

Parent Forum Minutes – Friday 13 November 2015

In Attendance

Sam Packer, Katherine Higgins, Tracy Harris, Tandy Titmus, Andrew Morris, Vanessa Bailey, Verity Roberts, Jane Joshi, Nicola Castle, Simon Barnard, Miranda Seldon, Shelley Williams-Farr, Jo Copestake

Apologies

Katie Bett

Minutes from Last Meeting

Approved via e-mail.

Matters Arising from Last Meeting

Scooters – AM reported that a space has been designated for the scooter park and the Governors are currently negotiating with the Pre-School to free up the space.

List of Childcare Providers in Dacorum – AM apologised if this link has not been uploaded onto the website but that he will be organising it with Mrs Adams if it has not.

Breakfast Club – it has not be viable to arrange this club at present but there will be another request for take-up in the summer term to monitor whether the demand for such a club has changed.

PE lessons - AM has observed lessons to make sure that children are not bored or uninspired. He feels that the children are happy but will monitor it. He also reported that a day of dance followed by showing each dance to the rest of the school, followed by a picnic has been planned for the summer. KH also recommended Kate Radcliffe as a dance teacher (and former parent).

AM also reported that since the change to a primary school, Potten End have had an inter-schools netball match, which they won and there is a football match coming up.

Prefects – AM reported that the Prefect system is up and running and has been very successful for the Year 6 pupils.

AM thanked TH for preparing the agenda.

1 PE Lessons (Class R) - one parent has requested these take place more than once a week in Reception Class and that the mission should not just be 'getting everyone changed'. How much exercise is actually involved and what are the other opportunities in school for Reception children to participate in sport/exercise? Could an extra PE lesson be incorporated into the weekly timetable?

AM stated Class R have one PE lesson per week where the Government do not recommend any scheduled sessions. He also stated that getting ready for PE independently is very important at this age, rather than teachers getting the children ready. AM did stress that it is never the goal of PE to get changed. There is one session rather than two because the recommendation for teaching is outdoor learning where there is always running around when outside and doing physical activity even though it would not be classed as PE. The school has introduced one session per week because it feels it is right to do, but as a state school, it needs to follow the curriculum.

In KS1 and KS2 there are two hours of PE per week plus clubs offered for extra-curricular activities. AM stated that the aim was to offer free clubs for children to expand their learning.

2 Why do the reception children team up and spend time with children in the year below (Nursery)? What is the rationale for this and how does it benefit Reception children? Why has time spent together with the Nursery Year increased?

AM stated that Nursery and Reception children are not taught together. The time these classes spend together has not increased but they do work together in the same space. They are learning through their own interests and AM stressed that the staff are constantly assessing all pupil learning possibilities on an individual basis in order to develop their learning.

JC thought that the fact that the recent Information Evening was held jointly for Nursery and Reception might have given the parents the wrong impression.

AM also stated that home visits have been taking place for this years intake and that has proved very useful.

3 Playground Issues - Length of Reception lunch break at 1 hour fifteen minutes – a couple of parents have flagged that they feel this is too long plus it's quite daunting being out there with all the other bigger children rather than the foundation stage playground. Maybe they need to consider equipment / activities that the younger ones can do. There is a concern is that they will struggle with it all the more as the weather turns colder.

AM stated that in observations, it has not been noted that Class R have been daunted by being in the playground. Nor are the children outside for 1¼ hours. AM's view is that the school is one cohesive setting where teachers teach and spread their skills across the whole school. Lunch time is when a lot of the discussions about how to move the school forward take place and so a staggered lunch time would remove this opportunity. Mrs Stroud is against zoning for age groups because all ages groups work together. Also, the prefect system allows prefects to come into the classes of younger children during wet play and play with them. AM felt that having that interaction between younger and older year groups means that everyone gets to know each other and the younger children get reassurance and a sense of pride that they know the older pupils. In the long run, it is better that the younger children are not intimidated by the older ones. AM also stated that Mrs Hall will be allowing younger children to come in earlier for a story if the weather becomes too cold for the children. AM will monitor this to ensure that the safety of the children is ensured at all times.

4 Packed lunches and drinks other than water. Should children be allowed to have drinks other than water in their packed lunch?

AM said no to this. He quoted the National Hydration Society who have found 'healthy' drinks contain as much sugar as juices and fizzy drinks. The school will stick with water. SWF suggested that the parents should be given this information as some parents are thinking about how to get around this.

TH suggested that drinks do not need to be brought into school for lunch as water is on offer to all children.

5 As a new parent in Reception, it would be great to have more information about the school day, school life, events etc as sometimes we feel at a loss as to what is happening/going on. This could be incorporated into the Parent Information meeting at the start of term, along with a handout which covers all the basics and more. For example, what happens in Collective Worship, how often does it take place? What do children receive 'Special Person of the Week' awards for and how are these handed out? What happens with the school library and are children free to borrow books etc?

AM agreed that things such as Special Person of the Week, Collective Worship themes and the timetable for the week could be put on the website. He doesn't always know the theme or subject if Penny is taking Collective Worship. KH advised that there are a lot of children who worry about some of the themes that come up. AM said that a lot of issues that are discussed are child-friendly and focus on helping people and SB agreed that it is important to face issues and teach the children to deal with it and be able to talk to each other about it. AM said he would mention it to Penny in case there are any issues that she might introduce so they are prepared.

7 How can steps be put in place to help different stages of development in Reception? Those parents with children who are at different levels to others feel that their child is not learning as quickly as they should be and may be getting bored with the lack of stimulation. Is there any streaming system for Reception and if so, at what stage of the year will this be put in place? Additionally, it would be good to understand the system behind Reading books and to develop more communication between parents and teachers as to what stage their child is at or requires to be at. It can be confusing for parents discussing these things at drop-off/pick-up as some children haven't been given any books yet, some are still on picture books and others are on words.

JC requested that general information could be communicated to parents and that it might be good to have as part of the Information Meetings. VR suggested this information be freely available to all (where it was discussing information about Houses, Special Person and other points) as not all children start the school in Reception. SWF also suggested having a designated person that did know all the information and other parents would know to go to that person.

AM stated that there is no streaming at Reception age. He stated that the children are learning all the time but that manners and social skills are just as, if not more, important than academic intelligence at this age. He also stated that books are carefully assessed according to the child's particular needs and boys particularly can be put off reading at this age if they are pushed beyond their learning capabilities. VB stated that any parent with a concern about their child's reading level can speak to staff and the child will be assessed. TH advised that parents could help by filling in their children's reading records with more information than 'Read well' as she feels this helps the volunteers who read with the children.

AM reiterated that staff are constantly observing the children, assessments are done to ensure each child is working to his or her capability.

7 Replacement hand dryers for toilets in main block
AM reported that new ones have been ordered.

8 Opportunity for school ski club at the Snow Centre
KH has looked into it and advised that it would cost £118 for 10 weeks of lessons with a minimum of 6 children taking part. It is classed as a school club but parents would need to take and fetch their children.

It was agreed that it could be offered as a club that parents are prepared to run but the school could not offer it for a number of reasons (safe-guarding duty, concerns about discriminating against lower income families etc) however AM is happy to add it to a school newsletter giving information and contact details of parents willing to run this.

Any Other Business;

AM had been given feedback from a parent that there is some inconsistency across the school with regard to stickers in reading records for reading at home every day. AM will ensure that stickers are used across all classes.

Simon Barnard received a suggestion from a parent to have portable A-board parking signs that could be put out and brought in at the same time as the traffic cones to encourage more considerate parking during the school run. AM will look into it, however it was then discovered that the prices were possibly too high.

KH raised the issue of large grouping for the school Christmas performances resulting in children from certain year groups not getting speaking parts and asked if it would be possible for each class to do individual Christmas plays. It was felt this was not realistic however AM will look into other opportunities for performances during the course of the year which may give more children greater opportunities for speaking parts etc. AM also reported that he is in the process of getting permission from the relevant families to film the Christmas performances, sell a professionally produced DVD at £7 and also have professional photos of the children in their costumes.

Note: Since the meeting, this price has been confirmed as £7.50 which will cover Wisepay costs and ensure the school does not lose money on each one sold.

Next Meeting date: 22 January 2016 at 2pm