

# Report on Student Interviews

---

**Dr. Mimi Kirke-Smith (CPsychol)**

**Research Fellow**

**31st October, 2014**

## **Rationale for study:**

An opportunity to provide the students with an opportunity to voice their opinions. It is noteworthy that other organisations, such as Kids Company, make a strong point of saying how they listen to the voices of their young people in order to help them. This in turn will provide the school with the evidence and understanding as to what the key elements are that go towards the success of the school from the students' point of view. Apart from general questions about the school and learning, questions 23 – 27 specifically looked at therapeutic provision, and questions 28 – 37 specifically looked at boarding.

Number of students interviewed: 100 (from Year Groups 6 – 14). The remaining students on the school role were either not available (i.e. only in college), refusals, or too new to feel able to contribute.

Data collected between May and October 2014.

Data collection was carried out in accordance of the BPS Code of Conduct and Ethics (2006) and all students were assured that their answers would be anonymous. Interviews were carried out individually and on average took approximately 20 - 30 minutes.

## **Highlights:**

- 80% of students' surveyed say it is easier to learn at this school than their last one
- 70.3% of students' who have received therapy say that it has helped them
- 91.3% of boarders' surveyed say it has helped them
- Overall rating of the school = 7.54 (out of a maximum of 10)

## **Areas of concern:**

- Bullying
- Staff bias/favouritism
- Inconsistent discipline

## **Conclusion:**

Overall the majority of students feel positive about their experiences at school, although there are inevitably some issues that they would like to see addressed.

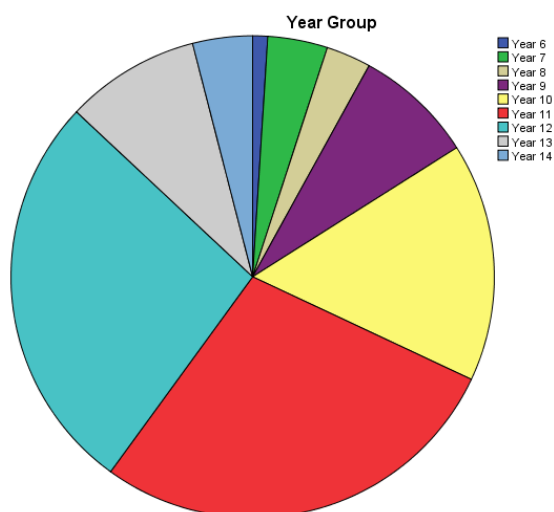
# Report on Student Interviews

---

## General Questions

Q1) Which year group are you in:

Year Group	Percentage
6	1
7	4
8	3
9	8
10	16
11	28
12	27
13	9
14	4



Q2) How long have you been at the school?

Length of time at the school	Percentage
Under 12 months	22
1+ years	16
2+ years	19
3+ years	15
4+ years	8
5+ years	20

Q3) How many other secondary school had you attended before you came here?

Number of previous secondary schools	Percentage
None	32
1	38

## Report on Student Interviews

---

2	15
3	12
4	2
5	1

Q4) What had you heard about this school before you started?

	Percentage
Nothing/Can't remember	59
Good school	17
Specialist school	12
That it would help me	7
Other	5: It had its own swimming pool; it used to have a bad reputation but its improved now; in the countryside, something to do with the Royal Family; Princess Diana; it does the Duke of Edinburgh Award

Q5) How does it compare with what you had heard?

	Percentage
As described	15
Can't remember	12
Not as good	8
Exceeded my expectations	5
Other	2: It was much more chaotic; much bigger than I expected
Not applicable	58

Q6) What did you expect when you started at the school?

	Percentage
Special school	17
I would be helped	8
Quieter/smaller	5
Like mainstream	4
Other people like me	2
Other	2: Snooty/posh; scary
More independence	1
Can't remember/Don't know	61

Q7) Is the school better or worse than you expected?

	Percentage
Better	53
Worse	17
The same	15

## Report on Student Interviews

---

Don't know	15
------------	----

Q7b) How is it better?

	Percentage
More relaxed	20.4
Nicer teachers	13
Nice environment	9.3
Treated better/as an individual	9.3
Other	7.4: Helped me grow as a person; other students not as bad as I imagined; made some friends
Less bullying	3.7
Smaller classes	1.9
Don't know	35.2

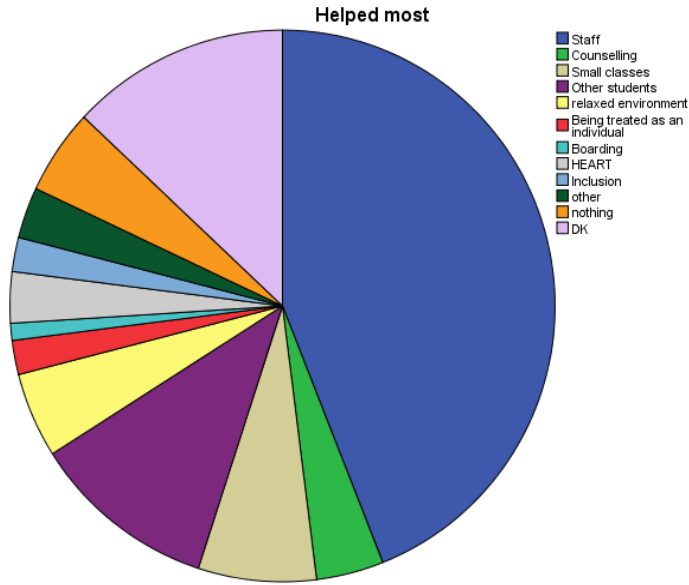
Q7c) How is it worse?

	Percentage
Chaotic environment	27.8
Full of idiots	16.7
Too much swearing/fighting	11.1
Inconsistent rules	11.1
Not enough support	11.1
Too much bullying	11.1
Made my behaviour worse	5.6
Don't know	5.6

Q8) What do you think has helped you most since you started at the school?

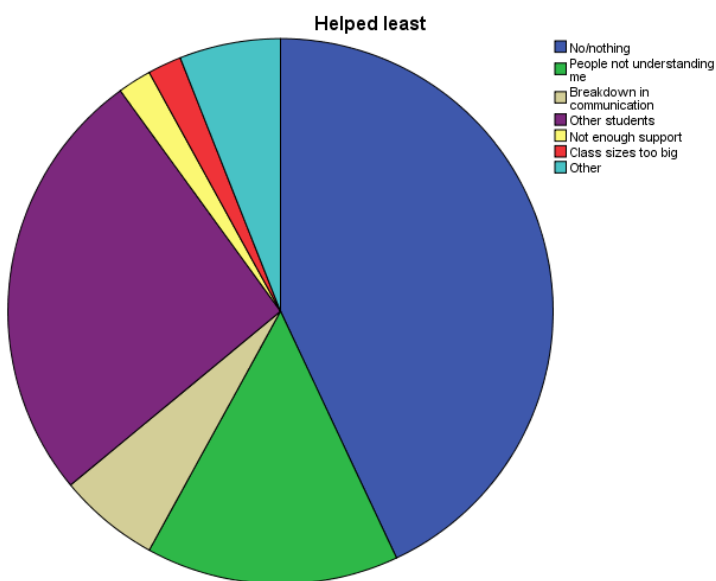
	Percentage
The staff	44
Other students	11
Small classes	7
Nothing	5
Relaxed environment	5
Therapy	4
HEART	3
Other	3: Being allowed to work with maintenance; being able to go home when I want to; doing a plumber's course at college
Inclusion	2
Being treated as an individual	2
Don't know	13

# Report on Student Interviews



Q9) Is there anything that hasn't helped you?

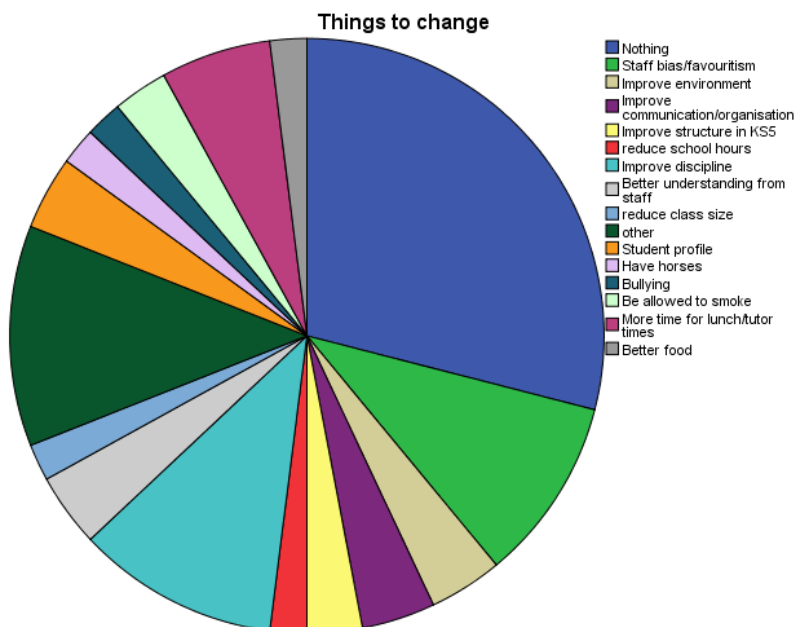
	Percentage
No/nothing	43
Other students	26
People not understanding me	15
Breakdown in communication	6
Other	6: The long holidays; not enough discipline; favouritism; too many non-academic lessons; PE; finding my way around the school
Not enough support	2
Class sizes too big	2



## Report on Student Interviews

Q10) Are there any things you would like to change at the school?

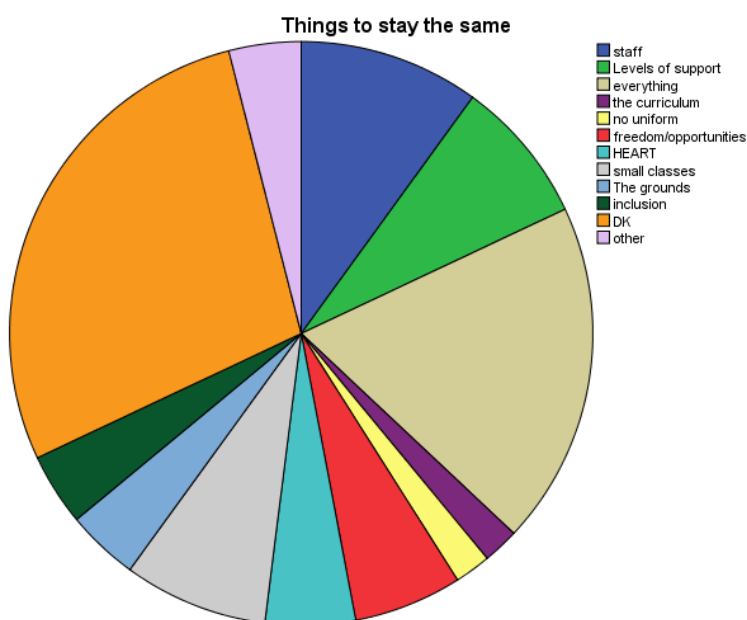
	Percentage
Nothing	29
Improve discipline	11
Staff bias/favouritism	10
More time for lunch	6
Improve the environment	4
Improve communication/organisation	4
Better understanding from the staff	4
Change student profile	4
Improve structure in KS5	3
Allow smoking	3
Reduce school hours	2
Reduce class size	2
Stop bullying	2
Have horses	2
Improve/provide more food	2
Other	12: Provide punch bags; separate KS3 and 4; have a soft room in KS5; don't have 1:1; have school uniform; reduce cost; make maths non-compulsory; update computers; have a paintball area; install water fountains; change some teachers; be open during the holidays.



## Report on Student Interviews

Q11) What things should stay the same?

	Percentage
Everything	19
The staff	10
The levels of support	8
Small classes	8
Freedom/opportunities	6
HEART	5
Inclusion	4
Other	4: specialist tuition; Self-science; no more building works; assemblies
Don't know	28



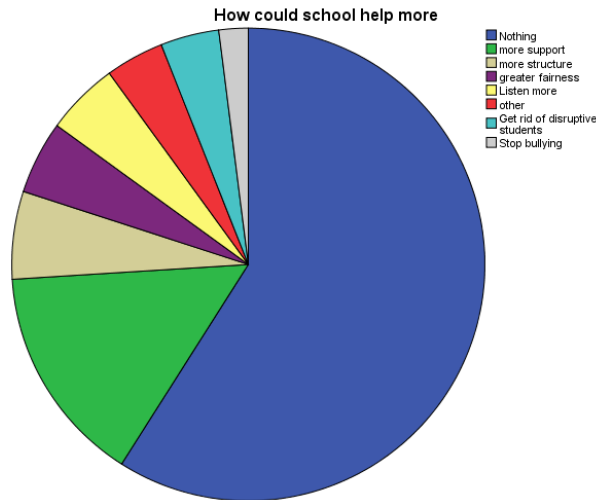
Q12) How do you think the school could help you more?

	Percentage
Nothing	59
More support	15
More structure	6
Greater fairness/less staff bias	5
Listen more	5
Get rid of disruptive students	4
Other	4: less changes; give feedback after each class; provide a map to new students; give more time at school than college

# Report on Student Interviews

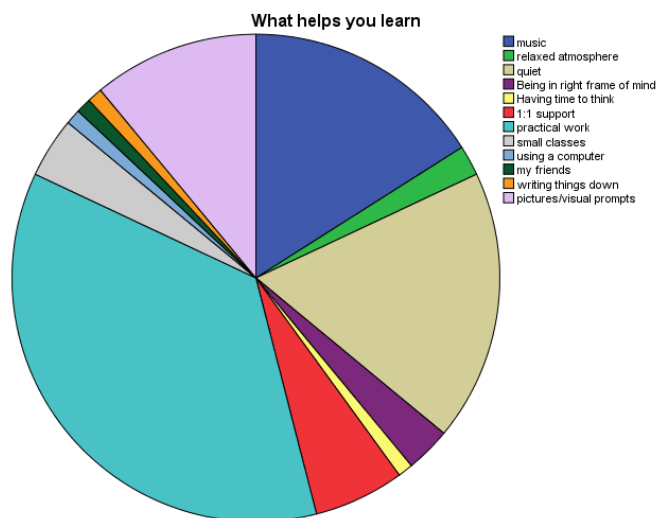
Stop bullying

2



Q13) What helps you learn?

	Percentage
Practical work	36
Peace and quiet	18
Listening to music	16
Pictures/visual prompts	11
1:1 support	6
Small classes	4
Being in the right frame of mind	3
Relaxed atmosphere	2
Having time to think	1
Using a computer	1
My friends	1
Writing things down	1





## Report on Student Interviews

---

Q14) Do you find it easier to learn at this school than your last one?

	Percentage
Yes	80
No	12
Don't know	8

Q15a) If yes, why?

	Percentage
Small classes	41.3
More support	35
Less pressure	11.3
I have matured	5
Things explained better	3.8
Don't know	3.8

Q15b) If no, why not?

	Percentage
Too noisy in lessons	33.3
Disruptive students	25
Staff don't listen	25
The work is too hard	8.3
Need to be pushed more	8.3

Q16) Do you feel you have enough support in the classroom?

	Percentage
Yes	78
No	11
Most of the time	6
Don't know	5

Q17) Do you think your behaviour has improved since you started at the school?

	Percentage
Yes	63
No	16
Don't know	13
Most of the time	8

## Report on Student Interviews

---

Q18) If yes, what do you think has helped you?

	<b>Percentage</b>
Staff support	52.2
Maturity	17.4
Don't know	15.9
Freedom to be myself	4.3
I enjoy school now	2.9
Small groups	1.4
Therapy	1.4
Student support	1.4
Something to aim for	1.4

Q19) Do you feel you are properly supported when you have problems?

	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	66
Most of the time	19
No	15

Q20) Do you feel you are listened to?

	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	65
Most of the time	19
No	16

Q21) Do you feel safe at the school?

	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	73
Most of the time	14
No	13

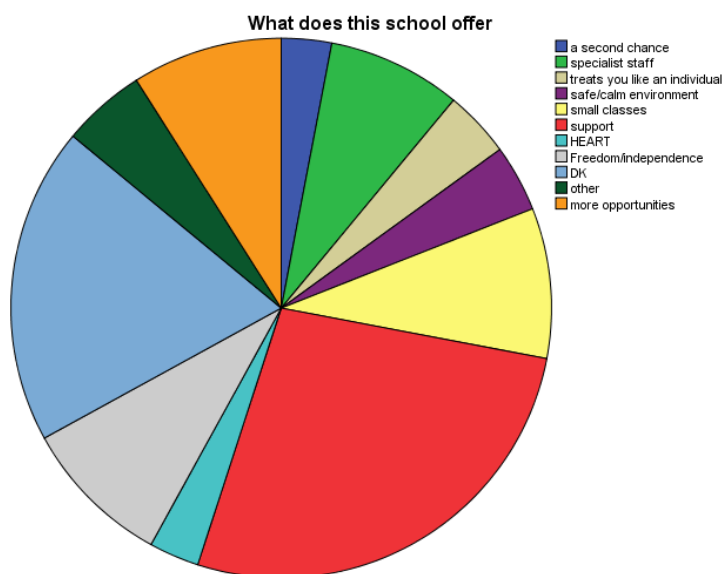
Q22) What do you think this school offers that other schools don't?

	<b>Percentage</b>
Support	27
Don't know	19
Freedom/independence	9
More opportunities	9
Small classes	9
Specialist staff	8
Other	5: Boarding; dogs; KS5; no uniform; breakfast
Treats you like an individual	4
Safe environment	4
HEART	3

# Report on Student Interviews

A second chance

3



## Therapy

Q23) Have you had any individual therapy since you've been at the school?

	Percentage
Yes	74
No	26

Q24) If yes, what type? (N.B. The next 5 questions only apply to those who have received therapy)

	Percentage
Counselling (N.B. This includes Bridget Juniper, Lynda Jones, Alison Rainbow, Annette Wickenden and Helen Winsor)	37.8
Combination (This includes counselling, CBT, Speech and Language, OT and Play Therapy)	28.4
CBT	17.6
Speech and Language	14.9
Play Therapy	1.4

Q25) Was there a specific area you were working on?

	Percentage
General issues	32.4
Anger management	29.7
Confidence/anxiety/self esteem	17.6

## Report on Student Interviews

---

Social skills	14.9
Speech	2.7
Don't know	2.7

Q26a) Did it help?

	Percentage
Yes	70.3
Don't know	14.9
Not really	8.1
No	6.8

Q26b) If so, how?

	Percentage
Learned strategies/coping mechanisms	44.3
Don't know	27.9
Helped me understand myself better	16.4
Improved my confidence	11.5

Q27) Has it helped you in other areas?

	Percentage
Yes	52.8
Don't know	29.2
No	9.7
Not really	8.3

### **Boarding**

Q28) Are you a boarder?

	Percentage
No	77
Yes	21
Used to be	2

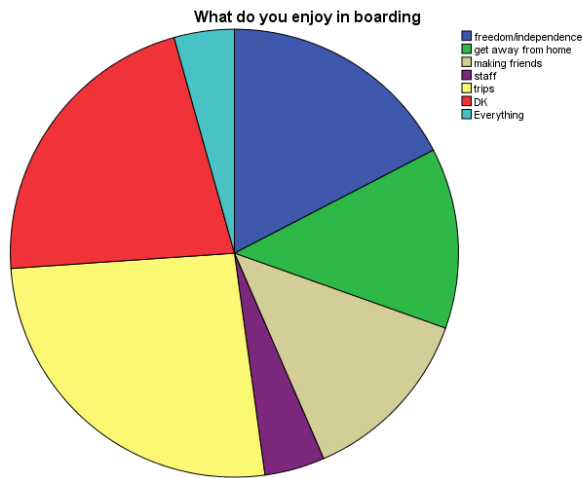
Q29) What do you enjoy about boarding? (N.B. The next 9 questions only apply to boarders)

	Percentage
Trips/activities	26.1
Don't know	21.7
Freedom/independence	17.4
Getting away from home	13
Making friends	13
The staff	4.3

# Report on Student Interviews

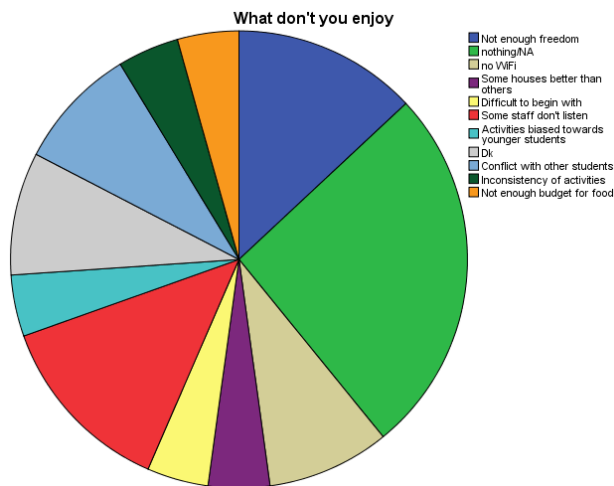
Everything

4.3



Q30) Is there anything that you don't enjoy about boarding?

	Percentage
Nothing	26.1
Some staff don't listen	13
Not enough freedom	13
Conflict with other students	8.7
No WiFi	8.7
Don't know	8.7
Some houses are better than others	4.3
Difficult to begin with	4.3
Activities are biased towards younger students	4.3
Inconsistency of activities	4.3
Not enough budget for food	4.3



## Report on Student Interviews

---

Q31a) Do you think boarding has helped you?

	Percentage
Yes	91.3
No	4.3
Don't know	4.3

Q31b) If yes, in what way?

	Percentage
Given me independence	28.6
Kept me away from problems at home	28.6
Helped me make friends	19
Don't know	14.3
Don't have to travel	9.5

Q32) Do you feel you are properly supported when you have problems in boarding?

	Percentage
Yes	73.9
No	17.4
Don't know	8.7

Q33) Do you feel you are listened to in boarding?

	Percentage
Yes	69.6
No	17.4
Not always	13

Q34) Do you feel safe in boarding?

	Percentage
Yes	95.7
No	4.3

Q35) Are there any things you would like to change in boarding?

	Percentage
Nothing	47.8
More facilities e.g. a games/cinema room	17.4
More support	8.7
Not being watched all the time	8.7
Rooms/showers need updating	4.3
Get Wifi	4.3

## Report on Student Interviews

---

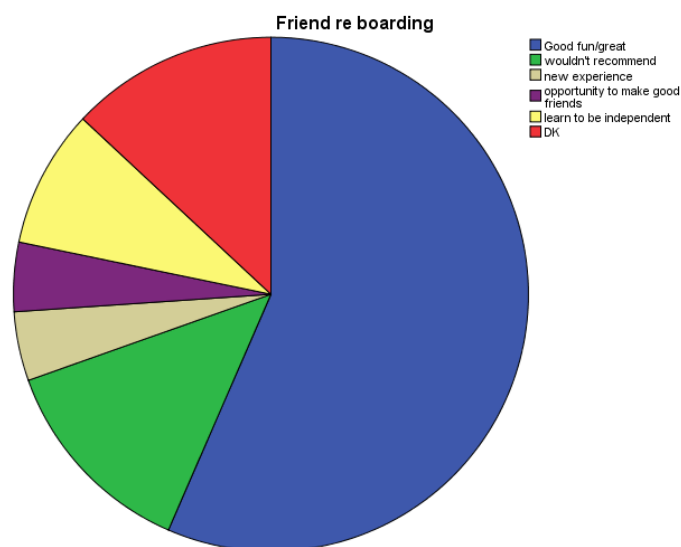
Reduce staff favouritism/bias	4.3
More people my age	4.3

Q36) Overall, do you think you are well cared for in boarding?

	Percentage
Yes	78.3
No	17.4
Don't know	4.3

Q37) If a friend asked you what boarding is like what would you tell them?

	Percentage
Its great/good fun/relaxed	56.5
I wouldn't recommend it	13
Don't know	13
Learn to be independent	8.7
New experience	4.3
Opportunity to make friends	4.3



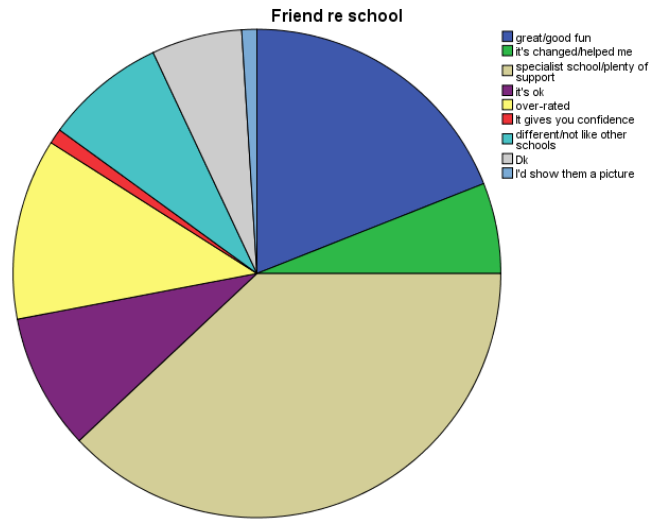
### General Concluding Questions

Q38) If a friend at home asked you to describe the New School what would you say?

	Percentage
Specialist school/plenty of support	38
It's great/good fun	19
Over-rated	12
It's ok	9

## Report on Student Interviews

Different/not like other schools	8
Don't know	6
It changed/helped me	6
Gives you confidence	1
I'd show them a picture	1

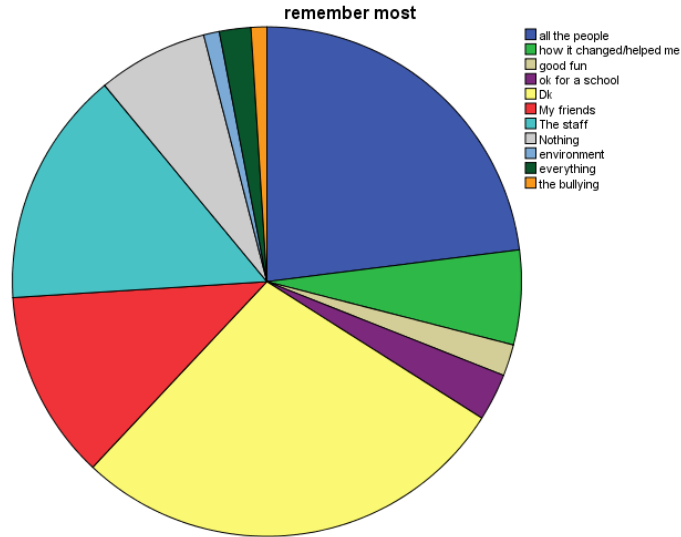


Q39) When you leave, what will you remember most about the school?

	Percentage
Don't know	28
All the people (staff and students)	23
The staff	15
My friends	12
Nothing	7
How it changed/helped me	6
OK for a school	3
Good fun	2
Everything	2
The bullying	1
The environment	1



# Report on Student Interviews

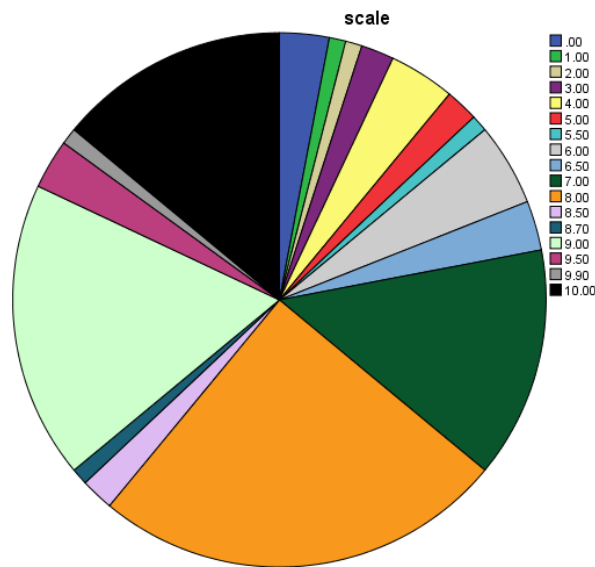


Q40) On a scale of 1 – 10 (1 = terrible; 10 = fantastic) how would you rate the school overall?

**Mean score: 7.54**

**Minimum score: 0**

**Maximum score: 10**



## Report on Student Interviews

---

Q41) Any other comments?

"It feels like a family – I know everyone really well"

"I hope everyone benefits from the school as much as I have"

"I find it hard to imagine what I'd be like if I hadn't come here"

"My first school broke me, my 2<sup>nd</sup> school fixed me, and West Heath painted me"

"There is far too much bullying" (N.B. This was mentioned by a number of students)

"Staff are biased and have too many favourites.....they also hold grudges" (N.B. This was mentioned by a number of students)

"Discipline needs to be improved"

"Disciplinary standards are not balanced – some people get away with murder, others are always punished" (N.B. This was mentioned by a number of students)

"Well behaved students are punished disproportionately"

"Staff are easier on girls, punishments should be equal"

"Students shouldn't be punished for swearing – it's a release of pressure"

"People like me get overlooked now because of the severe emotional needs of other students"

"It used to feel like a big family, but not now"

"Too many staff changes"

"Students have very diverse needs which can lead to conflict"

"Hopefully KS5 will become more structured soon"

"TAs are a let-down – they tell you off, but don't tell you how to improve"

"Communication and organisation in KS5 is terrible"

"There is a lack of respect from staff"

"Class sizes are getting too big"

"It is becoming too much like a mainstream school – I think the school has lost its focus"

"Scoring system is rubbish – the merit system was much fairer"

"External exclusion doesn't work – there should be a separate place for internal exclusion and other consequences such as banned from favourite lesson/activities"

## Report on Student Interviews

---

“There is too much emphasis on Performing Arts e.g. trips; other areas need this too e.g. science. Funding is not equal between departments.”

“Some staff are just here for the money”

“Staff should research students before making assumptions”

“Staff in KS5 should be more supportive – they just sit around and talk to each other”

“Improve DT facilities”