

Project 10/0142



Customer Service Excellence

Assessment Report

for

ST JAMES THE GREAT ROMAN CATHOLIC (VA) PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL

By Assessor: Neil Potentier

On behalf of EMQC Ltd

Dates of on-site visit: 23rd March & 27th April 2010

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1. Summary

Introduction and background

This Assessment Report covers the services provided by St James the Great Roman Catholic (VA) Primary & Nursery School and includes a brief description of the organisation, the assessment methodology and an overview of how the organisation demonstrated compliance against the Customer Service Excellence, the UK Government's national standard for excellence in customer service.

St James the Great School is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic school with 100% Catholic intake. The age range of pupils is three to 11. There are 70 staff and approximately 470 pupils.

A new senior leadership team is now in place and the School remains a vibrant, friendly, caring school based on a strong customer ethos allied to the Church values. All staff display a very positive attitude towards their customers (pupils and parents) and listen strongly to any concerns, comments suggestions and questions raised by the pupils through the Pupil Council

Whilst it is expected with all schools that teaching should be of a high standard, St James appear to display an ethos that goes beyond just teaching with a strong added plus in the way all members of staff care for the pupils and their parents

The School is very obviously committed to using external awards to self-assess, benchmark, challenge and stretch and the rationale for committing to Customer Service Excellence is based on this rationale

Methodology

The assessment process was a full assessment against all the elements of the Customer Service Excellence standard. A pre-assessment visit was made on the 23rd March to help identify the scale and quality of evidence necessary to achieve compliance with the new Customer Service Excellence standard. This meeting proved useful in agreeing the arrangements for the assessment visit including details of who should be seen during the visit.

Prior to the assessment visit the assessor was provided with a detailed and comprehensive matrix that showed the key documents cross-referenced to the elements of the Customer Service Excellence criteria. This enabled the assessor to examine some of the documentary evidence in advance through access to the portfolio of evidence and the School's web site. This allowed the assessor to identify some areas which needed clarification and this was accommodated during the subsequent on-site visit

The two-day assessment visit followed the agreed itinerary that enabled the assessor to meet a sample of customers, staff and representatives from partner organisations at both locations and to see the School in action.

Following completion of the assessment the Assessor was able to provide feedback to the Senior Leadership Team of St James the Great School compliance against all the elements of the Customer Service Excellence criteria and on his recommendation to the EMQC Certification Committee.

Summary of strengths

- A committed and focused leadership of the School ensures the delivery of a timely and quality service to pupils, parents and partners
- The ability to group pupils based on their needs allied to a very comprehensive identification of potential customers (new pupils). This has been augmented by the innovative use of SEAL to establish emotional needs of the pupils
- All non-teaching staff display a proactive customer focussed approach and see themselves as part of an internal chain delivering customer service
- Good arrangements are in place to provide information about the service to all customers via the web site and other mediums
- Coordinated working arrangements with partner organisations have clear lines of accountability for quality of service.
- Arrangements for handling complaints and introducing any subsequent remedial actions are in place.
- Responding to requests from customers (parents) on 'how is my child being taught'?
- The School practices an ethos of 'teach plus care' and the pupils commented on the friendliness of all teaching staff

Conclusion and recommendation

The assessment has shown that St James the Great Roman Catholic Primary & Nursery School meets with the requirement of the current version of the Customer Service Excellence standard. The report highlights strengths, and also some areas for further development.

Throughout the visit the assessor was impressed by the professionalism of the service and the commitment of all staff to ensure that the expectations of customers are at the heart of service provision. Customers and representatives of partner organisations who spoke to the assessor were generous in their praise for a service where every effort is made to customise the service to meet the needs of users.

I am pleased to pass on my recommendation to EMQC's Certification Committee that St James the Great Roman Catholic Primary & Nursery School continue be recognised as meeting the Customer Service Excellence standard. The award is valid for three years subject to annual monitoring.

There are four areas which are not fully compliant and I would recommend the development of an action plan to address these areas. Progress against these areas will be looked at when the Continual Compliance Review takes place in 12 months time.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone at St James the Great for their kind hospitality and cooperation during this assessment. In particular I would like to thank Stephen Beck and Becky Williams for preparing the written application, making the detailed arrangements for the visit and accompanying me throughout both days of the assessment visit. Their helpful contribution was greatly appreciated.

Neil Potentier
Assessor
May 2010

2. Detailed Assessment Findings against the standard

Criterion 1, Customer Insight

1.1 Customer identification

The School has an in-depth understanding of the different customer groups based on their experience of providing services over many years. Great use is made of Parish information on demographics which allows for the segmentation of pupils by ethnicity and special educational needs. The recent increase in Polish immigrants in the area is also taken into account and the School are also able to identify pupils with a free school meals entitlement. Work has also been undertaken on identifying white working class groups as these are seen nationally as having specific needs

1.2 Engagement and consultation

The use of survey results and comments from pupils and parents helps determine strategy via the School Improvement Plan. The strategy for engaging and involving customers is well-established. In this way the needs of user groups are identified and appropriate service provision is made such as the need for translation services

The assessor noted the commitment in holding regular presentations and consultations with pupils (via the School Council) and parents (via parent's evenings) to user groups and using the occasions to obtain feedback and ideas for developing the School further. On the evening prior to the assessment a presentation had been given to parents on 'how we teach maths'? This was in direct response to concerns from many parents. It was clear to the assessor that consultation with customers was integral to continuous improvement

1.3 Customer satisfaction

St James the Great School has in place a framework of surveys (e.g. the Antidote Survey) and consultation arrangements that are extensive and rigorous and measure on a regular basis customer satisfaction with the services provided. This is augmented by a regular and robust monitoring of the School Improvement Plan

The assessor noted that the trend over time in pupil and parent satisfaction was positive.

Areas for continuous improvement

You may wish to consider:

- Setting and monitoring an annual KPI (key performance indicator) for pupil and parent satisfaction. The Antidote survey could be one means of doing this. This would place a visible target regarding customer satisfaction even more at the heart of the School

St James the Great are fully compliant in this criterion

Criterion 2, The Culture of the Organisation

2.1 Leadership Policy and Culture

During the assessment visit the assessor was able to confirm by observation and discussion that St James the Great has a commitment of putting the customer at the heart of its service delivery. Examples of information from surveys and feedback from pupils and parents being used positively to adapt and develop services was explained to the assessor during the visit. This process is ongoing and reflects an insight into customers' expectations influencing service provision.

There are a full range of (teaching) standards in place which support the expectation for all pupils to receive excellent levels of teaching and support. Standards were clearly set out on the web site and other relevant documentation. Information was provided to the assessor to show how the privacy of customer information is safeguarded.

Survey data and other evidence provided to the assessor showed clearly the positive customer view that they are always treated fairly. Representatives of the Student Council spoken to by the assessor stated that they are always treated by the staff in a courteous and friendly manner with teachers always listening, acknowledging and acting on feedback. Throughout the visit, speaking to staff, customers and representatives of partner organisations (e.g. Sports Liaison Groups), the assessor was able to confirm that St James the Great embraces a customer focused culture.

2.2 Staff Professionalism and Attitude

Caring for the pupil is an integral part of any teacher training (including NQT training) and support staff are encouraged and given guidance to put the pupil first with people who would not normally become involved (e.g. financial people) actually being hands-on in dealings with pupils.

The evidence presented to the assessor showed that customers of St James the Great consider staff to be polite and display a professionalism that helps in delivering an excellent customer service. Staff commitment to customer service is monitored through the performance appraisal system and feedback is given to staff on aspects of customer service

In discussions with staff the assessor was able to recognise that the management of St James the Great supports frontline staff in a variety of ways. In particular by being role models and operating open-door policies with all suggestions to improve levels of service being extremely welcome

Areas for continuous improvement

- You may wish to consider publicising more widely the results of surveys that show staff to be helpful and friendly.

St James the Great are fully compliant in this criterion.

Criterion 3, Information & Access

3.1 Range of Information

Information about the full range of services is provided on the School's web site as well as in appropriate literature including a prospectus. The web site in particular has comprehensive details on all the School 's range of services

Charges for any services such as school trips and extra tuition are relayed to all parents via letter and include how payments can be made

3.2 Quality of Information

Regular surveys have established that the range of information provided meets the varying needs of pupils and parents. Reasonable steps have been taken to check that customers and potential customers have received and understood the information provided.

Feedback from customers as well as complaints and comments from customers (the pupils via the School Council and parents) were discussed with the assessor who found insufficient evidence customers had confirmed that the information provided was accurate and complete and that the School had worked to close out any complaints in adherence with their procedure

3.3 Access

Contact can be made in person or by letter, telephone call, fax, e-mail, or by a third party. Customers and representatives of partner organisations confirmed that services were easily accessible and communication with the School was excellent. However, no work has been done on establishing which is the most effective access channel used by customers

During the assessment visit the assessor noted the excellent condition of all the premises visited. Feedback from pupils confirms that premises are kept in excellent condition. There are suitable rooms at both sites that enable visitors (including parents) to conduct their business in comfort and with privacy.

Partial compliance

Sub-element 3.3.2 – Despite having a range of access channels the School still need to evaluate the effectiveness of each medium

3.4 Co-operative Working with Other Providers, Partners and Communities

The School works well with partners including other schools, sports liaison groups and the Friends Association. The caring ethos of the School is impressed on partners and relationships with school representatives are said to be regular and professional from the partners perspective

There are regular interactions with the local community and involvement with local charities. The School is involved with the local enterprises via an Enterprise Coordinator and will need to review if this is beneficial to its customers (pupils)

Partial compliance

Sub-element 3.4.1

Whilst working well with other partners the School still need to establish if the services offered through partnership arrangements are of benefit to the customers

Areas for continuous improvement

You may wish to consider:

- Formalising surveys for different aspects of service. There is evidently an ethos of all the parts working together to produce excellent customer service. It might be prudent to take individual component parts such as premises, admin or the Friends Association and see how these are performing in isolation. This will minimise any complacency and possible reduction on the effectiveness of service

Criterion 4, Delivery

4.1 Delivery Standards

Monitoring of clear and measurable standards and targets is systematic and rigorous through the School Improvement Plan and regular meetings. The assessor noted the performance achieved against all standards and targets for the current year had been monitored and results relayed back to all parties concerned including staff, delivery partners and customers

4.2 Achieved Delivery and Outcomes

The assessor noted that a detailed set of customer standards was displayed on the web site and is available in hard copy. Results are published and is published on the BBC Educational league tables and also made available as 'whole school targets' and 'KS2 attainment figures. Leading Teachers and ASTS spread the word about School successes around local schools and partners

4.3 Deal Effectively with Problems

Dips in performance are quickly identified and these are explained to staff and customers (parents) whilst remedial action is taken to deal with the problem. An example shows the School below the norm for 'Contextual Value' and this has been revealed to customers who have been informed of subsequent actions and improvements

The complaints procedure has been reviewed and is now felt to be effective in dealing with problems. There is a clear process showing how the complaint is elevated to the next level with levels of accountability specified

Complaint handling information and guidance has been given to all relevant staff and staff spoken to by the assessor confirmed that they were empowered to deal immediately with problems experienced by pupils and parents. The School still need to revisit complaints dealt with to see if the customer was happy that the process was adhered to

Partial compliance

Sub-element 4.3.6

Evidence from customers on their view of the outcome of their complaint is needed for full compliance to be achieved. Customers need to be satisfied that the complaint process is fair and appropriate and that the process was adhered to

Criterion 5, Timeliness & Quality of Service

5.1 Timeliness and Quality of Service

You set service standards, including time responses to phone calls, letters, e-mails and personal callers. These standards are regularly reviewed and published widely for customers to be aware of your service standards. However, the time limits between various stages of the complaints procedure need to be set and then communicated to customers

Partial compliance

Sub-element 5.1.1

You will need to determine time limits between each stage of the complaints procedure and inform customers of these

5.2 Timely Outcomes

The assessor noted that service standards on timeliness and quality of customer service had been set

Individual customer needs at first point of contact are addressed by ensuring that all staff are fully trained in recognising that the customer journey needs to be as short and as user-friendly as possible.

The sharing of information between staff and partners is strictly on a need to know basis so that confidentiality is respected. The assessor noted that information is exchanged with the parents in an efficient and confidential manner via parent's evenings, letters and telephone calls

5.3 Achieved Timely Delivery

Monitoring performance against standards for timely delivery and quality of customer service is carried out in a regular and systematic way via continual monitoring of the School Improvement Plan

Targets and achieved performance is published locally and shortfalls with targets such as 'Contextual Value' have now been addressed

Comparative data of relation to timeliness and quality of customer service with other public sector comparators shows the high standards achieved in the School in the area

Partial compliance

Sub-element 5.3.2

Actions are still outstanding to address the performance in 'Contextual Value' When publication has taken place and your standards are being met you will achieve full compliance in this sub-element

Appendix A – Compliance Framework

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Non Compliant	Partial Compliance	Compliant	Compliance Plus
1	1.1	1.1.1			X	
		1.1.2			X	
		1.1.3			X	
	1.2	1.2.1			X	
		1.2.2			X	
		1.2.3			X	
	1.3	1.3.1			X	
		1.3.2			X	
		1.3.3			X	
		1.3.4			X	
		1.3.5			X	

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Non Compliant	Partial Compliance	Compliant	Compliance Plus
2	2.1	2.1.1			X	
		2.1.2			X	
		2.1.3			X	
		2.1.4			X	
		2.1.5			X	
		2.1.6			X	
	2.2	2.2.1			X	
		2.2.2			X	
		2.2.3			X	
		2.2.4			X	
		2.2.5			X	

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Non Compliant	Partial Compliance	Compliant	Compliance Plus
3	3.1	3.1.1			X	
		3.1.2			X	
	3.2	3.2.1			X	
		3.2.2			X	
		3.2.3			X	
		3.2.4			X	
	3.3	3.3.1			X	
		3.3.2		X		
		3.3.3			X	
	3.4	3.4.1		X		
		3.4.2			X	
		3.4.3			X	

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Non Compliant	Partial Compliance	Compliant	Compliance Plus	
4	4.1	4.1.1			X		
		4.1.2			X		
		4.1.3			X		
	4.2	4.2.1				X	
		4.2.2				X	
		4.2.3				X	
		4.2.4				X	
	4.3	4.3.1				X	
		4.3.2				X	
		4.3.3				X	
		4.3.4				X	
		4.3.5				X	
			4.3.6		X		

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Non Compliant	Partial Compliance	Compliant	Compliance Plus	
5	5.1	5.1.1		X			
		5.1.2			X		
	5.2	5.2.1				X	
		5.2.2				X	
		5.2.3				X	
		5.2.4				X	
		5.2.5				X	
	5.3.	5.3.1				X	
		5.3.2				X	
		5.3.3				X	