

## Parent Forum Minutes – Meeting held on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2017

### **Present**

Andrew Morris, Simon Barnard, Shelley Williams-Farr (R), Jo Phillips (R), Jo Copestake (Y1), Emma Harwood-Jones (Y1), Verity Roberts (Y2), Katie Bett (Y2), Katherine Higgins (Y4), Henny Salinger (Y4), Tracy Harris (Y5), Tandy Titmus (Y5), Nicola Castle (Y6)

### **Apologies**

None

### **Minutes from last meeting**

Approved via email following last meeting

### **Matters arising from last meeting**

None

### **Agenda**

Mr. Morris (AM) brought the following items, from himself and the teachers, for discussion.

1. Reading – How to increase reading at home/Completing the reading diary/  
Discussing books in KS2

AM asked how we can support parents to increase the amount children read at home. He explained that age-related expectations for reading levels has increased. In Year 1, the focus is on decodable phonics. As children progress in their reading, they need to expand their vocabulary, learning more sophisticated 'Tier 2' words. By KS2, children are also assessed on their ability to make inferences from the text. He acknowledged that parents do try very hard to read with their children, but the children need to be motivated too. Children need to be reading to parents and also reading by themselves. He asked the Forum what would motivate the children to read more.

Verity Roberts (VR) commented that it can be difficult to motivate the older children to read. This may be because of their age, or because they are not interested in the books available. The younger children are more excited to read.

Henny Salinger (HS) asked if there are reading lists of suggested books available. AM confirmed that there are. VR and Emma Harwood-Jones (EHJ) suggested that stickers in the reading diary or House Points awarded for consistent reading at home would be a good motivator. Simon Barnard (SB) added that in Year 4, often children are not reading at home because they are not interested in the book.

HS suggested the idea of Book Clubs, where the children are able to suggest and swap favourite books. Nicola Castle (NC) added that it helps when the children are encouraging each other. Tandy Titmus (TT) suggested that reading magazines as an alternative to books. NC added that *Junior News*, a current affairs publication for children, is enjoyed by the children in Year 6.

Jo Copestake (JC) asked how much the children are reading in the classroom. She suggested that more communication is needed with parents about reading expectations in school, as it is not always clear from the reading diary when children have read with an adult. Katie Bett (KB) commented that many types of reading take place in class but is not recorded.

Tracy Harris (TH) explained that the school relies on parent volunteers to help with reading. AM said he would send out a further plea for reading helpers. He explained that with thirty children in a class, it takes a lot of time to read with each child and record. Checking the reading diary entries from home is also very time consuming. SB added that listening to a child read does not just involve checking they are decoding and comprehending the text, but the adult must also discuss the inferences the child is making. Extended discussion of texts in this way is especially important in KS2. He also commented that if a child is reading alone at home, there is no one to check pronunciation.

AM asked if reading online would be a motivator. The school could potentially buy into a scheme that provides online texts and comprehension questions. Although the idea of comprehension questions was positively received, the overall response of the Forum was that this would not be a good idea. Concerns were expressed about the amount of screen time children already have and the additional blue light before bedtime. AM concluded that this is therefore not worth the investment at present.

The discussion moved on to consider the current reading diary system. VR felt that a combination of reading according to the teacher's instructions and House Point rewards for consistent reading, would work well as motivators. AM suggested the introduction of a 'Passport Card' for reading, which could be

used to keep track of the number of times children read each week e.g. with a sticker or check for each time. This would be in addition to the reading diary and would increase the speed of checking reading diaries for teachers and teaching assistants. TH acknowledged that in KS1 more detail is needed in the reading diaries e.g. recording sounds/words they are finding tricky, but that in Year 4 and above a signature or stamp may be sufficient.

KB asked if parents should still be hearing the older children read at home. AM confirmed they should. He explained the value in reading aloud and discussing content with adults. This is a very different skill to reading alone in their heads.

AM confirmed that he will arrange the Passport Card system. This could be used for both reading with a parent and independent reading. It will enable the teacher and parent to better support each other in tracking and encouraging reading. He acknowledged that it can take time for teachers to respond to parental comments in the reading diary, but that communication should be as two-way as possible. He explained it is also important to know if children dislike certain books. He will ask teachers to clarify expectations of reading in school and at home.

EJH asked how long the children are expected to read for at home. AM explained this depends on the age and ability of the child and should be at the parents' discretion.

HS added that parents reading to their children, even when they are older, is still good fun and especially beneficial if the child isn't enjoying reading. NC suggested the use of audiobooks is also helpful.

HS asked if it is possible to update the library books. AM said that they do edit the books regularly. They accept donations of books from home if they are high quality texts. He confirmed they will review the library books again.

AM concluded that our overall aims are to encourage a love of literature and provide children with access to good quality books.

## 2. TT Rock Stars

AM asked how the children are finding TT Rock Stars. This is an online times tables scheme. It began with a pilot in Year 5 and it is now being used by other year groups. All agreed that it is going well and that Year 4 in particular are enjoying it.

### 3. Homework

AM explained that this is a difficult subject to find agreement on. All parents will want different amounts/types of homework.

He gave a reminder to all parents to please record if adult support has been given with homework. All homework is set with the intention that the child should be able to complete it with minimal support. He encouraged parents to speak to teachers if children are finding the homework difficult.

AM asked the Forum for their views on the amounts of homework given. Many members said that more homework was needed. NC commented that Year 6 need more to help them prepare for the higher quantity of homework given at secondary school. She suggested up to an hour a week. She added that current tasks are often completed very quickly. HS suggested giving different subjects on different days of the week to spread the work out.

KB asked what the national guidelines for homework are. AM said that there are no guidelines. HS added that some primary schools do not set any homework.

AM said that he will consider homework expectations for Upper KS2. He explained that it is important to strike a balance between essential homework and optional home learning. He also added that there is no concrete proof that homework has any positive impact on learning overall.

SB asked what the rules are if homework is not completed. AM explained that a sensible approach must be taken. For younger children, a simple conversation may be appropriate. For older children who repeatedly miss homework deadlines, there would be consequences e.g. staying in at break time.

HS added that another consideration is how much time it takes teachers to set and mark homework. KB commented that sometimes Year 2 have not been given feedback on homework. She expressed concern that the children have put time and effort into the homework and it is important that they get recognition. AM said he will look into this. He added that sometimes feedback may have been given to the child, but not the parent.

#### 4. Parent behaviour within school

AM asked the Forum their views on parental behaviour within school. Is it acceptable for a parent to behave in an aggressive manner to a teacher within school? All members agreed that it is not acceptable. It was agreed that if there were repeated occurrences of such behaviour, that the parent would not be allowed in the school building. SB confirmed that this course of action also has the full support of the Governors. AM explained that this is a safeguarding issue and his primary concern is that the children must feel safe within school.

#### 5. Parking

AM began by stating that his role as Head Teacher is to look after the safety of the children and not to organise parking. The Village Hall have given their response to recent difficulties with parking. Parents are no longer allowed to park in their car park at drop off in the morning. An alternative solution was offered by the Village Hall, however, this would have needed school staff to be present in the car park to monitor the situation. This was not felt to be appropriate. AM emphasised that safe parking is the priority. The Parish Council is aware of the situation as this will affect many village residents.

Many expressed concern that the parking situation will get worse now. AM agreed that next week will be tricky. KH suggested carpooling as an option to reduce the number of cars needing to park.

NC asked if it is possible to complain to the Charities Commission. AM explained that the school is unable to challenge the decision, but parents may take the matter further if they wish.

#### 6. Time keeping

AM asked all parents to ensure that their children are in school on time each morning. Children are unsettled by late starts, especially arriving late into Collective Worship. This matter is not about attendance figures. It is about ensuring children are not arriving late in school, feeling upset or worried because they have missed the start of the day.

#### 7. Attendance

AM explained that RAISEonline provides tracking for schools, analysing school and pupil performance data. Currently, the only area of concern at Potten End

is attendance, which is below the national average. This is due to a combination of sickness and unauthorised absences. AM asked the Forum what could be done to improve attendance.

HS suggested there could be reward system for the children to provide motivation. AM said it did not seem appropriate to penalise sickness.

AM also asked how to encourage truthfulness from parents about taking term-time holidays. He said that in theory, fines could be given. There was much agreement from Forum members about how much cheaper holidays are in term-time. AM said that there are no easy answers, but encouraged all to consider the right course of action when making decisions about holidays.

#### 8. Nursery – 30 hours provision

From September, some three and four year olds will be eligible for 30 free hours of nursery provision, rather than 15. AM said that the school will be able to provide the 30 hours for 10 children, in conjunction with another provider. He is disappointed that there seems to be local competition with regard to this provision. He encouraged all parents whose children have attended the school nursery to give honest opinions on the learning environment provided.

TH directed parents to look at the Potten End Pre-School website for more information on these changes to nursery provision.

### **AOB**

#### 1. Early Years Playground

TH asked that all parents ensure that children do not play with equipment that has been set up in the Early Years playground before school. Parents are also reminded to not allow children to climb on any equipment, as the school is not insured at this time. An email will be sent to parents of Nursery, Reception and Year 1 children.

J. Phillips  
23.03.17

