

Parent Forum Minutes – Meeting held on Friday 20th January 2017

Present

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

Apologies

Katie Bett (Y2), Henny Salinger (Y4), Nicola Castle (Y6)

Minutes from last meeting

Approved via email following last meeting

Matters arising from last meeting

1. Modern Foreign Language (MFL) provision

A Spanish club is now running in KS1.

Andrew Morris (AM) and Mrs. Hall are discussing the possibility of a MFL 'Enrichment Week', in which children could learn about particular countries, their languages and culture.

2. Parking

Liz Illingworth (Chair of Governors) is organising a meeting for parents that have volunteered to help monitor the parking situation at the beginning and end of school. They will agree a Code of Conduct.

The responses that AM has received from Dacorum Borough Council have not been very positive. No traffic wardens have been seen yet. He will follow this up. Traffic wardens will only issue tickets if drivers completely quit the vehicle.

Tandy Titmus (TT) noted that there have been some improvements in the parking situation in recent weeks. Katherine Higgins (KH) added that she would be happy to run a 'Walking Bus', to enable children to walk safely from further away.

Reminders have been sent about parking at the Village Hall. Parents are asked not to park past 9.00am as some activities begin at this time. Nursery parents

are asked to park at other locations due to the time restriction. AM will continue to monitor.

AM concluded that we need to continue to work on the situation. Friends of School (FOS) have offered to buy new road safety banners for display outside the school.

Agenda

1. Opportunities for parents to view written work (Reception)

A parent has asked if children's written work/exercise books can be available to view at Parent Consultations in Autumn and Spring, rather than just at Open Evening.

AM said that due to space limitations during Parent Consultations and the fact that classrooms are still being used during appointment times, this would be difficult. He suggested that an alternative time could be found when parents can view books with the children in the classrooms, if they wish. He will look into this possibility.

2. Christmas Service (Year 6)

A parent has expressed disappointment that not all Year 6 children took part in the Christmas service. They commented that it was their last opportunity to do this, but a number of the class were sitting at the back with nothing to do. Some of these children had wanted to take part, but were not allocated anything. This parent feels it was a great shame that these Year 6 children were not given as many opportunities as in previous years.

AM fully acknowledged this and understands their view. He explained that the selection process for readers was fair – all names of children who wanted to read were put in a hat and names were drawn. Services like this can be tricky with large numbers of children and giving every child a speaking part can be difficult. He added that the children who did not read, but wanted to, were given a role in the evening Carol Service.

AM will review the options and try to include more roles for readers in the evening service next year.

KH asked if every year group has 'Show and Tell' opportunities. She highlighted the importance of this for the development of valuable speaking and listening skills. AM explained that it does not happen in the older year groups. Verity Roberts (VR) noted that Year 2 are allowed to bring in items for 'Show and Tell' when they wish.

AM explained that there are many other opportunities for developing speaking and listening skills in KS2 e.g. frequent group work, reporting of findings to the class, writing and saying prayers and taking part in Collective Worship. He said it would be difficult to fit traditional 'Show and Tell' into the KS2 Curriculum.

KH added that she was impressed by the children in Years 2-4 during the Christmas play. They delivered their lines very well and used the microphone with confidence.

3. Lunch options (Year 1)

A parent is concerned that their son often does not get his choices at lunchtime because meals are held back for other year groups. If he doesn't like the option available, he goes hungry. They ask if this is because he is at the back of the queue because the children are in alphabetical order, or because he is slower to get into line. He has been getting upset about missing out on his choices.

AM asked that this parent speak to Mrs. Paton and Mrs. Loria about this matter. He will do so also.

From Year 3 upwards, children are allowed to select their menu choices in advance. This has been trialled with the younger children before. However, they often cannot remember what they have chosen, which can lead to upset at the counter. AM explained that Alison Brazer (Head Cook) tries to cook meals in the proportions that are usually asked for. Kitchen staff do their best to accommodate requests.

He suggested that the queues could be rearranged and he will ask the teachers to encourage this child towards the front of the queue.

KH asked if the meal choices for the term can be changed. AM confirmed that they can be changed by speaking to the class teacher or teaching assistant, or through the office. The menu is available on the website and paper copies have also been given out.

4. Ticket allocation for the Christmas Plays (Year 4)

A parent has asked if there are any alternatives to the current ticket allocation for the Christmas plays e.g. Would hire of the Village Hall enable at least two tickets per performance?

AM has looked into the option of hiring the Village Hall, but this has the same capacity as the school hall (100 seats). He explained that the logistics of hiring another venue are very complicated. It was difficult to secure Ashlyns for the Year 5/6 production in the Summer. This would be even more of a challenge to schedule at Christmas. He added that the younger children may not cope well with travelling to and performing at another site.

KH asked how we could accommodate the Grandparents that wish to see performances. If only two year groups took part in one play rather than three, this would allow 120 tickets over two performances. Could there be some standing tickets? AM said this was not possible due to fire regulations.

Jo Copestake (JC) asked if there could be more performances to allow for more tickets. AM explained that too many performances would be tiring for the children and detrimental to the overall quality. He also highlighted that performances are filmed so that other family members can see them.

AM acknowledged that it is difficult to find a solution.

KH suggested hiring a larger hall in another primary school. TH highlighted the cost involved. AM commented on difficulties with timings and transport to another venue.

Emma Harwood-Jones (EHJ) suggested that parents be allowed to request tickets for the performances they want on a first-come, first-served basis. VR said that alternatively, parents could return unwanted tickets and they could be reallocated. However, swaps like this already happen through Facebook and Whatsapp groups. Tandy Titmus (TT) added that most children will want a parent/family member there for each performance.

The possibility of two evening performances was also discussed, but AM pointed out that the children will become very tired. TT added that this means teachers working for two evenings, rather than one.

KH mentioned again the possibility of two year groups per play, rather than three. AM explained that it would be difficult to find time for all rehearsals. There are only two possible slots in the day as the hall has to be prepared for lunchtime at 11.20am.

Shelley Williams-Farr (SWF) suggested that Grandparents be allowed to watch the dress rehearsal. TH explained that the dress rehearsal is usually for the children of other year groups and the Pre-School. Again, there would not be room in the hall for a larger audience.

AM said that some schools now have a production at Easter for the middle year groups. VR commented that many parents will prefer a Christmas production. AM added that moving Year 5 and 6 from a Christmas to a Summer production was tricky and some parents felt disappointed.

AM will consider solutions and review the matter at the next meeting. He added that the Governors are offered tickets too (ten per performance), so this must be allowed for when considering numbers. If two year groups performed together, then three tickets could be offered over two performances. However, the evening performance would always be in demand.

5. Young Voices (Year 4)

A parent has highlighted the impact of Young Voices now only being entered by the school every two years, rather than every year. This will adversely affect Year 4 especially, as they have not been able to go in Year 3 or 4 (since the change from First School to Primary School) and now won't be able to go in Year 5. Also, some children from Year 5 have expressed disappointment at not being able to go.

KH gave the background to this issue. She explained that previously, the two oldest year groups have attended – previously Year 3 and 4 and then Year 5 and 6, after the expansion.

AM said that Potten End was the only school in Berkhamsted that entered two year groups at a time. He explained that funding cuts are an issue. Parents are now asked to pay for the coach. He added that previously, there were only 45 spaces, rather than 60. He acknowledged that Year 4 will have to wait a long time for their turn to go. He would like to offer an alternative every other year, if possible. Another consideration is that the teachers accompanying the

children will be working from 8am-12 midnight and then have to be back in at normal time the following day.

KH emphasised that Young Voices is so well received and the children love attending. Their expectations will need to be managed now the situation is different. TT added that the cost is around £100 per child. She also pointed out that some children chose not to attend for the second year previously, as the first time had been so special.

Simon Barnard (SB) highlighted that all children will still get one chance to go. AM will consider alternatives for the interim year. He emphasised that he relies on the commitment from teachers, which goes over and above their required duties.

AOB

1. Items from Mr. Morris

AM will bring some items for discussion to the next meeting and ask for feedback from Parent Forum members.

2. New Building

KH asked how the funding is progressing for the new building. AM explained that we have not reached the total needed yet, but would still like to complete the build by the Summer. They hope to build the base this term. A sponsored walk will take place, to which last year's Year 6 will be invited.

The building will be situated on the grass area between the old and new buildings. It will be used for small group interventions and for AM. It will be approximately 8 x 10 feet and have heating and electricity.

KH asked if they could use tradesmen from within the school community, in an effort to keep costs down. AM and SB explained that this is difficult as there are a lot of health and safety regulations which must be followed by schools. Work needs to be checked and certificates provided. The structure will be bought in, but assembled more cheaply on site. Unfortunately, due to the health and safety regulations, volunteers are not able to help with the assembly process.

3. The Big Hug

AM explained that he has ordered a 1.4m high teddy bear with a Potten End badge. If children are feeling sad or having a down day, they are able to go and hug the bear. The idea is that as well as helping a child to feel better, this will act as a warning to staff that they are feeling vulnerable. A home for the bear is still being decided. It will probably be located near the office.

4. Parent Helpers

SWF asked if Mrs. Barber could send out a request for more parent helpers. AM agreed this was fine. SWF explained that many parents are willing to help for an hour, but are not always available for a whole morning or afternoon. She asked if there could be a 'sign up' process for different activities that require volunteers and offered to help organize this.

J. Phillips
26.01.17