

Parent Forum Minutes – Meeting held on Friday 20th April 2018

Present

Louisa Ingram, Simon Barnard (Vice-Chair of Governors), Jo Copestake (N/Y2), Jo Phillips (N/Y1), Shelley Williams-Farr (Y1), Katherine Higgins (Y5)

Apologies

Emma Harwood-Jones (N/Y2), Katie Bett (Y3), Verity Roberts (Y3), Henny Salinger (Y5), Tandy Titmus (Y6)

Minutes from last meeting

Approved via email following last meeting

Matters arising from last meeting

1. Sports Day

Louisa Ingram (LI) confirmed that medals will be ordered shortly. Dates for Sports Days can be found in the Diary of Summer Events sent out by email.

2. Adults in School

Please see AOB Item 1.

3. Road Safety and Parking

Parking reminders have been given in the newsletter.

LI explained that no further safety signs will be ordered at present. The existing signs will continue to be displayed outside the school.

4. Year 1 Parent-Teacher Consultation

Year 1 parents were able to choose whether or not to have their child present at the Spring Parent-Teacher Consultations. The feedback from parents and Year 1 teachers has been positive. Shelley-Williams Farr (SWF) and Jo Phillips (JP) agreed it was helpful to speak to Mrs Paton and Mrs Loria without their children present.

LI confirmed that this arrangement will continue for Year 1 at the next Parent-Teacher Consultations.

5. Skip2bFit

LI explained that following the success of the Skip2bFit sessions last term, this whole school skipping initiative will continue into the Summer term. The children will take part in extra skipping each week. Certificates for their achievements in skipping will be given out each Friday in Collective Worship. The emphasis is on children achieving their own personal bests. There will be displays in the hall and in classrooms. The school will also enter into a competition with Westfield School. Staff and parents are welcome to take part in Skip2bFit. Please see further details in the Physical Education Sports Premium Statement on the school website (Agenda Item 8).

The school are also looking into the Daily Mile initiative, which will hopefully take place in the future.

6. English Speaking Union

The English Speaking Union have now been in touch with Katherine Higgins (KH) and she will look into how the school can get involved. This is an organisation which helps develop key oracy skills and boosts children's confidence in public speaking. They run a comprehensive debate programme for Year 5 and 6.

Agenda

1. Visiting Father Christmas in School

A parent has asked if it would be possible for the children to not visit Father Christmas in school during December. They explain that most parents tend to take their children to visit Father Christmas as a special family activity and therefore this is not something that the school needs to do as well. They add that at this time of over indulgence, the children do not need two visits and two presents. It was also difficult to explain to the very young children who guessed his identity, why Mr Wallis was dressed up as Father Christmas.

The general feeling among Forum members was that visits to Father Christmas should continue. LI and Simon Barnard (SB) agreed. All commented that the children love the tradition and it is part of the magic of Christmas in school. Only a small token present is given (reindeer food and chocolate coins). LI added that not all parents will take their children to see Father Christmas outside of school.

Jo Copestake (JC) asked if the quality of the costume was an issue. SWF said that FOS would be happy to pay for a professional Father Christmas if this was wanted. LI said this was not essential but would be considered. SB explained that the appropriate DBS checks would be needed, though the company would also be required to have their own safeguarding procedures.

LI confirmed that visits to Father Christmas in school will continue.

Action: LI to consider whether a professional Father Christmas could be used next year.

Miss Ingram brought items 2-7 for discussion.

2. Long-Term Plan for Maths

LI explained that a new approach to teaching Maths in Years 1-6 will be adopted from September (Maths is current development priority for the school). Since the new curriculum began in 2014, there have been gradual changes to how Maths is taught across the country. International league tables showed that, as a country, we needed to improve standards in Maths. There are now Maths Hubs across the country. LI added that her background is in this area of teaching.

Teachers have specifically chosen to follow this new approach, which has been developed by County (Herts for Learning). The central idea is that children are not just learning the rules of Maths, but they must understand the 'why' of each concept.

Teachers will be learning the new approach this term and will then be able to pass helpful information to parents too. They will personalise it for our school. FOS will be buying new 'Maths manipulatives' for the children to use. These are physical resources to support the learning of place value and other concepts.

KH asked for some specific details of the approach. LI explained it is a holistic method of teaching, known as Concrete, Pictorial, Abstract (CPA). There are four main areas:

1. Making calculations – Children will draw, build and explain their calculations.
2. Reasoning and convincing – This is a skill in itself (not just in Maths).
3. Talk – Children will learn to explain concepts using the appropriate Maths vocabulary.

4. Time – Children will spend longer learning a particular concept than they have done previously. They will revisit concepts less often, though they will review learning briefly in lesson starters.

KH asked how much value Year 6 will gain from the new approach. LI explained there will be a significant impact on their understanding and learning. The depth of understanding children have at Primary level will make a huge difference to their learning at Secondary level. The new expectations are also matched to the expectations of SATs, which have increased in recent years. The SATs will consist of two written reasoning (problem solving) papers and one arithmetic paper (testing fluency and speed).

SWF asked if there is a specific name for the approach. LI said 'Mathematics Mastery' is the current term being used.

3. Forest School/Outdoor Learning Project

LI explained that there is currently a working party for the Outdoor Learning Area – a new and exciting project. All year groups will be able to use the area. Nursery and Reception will have Forest Schools on site, rather than visiting Boxmoor Trust.

Mrs Hall and Mrs Wonnacott (Science Subject Leader) are leading the project. They will be taking the learning from Boxmoor Trust Forest Schools and developing the grassy area at the bottom of the KS2 playground. The plan is to launch the area in September, with new outdoor learning links to the curriculum.

SB highlighted the existing Forest 'Walk' around the outside of the FS playground.

SWF added that they will be asking for volunteers to join the working party to help clear the site and replant, in order to save on labour costs. They will be especially pleased to hear from parents who have gardening or landscaping experience. She asked Forum members to encourage as many parents as possible to volunteer.

Action: Parents are encouraged to join the working party to help develop the new Outdoor Learning Area.

4. Attendance and Promptness

LI and SB made a plea from the school and the Governors to all parents regarding attendance and promptness in the mornings.

1. Attendance

Please do not take holidays in term time. There are currently high rates of term time holidays and it is becoming a problem. There is an educational impact for the children and the school is now below the national average for attendance. This has implications in an Ofsted inspection (with regard to holiday absence, not illness).

A letter will now be sent to parents when an individual child reaches a certain level of absence. This has not been done previously. Absences due to illness are also included in these figures, although obviously there is an understanding that everyone is ill at times and children should not be sent in if unwell. Attendance certificates will be relaunched.

KH and SB both outlined one of the reasons for parents taking term time holidays is the lower cost, when compared to school holidays. This is a wider issue that needs to be addressed by Government.

2. Arriving at school on time

Children need to arrive in school between 8.45am and 8.55am. Significant numbers of children are currently arriving after 8.55am and must be entered as 'Late' in the register.

JC asked if arriving at 8.55am is ok or is it preferable that children are in at 8.45am? LI confirmed that 8.55am is fine, although 'register' activities that benefit the children are going on in the classroom from 8.45am.

SWF asked for clarification on when children are marked down as 'Late' or 'Absent'. LI explained that the register codes vary depending on the exact time of arrival, but that lateness can in itself have an impact on attendance figures.

5. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

LI explained that the school are addressing the changes required by this new legislation. All procedures must be reviewed. There is a County 'toolkit'

available to help with this. There will be more information sent to parents shortly.

Please see AOB for a related item on adults in school.

6. IT Audit and Implications

There has been an audit of the IT infrastructure in school. A new server is needed. No financial help is available from County for this significant outlay, therefore the work is currently being put out to tender. FOS are unable to invest in school infrastructure.

KH asked if leasing a server would be an option. LI explained they are not able to do this.

The Governors (Emma Harris and Steve Cutler) would be grateful of any input or advice regarding this work from IT experts within the school community. A strategic IT Plan will follow this work, therefore FOS IT spending is currently on hold.

7. Collection from Clubs

LI gave a reminder to parents that when collecting children from clubs, please wait at the outside doors, rather than entering the school building. This is in line with County safeguarding procedures.

JC asked how this procedure works for children returning from Game On. LI explained that the children must go back into school for the club providers to then see them to their adult.

Parents should pass this information on to any other adults collecting children on their behalf.

8. New Strategic Sports Plan

LI highlighted that the new Physical Education Sports Premium Statement is available on the website. Schools are now given £15 000 annually that is reserved specifically for sports spending. This document must be provided by the school to demonstrate how the money is spent. There are five key indicators that outline the ways in which the money should be used.

Initiatives included in the document include Skip2bFit, the new playground markings and relaunching the Year 5 Play Leaders scheme.

AOB

1. Adults in School

A parent has asked for an update on the item regarding adults in classrooms from 19.1.18. (**Action:** Email to be sent to parents with details of students and volunteers in each year group). They have also asked if it is possible for photos of teachers, teaching assistants and students to be on classroom doors/windows to help children and parents identify who is who.

LI explained that the email regarding students and volunteers was sent, but it seems to have gone astray as parents have not received it. This will be investigated.

Under the new GDPR legislation, it is not possible to display photos of staff and students. There are currently photos of the Governors outside the office, but permission to display these is being reviewed under the new legislation.

All members of staff wear badges. Parents are very welcome to ask who an adult in school is. As part of safeguarding protocol, staff are also encouraged to ask other adults who they are if they do not recognise them.

SB asked if volunteers could also wear badges. LI agreed this is a good idea.

KH explained that the desire to know the names of adults is normal and understandable. LI reiterated that parents are always welcome to ask adults to introduce themselves.

Actions:

1. Resend email with details of students and volunteers.
2. LI to arrange badges for volunteers in school.

2. Potten End Pre-School Chairperson

JC highlighted that Potten End Pre-School is currently looking for a new Chairperson. Parents are encouraged to get in touch with the Pre-School if they are interested in this important role.