

## Parent Forum Minutes – Meeting held on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2018

### **Present**

Nikki Comer (Interim Headteacher), Gilly Brown (Deputy Headteacher), Sarah Chittenden (R), Jo Phillips (Y2), Shelley Williams-Farr (Y2), Jo Copestake (Y3), Emma Harwood-Jones (Y3), Mary Flynn (Y5), Louise Cutler (Y5), Katherine Higgins (Y6)

### **Apologies**

Sharon Kinder (Y1), Katie Bett (Y4), Verity Roberts (Y4), Henny Salinger (Y6)

### **Minutes from last meeting**

Approved via email following last meeting

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

#### 1. Buddies for children new to the school

**Following on from the discussion regarding making contact with new parents, a Year 5 parent would like to suggest a buddy system with the intention of helping new children become familiar with school routines.**

Mary Flynn (MF) asked if there could be a buddy system for new children to support them with routines and lunchtimes. She also highlighted that as a new parent it can be a struggle to work out who is who amongst parents and FOS reps. It was previously stated that GDPR makes it difficult to share contact information.

Gilly Brown (GB) highlighted the success of the Reception buddy system and said it is a good idea to consider this for new children. She explained that this does usually happen within each class, but will reiterate the importance of this at the next staff meeting.

Regarding parental communication, Louise Cutler (LC) said she will be arranging a new WhatsApp group for Year 5 parents.

Actions:

- Buddies for new children to be discussed at staff meeting.
- LC will set up new Year 5 WhatsApp group.

#### 2. Learning to cycle

**Updates to be given on potential future arrangements for learning to cycle at school (with the Scouts or Bikeability). A Year 6 parent has asked if cycle training has been confirmed for 2018/2019.**

Katherine Higgins (KH) asked about the progress made arranging cycle training for Year 6. GB explained that the school has applied for this year but has not got a place at present. They plan to try again.

KH said she has made contact with the Herts County Council Bikeability team. They are able to provide training on school grounds at a cost of £20-25 a hour. Each session would last 90

minutes. They usually provide this during half-term week but perhaps it could take place within school hours.

GB agreed this sounds like a good idea. KH offered to follow this up.

Action:

- KH to follow up possible arrangements for Herts County Council providing Bikeability training for Year 6.

### 3. Year 5 and 6 show

**Following on from the discussion regarding radio microphones for the Year 5 and 6 play, a Year 5 parent would like to highlight the problems with the sound levels.**

MF commended the excellent performance of Peter Pan, but explained that it was difficult to hear everything that was going on. KH added that it was a brilliant show, but let down by the sound. She explained that these problems have occurred in previous performances and asked if they could be resolved for next year. Potential causes were highlighted: acoustics in the large hall, microphone problems and having children operating the mixing desk.

GB explained that unfortunately there is no budget for the show. The performance takes place thanks to the good will and hard work of staff, children and volunteers. She explained they have been working hard to solve the problems with sound and things have improved in recent years. They looked into buying new radio mics but these were too costly at £200 each, therefore they borrowed mics instead. She highlighted that they are only able to have the hall at Ashlyns for the day of the performance, which makes set up challenging. She added that is good to be able to involve children in the back stage and sound arrangements as not all of them want to be on stage.

KH suggested asking parents who are in the industry for support. Nikki Comer (NC) agreed this was a good idea.

MF asked about the possibility of switching venues, for example to a smaller community centre with a stage. GB explained that they currently pay £100 to hire Ashlyns, therefore the cost of other venues would be an issue. However, this could be considered for future performances.

## **Agenda**

1. Breakfast Club/After-School Club  
(Previously discussed on 8.5.15, 19.6.15 and 22.6.18)

**A large number of parents from Reception and Year 4 have asked about the possibility of the school having a breakfast club and an after-school club. A Reception parent has seen this successfully established at another school and would like to suggest some ideas for setting up this provision at Potten End.**

Sarah Chittenden (SC) explained that many working parents are struggling with drop off and pick up and asked if we can explore options of before and after-school care at the school.

She highlighted that there are not many child minders in the area. She said that a before-school club would not necessarily need to include breakfast.

GB explained that Mr Morris previously conducted a parent survey to establish demand for this, but at that time it was not found to be cost effective. She explained that there are a number of logistical issues to consider. The best place to hold a club would be in the hall, however, the space would need to be completely tidied before Collective Worship at 9am. Also, several clubs are already using the hall before school. If before and after-school care were to be provided, it would need to take these things into consideration and be sustainable.

SC explained that at another local school, the clubs were successfully set up by parents, who volunteered on a rota. GB said that this would require DBS checks of all volunteers and there would be insurance considerations. However, it could be investigated.

GB said that a further parent survey will be run at Parent Teacher Consultation in two weeks. NC explained that costings and logistics can then be investigated. Jo Copestake (JC) said that parents are likely to be willing to pay the required costs as this provision is needed so much.

There was further discussion about staffing. NC explained that at Great Gaddesden the clubs were run by support staff (teaching assistants). JC suggested the Nursery classroom as another location for the clubs as they don't start until 9am.

Action:

- Survey of parent interest in before and after-school clubs to take place at Parent Teacher Consultation.

## 2. Communication with parents following incidents and accidents at school

**A Year 2 parent is concerned that incidents and accidents that happen during the school day are not always communicated to parents. They explain that their child had a skin reaction on their hands while playing at school and they were not notified verbally or via note. They also give the example of footballs hitting children in the face or on the head. They fully appreciate that accidents happen, but they would like to ensure that parents are notified, especially with head bumps. Overall, they are finding the lack of communication from teachers to parents very frustrating as trying to find out what has happened from a 6/7 year old can be difficult. They suggest that a note in the book bag regarding incidents and accidents would be appreciated by most parents and they explain that parents have a right to receive this information about their child.**

LC added that this concern has also been raised by a reception parent. SWF asked for clarification on what the existing school procedures are for communicating incidents and accidents to parents.

GB explained that all incidents and accidents are formally recorded. Taking the example of head bumps, she said that previously notes have been put in book bags, but they found that these were not always seen by parents. Therefore, they began using 'I bumped my head' stickers with details of the incident and treatment given. As well as informing parents, this is also helpful for teachers to see so they can keep an eye on the child.

GB highlighted that difficulties arise when a child doesn't tell an adult that an accident has happened, for example because they want to continue playing. She said they need to reiterate to the children that they must tell an adult about all incidents and accidents. She said that with the skin reaction described above, it is likely this was an isolated incident that was not reported fully. She added that the vast majority of incidents are fully reported to parents.

Action:

- Children to be reminded in Collective Worship of the need to report accidents to an adult.
- Procedures to be highlighted at staff meeting.

### 3. Supporting Lunchtime Play

**A Year 2 parent has asked if extra activities could be provided to support constructive play at lunchtime. They explain that the children really enjoy having time on the football pitch on a Friday and suggest that there could be more opportunities for structured play like this. This would help those children who sometimes find lunchtimes difficult. They suggest various activities such as: chess, Lego, art and craft. They also propose that activities could be run by the older children as staffing may be an issue. There could then be some kind of recognition (merit or treat) for the older children who want to help.**

SWF outlined that currently there is a lot of boisterous play amongst Year 2 children at breaktimes and lunchtimes. She asked if there is anything we can do to help at this tricky time and highlighted the above activities suggested by the parent.

GB agreed this was a lovely idea. She acknowledged staffing extra activities can be tricky but that doesn't mean that a solution can't be found. The example of playing chess under the covered walkway was discussed. A timer could be used (as is used already for the bars) so lots of children get the chance to play. There are always staff based in this area for first aid, so they would be able to monitor the games. The prefects could also be asked if they would like to help (although this would not be compulsory). The games could be rotated in order to cater for all children's preferences.

SWF highlighted that the school has expanded in recent years, but the playground has not, therefore it is good to find ways of decreasing the number of children on the playground at any one time. The successful rota for using the courts for football and the new playground markings were also highlighted. Both are very well used.

MF asked if the children are skipping in the playground. GB confirmed that there is a large bag of sports kit available at morning breaktime, which includes skipping ropes. This is supervised by the teachers on duty.

SWF suggested that FOS could fund the purchase of new/large games for the covered walkway. GB said this was a good idea, but suggested they trial using their current games first and see how it takes off.

MF asked what the policy is on playing outside when it is raining. GB said that the teacher on duty will make the decision on the day. If it is only light rain, the children still play

outside. If it is outside play, all children must go outside. They are not allowed to remain in classrooms unsupervised.

Action:

- Board games under the covered walkway to be trialled at lunchtimes.

#### 4. Supporting friendships

**A Year 4 parent has asked how we can best support our children in their relationships with one another. They have had feedback from their child about friendship difficulties. They discuss at home how to cope with these, but they wonder if the school could also support the children more with relationship problems. They explain that playtime can be a minefield and often children are left to play out the roles of Ruler, Fixer, Victim etc. This can affect their self-esteem and ultimately how they feel about school. They acknowledge the role of PSHE but they are not sure how often this takes place.**

**Another Year 4 parent has suggested the school take part in This Morning's 'Be Kind' campaign.**

**A Year 2 parent has asked if the school could introduce mindfulness practice as a regular activity in classes across all age groups.**

Jo Phillips (JP) outlined these concerns and ideas from parents. Concerns about relationships in Year 5 were also noted. NC confirmed that PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) takes place each week. She explained that this is essentially a preventative measure. However, teachers will respond to what is happening in their class and will add in extra Circle Time to help with specific issues when required. GB explained that it is very important that children communicate relationship difficulties to their teacher. Some find this hard and therefore there are various systems in place to support communication e.g. notebooks to write in for the teacher. It is also very important to keep communication open between staff and parents.

GB said she is very keen on using mindfulness in school. She started this in Year 6 last year and the children got a lot out of it. This is definitely on the school's radar, although unfortunately it cannot be the number one priority at present.

KH asked if any mindfulness practice currently takes place in class. GB explained that there are sometimes of elements of mindfulness within class, but that teachers need full training through the Mindfulness in Schools Project to deliver the teaching properly.

MF asked if it can be taught through the RE curriculum. NC explained that it can to a certain extent, but mainly through PSHE and other opportunities in the classroom e.g. early morning work and just before lunch.

JC asked if Energise still takes place. GB explained there has been a technical hitch with Energise since the installation of the new server, but once this is resolved it will continue.

Action:

- Mindfulness in school to be researched.

## 5. Maths Challenges

**A Year 6 parent has asked if the Maths Challenges could be brought back. These fun, age-appropriate challenges were set at school and children completed them at home. They were able to win prizes for doing well.**

GB explained that these were coordinated by Mrs Stroud. She agreed that it would be good to bring these back. She added that there will be a reading challenge set for half-term and an author will be visiting the school after half-term.

Action:

- Maths Challenges to be restarted.

## 6. Clubs

(Last general discussion about clubs was on 19.1.18)

**A number of parents have asked about the possibility of setting up various clubs:**

- **Netball Club - A Year 6 parent has asked if there will be a netball club starting for Year 5 and 6, and/or other year groups, to ensure they are familiar with the rules before transferring to secondary school. They explain that there was a club for Year 5 and 6 last year, although they didn't play any matches as apparently the team weren't ready. They suggest it would be really good for them to play some friendlies as they will all be on the back foot at secondary school if they don't know the basic rules and positions.**
- **Board Games Club – A Year 6 parent would like the school to look into the potential popularity of a board games club. (See Item 3 regarding board games at lunchtime).**
- **After-School Clubs for Year 3 – Year 3 parents have highlighted that there are no non-sports clubs for this year group and there are not enough clubs for girls. They suggest cookery club, art club and a board games club. They also propose that if the school is unable to plan extra clubs, but is willing to provide the space, parents could organise and assist with them.**

GB explained that there is rolling programme of sports and non-sports clubs for different year groups so not everything is available for all years at the same time. They are currently looking into the possibility of a dance club.

Regarding a netball club, she agreed it would be good to get this up and running. It was run by a Year 6 parent (with school staff support) last year. GB and Mrs Wannacott are looking into this and they may ask for parent volunteers to help again. KH suggested they could ask for support from the trainee netball coaches at Everyone Active, who need to complete several weeks of teaching practice.

GB explained that it is great if parents want to help run clubs, but they need to have a DBS check and have a member of school staff present for insurance reasons. SWF mentioned the gardening club which she ran previously with a TA. Parents were charged £3 a session for the club, which covered the cost of the TA's time. This system worked well.

MF asked about the results of the questionnaire completed after sports day. GB said she would look into this.

Actions:

- New possibilities for clubs, including netball, to be investigated.
- Parents very welcome to run clubs, but they need to be accompanied by a member of school staff and have DBS checks.
- Sports questionnaire results to be looked into.

## 7. Scooter Park

(Previously discussed on 22.6.18)

**A Year 6 parent has asked if there could please be an extension to the scooter park, as the current one is very well used and fit to burst.**

KH explained that the scooter park is full, which is very positive as it shows less children are being driven to school. She has discussed the logistics of extending it to the left with Mr Illingworth (including ensuring that the land there belongs to the school, rather than the pre-school). The costings are in process, but the current estimate is around £500. She suggested appealing for the donation of necessary materials, asking FOS for funding and also the possibility of a sponsored event. JC suggested a sponsored scoot.

GB asked if bikes are also left in the park. KH explained that it is not really big enough for bikes and these are currently left in the staff car park.

GB said it would be good to move forward with the plans. KH offered to organise a working party to carry out the work.

Action:

- KH to look into options for funding the scooter park extension and organise a working party in due course.

## 8. Parking

(Last general discussion about parking and road safety was on 19.1.18)

**A number of parents have expressed concerns about the parking situation around the school.**

- **One parent observes that cars are continuing to park on the double yellow lines outside the school gates, mostly at drop off. This parent has tried speaking to drivers but the responses aren't always favourable and the inappropriate parking continues. There is a similar situation on the double yellow lines on the Front and on the corners of the junction. They explain that it makes it very difficult when crossing the road with children. They understand that parking is difficult in the morning, but say that as parents, we should be protecting our children and acting responsibly. They add that parking next to the church on the main road, by the junction is going to result in an accident one day. They suggest if parents were permitted to drop children off from 8.30am, perhaps this would ease matters.**
- **Another parent highlights that many cars are parking inappropriately across the pavement on Vicarage road. This situation has worsened this term.**

Emma Harwood-Jones (EHJ) explained that many cars are parking on the pavements on Vicarage Road making it very difficult for pedestrians to pass by. Others highlighted the problems of cars parking on corners and double yellow lines.

GB gave the current advice from the local PCSO: if a car is parked inappropriately or dangerously, the best course of action is to take all the details of the car (make, model, registration), note the date and time and take a photo. This information can be given to the police by calling 101 (for non-emergencies). GB gave the reminder that school staff have no authority over where parents park. They are not allowed to place cones on the corners of junctions.

MF asked about the possibility of parking in Village Hall car park. She said it would be good for the community to work together on this issue. GB explained that the Village Hall will not allow parents to park there in the mornings (please see minutes from 10.3.17 and 20.10.17 for details).

Action:

- Reminders about appropriate parking and PCSO advice to be sent to parents.

#### 9. Parent Teacher Consultation Format

(Last discussed with regard to Year 1 on 20.4.18)

**A Year 5 parent is very concerned at the appropriateness of the expectation that children be present at Parent Teacher Consultations from Year 2 onwards. They explain that this is not standard practice for all years, even at secondary level; though they understand it has been the format at Potten End for some years. They would like to suggest that parents should be given a choice as to whether their child is present or there should be separate opportunities for consultation without the children.**

MF explained that she doesn't feel children should be present at Parent Teacher Consultation. She asked if they are involved due to Assessment for Learning requirements. She asked if parents can be given the choice about whether or not their child is present, so that a frank conversation with the teacher is possible.

EHJ said that in a previous consultation, her child returned to class for the last five minutes so there was an opportunity to speak to the teacher further.

MF asked what the purpose of the child being present is. She also asked for guidance on how best to prepare the child in order to make the most of the consultation.

NC explained that the Parent Teacher Consultation is designed to be a positive experience for all and enable transparent communication. It is also a celebration of the child's strengths. GB added that it is the children that are being discussed and they should be a part of this learning process. The school has run consultations like this for many years. She explained that if there is anything confidential that needs addressing, teachers can always discuss this in an appointment at another time. She added that having the child present is helpful for giving other important messages e.g. sharing targets and addressing behaviour concerns. The child is able to see that the teacher and the parent are on the same side. She concluded that this format is believed to be best practice for the school. It demonstrates that there is a team of support around the child.



KH added that it is important to involve the child as they are the one affected by the discussion. GB added that there is more impact when giving positive messages and it is also powerful when addressing issues.

## **AOB**

### 1. Laptops

EJH offered to donate some laptops to school. GB said this would be very welcome and asked her to speak to the office and check with FOS on any planned purchases.

Action:

- EJH to liaise with the office about laptop donation.

### 2. Timing of PGL and Berkhamsted School Selection

**A Year 6 parent has highlighted the clash between the PGL trip and the Berkhamsted School Selection test date this year. They would like this to be considered when booking PGL for 2019.**

KH explained that four children are affected by this. They are due to sit the selection test on the day after returning from PGL. Berkhamsted School are not willing to change the date. She asked if this clash could be considered when booked PGL next year.

GB said the school will look into this for next year.

Action:

- Berkhamsted School Selection Test date to be considered when booking PGL.

### 3. The Daily Mile

(Last discussed on 20.4.18)

**Parents have asked when the school will be introducing the 'Daily Mile' initiative.**

There was discussion about Skip2bFit being a current sports initiative in school, but GB said that the Daily Mile could be looked into for the Summer months. GB confirmed that Skip2bFit currently takes place in PE lessons once a week.

J. Phillips  
18.10.18