and authority of staff is clear and consistently applied; the warmth is that this is combined with positive, caring relationships between staff and students and the rules are enforced with purpose, not power. Your feedback on behaviour will be a second key item in our forthcoming Parents' Forum meeting.

The most significant focus for teachers this year as we work to improve is on raising our expectations regarding our students. What is clearly apparent with the new, reformed GCSEs (now in their third year of running) is that students need to be able to work independently and be resilient and confident in their learning to achieve well. This links to homework but it is also crucial that students have high expectations of themselves. We are concentrating on the basics and want students to take pride in their work. We are also challenging them more with our newly created teaching and learning 'STRETCH' model. This model helps teachers to both challenge and encourage our learners, working on prompt, purposeful lessons which incorporate challenge with support and effective feedback for all of our students.

On other matters, you will probably remember that we are no longer running Academic Review Days at TCS Exeter Road as the feedback on the effectiveness of these was patchy. All year groups will hold a parents' evening where you will have a chance to get feedback directly from your sons/daughters' teachers. However, we are holding a 'Meet the tutor' afternoon and evening for all year groups for the first time on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> October. This is an opportunity to meet your child's tutor, to review progress and successes last year and to set targets for this year. I would like to encourage you to attend this meeting if you possibly can. It is a good opportunity to meet face to face with your son/daughter's tutor, a key figure for them and someone who can help you with any questions and concerns over the year. On this day, as with the parents' evenings, normal lessons will finish after period 5 and appointments will then run between 3.00 and 6.00pm. On a related theme, we are looking at the format and content of our reports and these will change this year. More will follow on this.

Communications are another strand of our improvement strategy and we now have a dedicated member of staff updating our website and pushing out news and events more regularly. I hope that you will very shortly see the benefits of this. If you haven't already downloaded our 'Parent App', please could you do so. This enables us to send you push notifications which will contain general news and messages and will, in time, contain

information that is specific to your son or daughter. Please follow the below link to find out more: <https://www.teignmouthsecondary.co.uk/parent-app-now-available-to-download/>

I am not seeking to excuse any shortcomings but you should be aware that our funding is still exceptionally tight and forces some very difficult decisions. Devon is in the lowest 10% of funded authorities nationally and our staffing and resources are very stretched. The government has recently promised a very significant boost to education funding, and we will hope this is put into effect.

Finally, I would be grateful if you could remind your son/daughter of the essential importance of taking care and following the Highway Code in their journeys to and from school. We repeatedly have concerns raised from member of the local community about students stepping out in front of traffic. If crossing Exeter Road, students must use the footbridge.

Some key dates for this term:

Monday 7 <sup>th</sup> October: 3pm onwards	Meet the tutor afternoon for all years
Wednesday 16 <sup>th</sup> October	Parents' Forum meeting
Friday 18 <sup>th</sup> October	Training day for staff (half term start for students)
Monday 28 <sup>th</sup> October	First day of new half term
Monday 4 <sup>th</sup> November	Year 7 SEND Meeting
Tuesday 5 <sup>th</sup> November	Year 9 Parents' Evening
Monday 18 <sup>th</sup> November	Year 8 SEND Meeting
Wednesday 20 <sup>th</sup> November	Year 9 SEND Meeting
Monday 25 <sup>th</sup> November	Year 10 SEND Meeting
Wednesday 27 <sup>th</sup> November	Sixth Form Open Evening (for Year 11)
Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> December	Sixth Form Parents' Evening
Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> December	Year 11 SEND Meeting
Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> December	Year 10 Parents' Evening
Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> December	Break up for Christmas holidays
Monday 6 <sup>th</sup> January	Training day for staff (holiday for students)
Tuesday 7 <sup>th</sup> January	First day of term for students

In addition you are probably aware already but please note that the first May bank holiday in 2020 has moved from Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May (which will be a normal school and work day) to Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May in order that the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day can be commemorated.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Yours faithfully,



James O'Connell  
Principal