

Minutes from Parents' Forum Meeting 6

Held on 1.7.15

Present:

Parent	Year groups represented
Ciaran Dodd	Years 3, 1
Ellie Burt	Reception(next year N)
Pam Gregson	Years 3, 1
Anna Jones	Assistant Head KS1 Year 5 and 6 parent

Apologies:

Shaun McCartney	Year 2
Sally McMillan	Reception

All members of Parents' Forum were thanked for the time and commitment they have given to attending meetings over the last academic year.

The aim of this session is to discuss the last half term and an overview of the successes of school over the last year.

Sports Day

Feedback from parents re the Junior Sports Day is that all parents had enjoyed the opportunity to see their child competing and demonstrating their sports skills, however they did feel that the sessions are very long, particularly for parents who are having to come to two or more sessions- a whole day at school is a very long time to be in school. Also, for parents who work it is easier to be able to book an hour or hour and a half session off work instead of having to book half a day. Might it be possible for parents to know when the races are for their child, so that if they can only make part of the morning they know which part to aim for as children mainly want their parents to be at the competitive part of the Sports Day.

Also, many parents missed the opportunity to purchase refreshments this year, AJ explained that FOMPS usually do this, but because they already had the Summer Fair to organise for that week it was felt unfair to ask them to also arrange this. AJ asked if perhaps this is something Parents' Forum could do, or could Year 6 be asked to do refreshments as part of an enterprise challenge? Alternatively, could volunteers from parents be requested for the sessions?

Parent Volunteers

Parents at Forum wanted school to think about how we might be able to re-engage parents in volunteering, as they had noticed that it seemed to be predominantly staff running stalls at the fair and they felt this was an unfair pressure after already having a long day at school teaching.

Also, the parent workshops and FOMPS seems to be falling to the same small number of parents to organise and run. Could parents be given a timetable of the year with events that will be happening and a suggestion of how they might be able to help plus the amount of time they might be needed for? This way parents who might be able to help with a specific event happening at a certain time of year might be able to book time off in advance or might be able to offer help for something they could do at home e.g. folding raffle tickets etc. It was felt that it would be harder to say no if you have the dates well in advance and that you know exactly what you are signing up to do.

For the school disco parents were aware that a limit had to be put on the number of tickets sold, but perhaps families should be made more aware of the fact that these events are reliant on the number of volunteers to run it. Could parents sign up for 45 min slots for example?

Suggestions included:

Could a specific request go out on the newsletter, explaining the aims of the fundraising? Parents might be more willing to help if they know exactly what they are helping to raise money for, e.g. thinking about the success of the Spellathon.

Time of the fair- could the time be moved to straight after school from 3.30 till 5pm for example, so that parents and staff go straight to the stalls at the end of the day and the children can come straight in to spend money, this way parents who are picking up at the school gate could come in and help for half an hour or so before they go home.

Children running stalls and parents coming to support them- giving the ownership of the fair to the children rather than the adults?

AJ asked parents' forum to think about why FOMPS might be struggling to get volunteers. Reasons included:

The worry of being stuck doing all the events because no-one else will volunteer.

Not being sure about how much time you are committing- could parents be told in advance the dates of all the meetings during the year, as we are in Parents' Forum so that they can plan to come. Also, be told how much time they will be required for, could have a sliding scale of the type of volunteer you want to be, e.g. bronze, silver, gold member- the more time you give the higher the colour of volunteer you are.

Could FOMPS meetings be held in an afternoon during school once every half term so that parents could attend the meeting before collecting their child from school?

How to improve Parents Workshop for parent volunteers...

Could the activities to help school that could be completed at home e.g. cutting out resources, or sticking be shared with parents, so that they can offer to help, do work at home then bring it back to school?

Could items for Parents' Workshop be in on Thursday as a deadline, so that the volunteers can give a quick call to school and decide whether only one or two people are needed for the jobs, that way they would not need to come in unless required?

Volunteering in classrooms e.g. cooking. Sometimes parents felt unsure about what they were being expected to do. Suggestion that a simple proforma could be given to parent volunteers, explaining

- Total time they will be needed for
- size of group they will be working with
- which member of staff is working with them
- what they will be responsible for
- confirmation slip to say they are actually needed, as sometimes you volunteer, teacher says thanks we need you then you hear no more about it.

Lunchtimes

Food Council

AJ explained that Food Council has met once every half term, with representatives from each year group and that the pupils have had a positive influence on feedback about meals for Mr Goodwin. Parents are impressed with the work Mr Goodwin has had on children trying new foods and the cooking sessions he has done in different classes, for example the work on pasta sauces with Year 3 that led to a competition to create a sauce for the school meals.

CD asked if all parents and pupils were aware of Food Council. AJ explained that all classes have an agenda sent in the register the week of the Food Council meeting, which is discussed with the class and the feedback notes are brought to the Food Council Meetings. AJ explained that Mr Goodwin was arranging to purchase badges for Food Council next year, so that children are more aware of the reps and can bring any issues to their attention more easily. It was noted that not all parents are aware of Food Council, so this will be explained to parents next year, particularly as the school is aiming to work on a Bronze Award with Food for Life Partnership.

Farm visits

AJ explained that Mr Goodwin and Mrs Powell are looking into the next Farm to Fork visits, this time to a local farm following the success of the Tesco visits in the Autumn term this year. There is a possible opportunity for classes to visit a local organic beef farm, which is run by a parent in school and has hosted visits from Year 5 pupils in the past. The details of the new visits will be outlined when we come back to school in September.

School Meals

Forum asked how the take up of school meals is going. AJ explained that meals are continuing to prove popular in all year groups and that Mr Goodwin has asked Food Council

to talk to their classes about how we can improve the look of the serving area. Mr Goodwin has also asked for a display board in the hall where he can create displays of different aspects of healthy eating and the ingredients used to make some of the meals on the rota. Parents wanted to thank Mr Goodwin for his hard work and the positive effect he has had on pupils food choices at home as well as in school.

Parents to lunch sessions

Parents love the 'bring your parent to lunch' sessions. Overall, parents felt that this is such a positive experience, that children are all very proud of their work and it is lovely to be able to see them in the classroom.

Could parents just be reminded that once they have been into the classroom and eaten dinner that the session is finished, as some of the younger children rush their dinner because they think that you can come out to play in the playground with them. This could be said at the beginning of the session so that parents are aware and perhaps at the new Reception parents meeting?

Healthy Living Week

Feedback from parents was that this week was a real success. The parents all liked how the body was looked at as a whole, not just food, and how the effect of food and exercise was made clear to children. They felt that it has had a positive impact on the children's attitudes at home, as pupils are now understand how food such as chicken gives us protein and what the body uses this for, and that it has helped change habits e.g. which types of cereal their child is choosing, as they are now checking for the sugar content in products. Also, it has become easier to explain why one ice-cream on a hot day is enough and cannot be eaten in addition to a fizzy drink for example. The activities linked to Healthy Eating on the Learning Platform proved to be very popular with children. They are all looking forward to next year.

Stationery for School- Junior pupils

Parents in Forum all asked about why pupils in the junior classes have to purchase their own stationery? They felt that this is an extra cost that should be met by school and wondered if it is due to budget issues then could some of the FOMPS money go to pay for stationery before it is used to pay for other fundraising issues in school. This is an issue that is regularly discussed at the school gate and Forum felt needed addressing.

There were other suggestions:

1. Could parents purchase items only from the school office, as surely this would be cheaper to buy in bulk then pass on the savings to children rather than getting children to go out and parents buy it for them?
2. Could there be a stationery day once a week where pupils can come to purchase items from the school office, as sometimes there is a large queue and children are told to return to class without purchasing their items, particularly if they are quiet children.

3. Could school provide a pencil case with items in it (with school logo) at a cost price at the beginning of the year, so all children have the same items rather than there being a competition to purchase more expensive/ newer pencil cases, pens etc.
4. Could parents be asked to contribute towards the cost of stationery at the beginning of the year, e.g. £5 -£10, then school just buys everything that the children need.
5. Could Junior staff have a small selection of stationery items in their classrooms which pupils can purchase, so that they don't have to go to the school office?

Dress Down Days

Parents in Forum felt that there had possibly been too many dress down days this year. They appreciated that this has been an important way for school to raise funds this year both for charities and for school, but wondered if there might be a way of staggering them better next year, as there seemed in the Spring term particularly to almost be one a week.

If we do have dress down days, could parents be reminded that they do not have to dress their child in expensive clothes, as sometimes the pressure is felt that your children need to be wearing their best attire, then it comes home covered in pen/ paint etc.

Apart from World Book Day, where parents felt they have time to organise costumes, sometimes theme days can cause an extra headache to already pressured parents to find/ make costumes- could we perhaps have a swap shop the week before the dressing up day for parents to come into the hall and donate a costume/ choose a costume to reduce the costs or could more warning be given to parents about when they are coming up?

Alternatively, could children do something more active such as save a penny over the term or raise money through cake sales etc as parents felt that it doesn't seem so bad if your child is getting something in return for the donation?

Also, could parents be made more aware of exactly what the dress down day is raising money for? Could a summary sheet with all the planned events and dress down days be sent in at the beginning of term or the beginning of the year so that we know what to plan for well in advance?

Pick and Mix Homework

Overall parents on forum with children in KS2 feel their children have really enjoyed the new style pick and mix homework. It has particularly motivated less academic pupils who are now able to choose a format that they feel comfortable with to present their work.

The creative aspect of the homework has proved popular, for example the collages.

It has been a good idea to get children to focus on themselves from a self-esteem point of view, as they have been given time to think about what makes them special, what their strengths are.

The halfway deadline is a good idea, as it has been hard for some parents to motivate their children until just before the deadline. In future could some examples

of good work be placed on the learning platform or website so that parents can access them to help their children think about how to present their work and the standard expected? Especially if this homework is completed next year in preparation for transition to the next class.

Parents overall felt this is a really good idea to have homework projects and they hope that this will continue next year. Is there a plan for a homework gallery at the end of each project so that the parents can come in and see all the hard work that has been put in and steal ideas for the next project in terms of layouts etc?

Finally, parents wished to thank staff for all the wonderful opportunities their children have been given this year, they are aware of the time it takes to plan and deliver everything, but it is what makes this school so special.

AOB

Dates of Future Meetings:

Wednesday 23rd September 2015 will be the first meeting of the new academic year.

All future meetings will continue to be held on the first Wednesday of the half term at 9.05am. Discussion about changing the date to another day is not currently feasible, so we will see what will happen. Invitations will be sent out to all parents in September.