



Parent Council Meeting 24.11.21

Apologies

Apologies were sent from Michal Graham (5M) and Elmari Bishop (3G).

Workings of the Parent Council

As this was the first meeting of a new school year, John explained how the council works and introductions were made. The council meets termly and acts as a conduit for ideas, suggestions and concerns from parents to the school. It has affected a lot of changes since its implementation and is a very powerful tool. The school often uses volunteers from the council to give advice and opinions on parts of school life such as the new website and school policies.

Permission was given by all councillors present to share their email addresses on the website so that parents/carers can contact them this way if needed.

Mary Poppins

The question was raised as to whether there would be an opportunity for those not in the company to play a part in the production.

Beyond the company there are many roles that will come about over the coming months – at present we are in the very early stages but there will be children needed for a choir (hopefully), to help backstage, work on scenery, act as technicians/lighting assistants and to work at front of house.

PE Sessions

Can we keep PE sessions consistent and not change these at half term?

Unfortunately this would not be possible – PE is on an alternating system as part of our PPA (Planning, Preparation and Assessment time for teachers) cover, when children receive half a term of specialist PE teaching and this then alternates with half a term of specialist computing learning.

After School Club

The junior school is unable to run an after school club due to the large number of specialist clubs that take place after school – these make use of all of our spaces and we would have to lose these as a result. We also do not have access to a kitchen to provide the food that would be needed. The after school club provision used to be organised via 'Leigh Village' in the dining hall but then the infant school took this on themselves and we continued to manage the breakfast club provision for both schools. Due to space limitations, the infant school are currently only open to infant children, but will invite juniors when they are able. It was suggested that parents get in touch with the infant school directly to find out more information.

Club Participation/Selection

The children's participation in clubs is monitored annually and we use this information to help us 'select' children for clubs. We have decided to do this in December this year – the information we

get will be passed to class teachers so that they can prioritise children with low participation when choosing children for the next lot of clubs that will start after Christmas.

There will be more opportunities for children in lower school to attend clubs in the spring term when the new pupil-led clubs begin. There are usually less opportunities for Year 3 to attend clubs during the school day because they need to settle and find the day very tiring – even without clubs! Some clubs are open to all but others are for those with a certain talent or skill.

Vocational Opportunities v Core Subjects

Computing is on an alternating timetable with PE during activity afternoons so the children will pick this back up again. Computing is also taught throughout the curriculum, in all subjects. Some subjects, such as art or design technology, may not be taught weekly and may be blocked across two/three weeks – this allows the skills to develop and for children to work in a focused manner on a project. These subjects are carefully planned throughout the school year to ensure that our curriculum is broad and balanced.

Class Sizes

In the infant school, there is a government ceiling of 30 placed on class sizes – however there is no ceiling in the junior school. We use a PAN (Published Admission Number), which is negotiated with the local authority (Southend) – this is based on local need. Our current PAN is 128, which includes the 120 from WLIS plus 8 casual admissions. The PAN in Years 4, 5 and 6 is 132, as more places were required locally. If children leave, we are obliged to take on a child that is on the waiting list. We can also adjust our PAN based on individual need – for example if a particular child needs to attend our school due to their personal/individual/special educational needs.

Multiple Parents/Carers Getting Information from ParentPay

At present only one parent or carer can receive the texts and emails from ParentPay. The school have looked into this and this is due to the current set up, with lots of messages being sent via text.

We will now be using mainly emails to send out all notices, letters and information – so parent councillors were asked to encourage the parents in their class to look out for these emails, rather than texts. The office staff will begin the process of transferring over the second contact for each child so that both parents/carers receive all emails. This will take a while so please bear with us.

Playtimes – Additional Activities

The morning break is a very quick fifteen minutes so it would not be possible to set up activities during this time. However, there is much on offer at lunchtimes to support the children and ensure they have a good lunchtime experience. This includes our Playground Squad, made up of trained Year 5 pupils who get different equipment out every lunchtime and encourage children to join in. Our midday assistants also get out different games and play equipment for the children to play with every day.

Acronyms and Ambiguous Communications for New Parents

It was agreed that we need to check our communications more carefully with the eye of someone new to the school – examples given included the cross country letter where the location for drop off was assumed knowledge.

Maths Books

An opportunity to meet with maths teachers will be given in the spring term when we hold our 'maths drop in'.

If parents let children know that they will be coming into school that evening, children can go and fetch their maths book to have ready. However, it is very difficult to look at a maths book and know what you are looking at – even as teachers!

Playground Refurbishment Update

Mrs Woolf asked the council to pass on thanks for the parents' and carers' amazing generosity – we now have a good sum of money that we are using to improve the playground. We have plans that have been made using the children's ideas and we have received quotes from a company, although we now need to get some more. There are delays with raw materials and equipment, which is why the process is taking longer than we had hoped.

The 'Reading Nook' is now in place and there should be some changes starting in the spring term – the changes will be gradual rather than all at once.

Spellings/Showbie

Teachers will be reminded to add the weekly spellings to Showbie and we will also ask for this to be updated with the current Sir Linkalot bundle being used.

Spelling lists and the school approach have recently been changed, and as with any change we have realised that some tweaks do need to be made. Our English lead has worked extremely hard at pulling this all together with our new rationale, which links spellings and handwriting with our new methods for learning spellings, but there will be some changes made from tomorrow. We will also ensure that children are not reading out their spelling scores, as this is not school policy.

Folders in Showbie are for use in class by the teachers and children – this is our digital workbook and these are organised however the teacher feels best. The only folders needed at home are remote learning and any spellings/homework. We are looking at a way to allow parents to only view what is needed at home.

The remote learning timetable needs to be downloaded in order to click on the links – a note reminding children/parents about this is now added to the folder.

Meals and ParentPay

Some issues were reported when booking hot dinners – please contact the office if you have any problems with this.

Streaming

Some questions were raised about the streaming process. A letter was sent to all Year 4 parents last term explaining the rationale and process in detail as unfortunately we were unable to hold our usual information meeting, but if there are further questions please do come in and see Mrs Woolf or Mr Lear. A meeting will be held in the summer term for current Year 4 parents (as long as restrictions allow for this!).

Covid Catch-Up Funding

We do receive a small amount of Covid catch up funding and this is spent on employing qualified teachers to deliver targeted interventions. The children who receive these interventions are decided

in termly progress meetings and it is based on progress rather than attainment. A full explanation of how the money is spent can be found on the school website.

Attendance Certificates

It was decided that these are no longer required. We initially introduced these several years ago when we did need to improve attendance, but as this is no longer an issue, it was agreed that these do send mixed messages and reward children simply for managing to stay well.

Ofsted Inspection Feedback

There is not yet any feedback to share – we are hoping that the report will be published in approximately two weeks.

Separation of Packed Lunch and School Dinners

The children do still have plenty of time to play together even if they are different lunch options. The packed lunch children eat in the classrooms at the beginning of lunch – they are mixed together within the year group. These are well supervised by midday assistants.

Lunches are much more pleasant as the dining hall is less crowded and the children are able to sit with their friends to eat. The children are eating more and are not dropping food or making a mess.

If nuts are brought in by a child in a packed lunch, this is dealt with.

School Trip Payment

The Colchester Zoo trip only had two instalments with a small gap between them. We do usually split payments into three smaller instalments, however we had waited until a lot longer to book this trip due to concerns that it may be cancelled due to Covid – we wanted to be confident that it would go ahead before booking. We do ask that parents or carers come and see Mr Lear or Mrs Woolf if they are having trouble making payments for trips – our door is always open.

School Photos

Positive feedback about the school photos was shared – it was noted that they were good quality and look lovely. We will pass that feedback to our photographer, who works really hard to edit the photos and make them look so good.

Opportunities to Represent the School

As organisations open up again over the coming months, there will be more opportunities to represent the school at events. Many have started already this term, but there are usually a wide range of events including quiz club, science quizzes, chess and many other sporting events. We hope that next academic year will return to normal.

Absence Forms

These do need to be completed for holidays – they are checked by Mr Lear and are then passed to our attendance officer. If you know of appointments where a child will be absent, just leave a message on the absence phonenumber to be picked up by Mrs Atkin – this can be done in advance.

Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be March 16th.