

BURFORD SCHOOL



Burford School

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Parents' Forum 1 - Friday 16 May 2008

Please find attached all points raised and discussed at the recent first Parents' Forum hosted by Mrs Whittington and Mrs Williams. We had a busy first meeting and covered most but not all issues raised by parents. The Parents' Forum will be held every half term. This is a relaxed forum whose purpose is to share ideas and information, and resolve concerns. Parents can of course still speak to their class teachers or head direct.

Parents can raise any issue they would like via a representative for their class. All resolutions will be communicated back to the parents in the week following the meeting via the minutes. These will be available via the web.

All issues are raised anonymously in the forum. If you would like your representative to communicate the minutes directly back to you where you have raised a particular point, please make this known to the class representative.

Attendees:

Mrs Whittington

Mrs Williams

Apologies:

Pine Heidi Callan Hine

Cedar Helen North

Yr R	Sycamore	Iwona Batterberry
	Holly	Viv McMillan
Yr 1	Pine	Samantha Amend
	Oak	Emma James/Michelle Livett/Andrew Thorburn
Yr 2	Chestnut	Vanessa Marston
	Elm	Nicky Moss
Yr 3	Cedar	Gillian Bowers
	Beech	Catherine Barlow
Yr 4	Willow	Joy Small
	Cherry	Nicola Moss
Yr 5	Sequoia	Mary Nash
	Juniper	Sabine Bolier
Yr 6	Yew	Ulla Salmon
	Hawthorn	

Minutes

1. Emergency Telephone Tree Required

At the forum Mrs Whittington requested that each class representative set this up.

The school would like to set up an emergency telephone contact tree for each class. Legally the school requires parents' permission to share information. Sign up to the list will be optional but would be very helpful for contacting parents quickly should an emergency arise. The parent representatives have been asked to coordinate this for each class. All telephone numbers will be shared across all of the class and where years are about to be mixed the information will be re-compiled for next year and shared across new class groups. The tree will require a parent to phone 3 – 5 people on the list who in turn will contact the next 3 – 5 parents.

It was suggested that Yr 6 be excluded as these children only have half a term remaining at Burford.

2. Classes to be mixed for Sep 2009

There has been mention that children in yr 2 and other Yrs may be mixed. Can this be confirmed? Why are they being mixed up?

Generally classes will be mixed at the end of Yr R, Yr 2 and Yr 4. When children enter Burford in Reception teachers do not have a clear view of individuals in the class and it is important to spread academic abilities and personalities of children equally across both classes.

This year Yr 4 will not be mixed as this year has experienced an amount of upheaval and it was felt appropriate to not mix the children.

Yr R and Yr 2 children will be mixed. After half term the children will be sent a form where they can select up to 2 friends they wish to remain with. This form will be optional as some parents voiced that their child would not be comfortable choosing friends. If a child does not wish to complete this form they do not have to, but where they have, teachers will try to accommodate choices.

Feedback from parents where classes have been mixed was shared in the forum. Although parents experienced anxiety over how their child would cope, most found the experience really positive with children making new friends and widening their social groups.

3. Bucks Learning Grid

FoB funded the Bucks Learning Grid. Can we confirm who is using this and why it is useful? Is it now accessible from home? What kind of information is on this for each year?

The Bucks Learning Grid provides an enclosed password protected website environment called Moodle which is appropriate for teachers and children. Kids can access work set by teachers, or chat to each other about projects in class or from home. The environment is closely monitored by teachers. Daily IT classes, some project work, sharing of information and pictures are possible via this website. Each child already has their own user name and password and parents will be informed what this is via a card next half term. Many classes have accessed the Moodle site. e.g. Yr 4 Iron Man topic. All pupils will keep their user id and password throughout their Bucks Education.

4. Annual Curriculum Meeting for Parents for Each Year

Some parents have voiced concerns on how to assist their children with homework as they are unfamiliar with the curriculum, topics and methods for each year. The complexity and volume of homework was felt

overwhelming for some children and parents wanted to be better informed as to how to help their children cope. Some parents found the assistance offered through examples on homework sheets, guidance worksheets and meetings such as the Phonics evening extremely useful. How can we better help parents support their children?

Each year group will have a Curriculum Meeting to introduce parents to the content for that year early in the first term of school starting from Sep 08. In addition, there will be ongoing curriculum specific workshops through the year.

5. Structured Play and Monitoring for Drop Off and Break Times

Parents asked if quiet time could be better supported in the playground, which may decrease rough play in the playground. Some parents were concerned that there was an element of unacceptably rough behaviour such as pushing, running around in gangs.

Children, particularly boys, need to naturally let off steam, but staff do watch over the children and have a discipline process which the children are aware of. This includes making children take time out if an incident occurs, keeping a record of serious events which is sent to Mrs Whittington.

The school has some outdoor toys stored in many cupboards. Mrs Whittington is investing in some outdoor storage boxes via the sports coordinator so that toys and equipment will be readily available in the quiet areas of the playground. Staff will be organizing structured play sessions with these during break and lunch times.

We will also be exploring with FoB if a playground working party was investigating the possibility of outdoor games tables / equipment such as chess / drafts.

At drop off time in the mornings, in addition to the two staff that are available from 8:30 on the playground to monitor children and behaviour, an adult will be placed at the bottom of the slope to encourage younger children up onto the playground. Mrs Whittington will remind staff of this.

6. Parent Helpers for Reading

Parent volunteers asked why they cannot read with their own children when they come in to help at school? Some children and parents are upset about this. Some parents also felt they no longer wanted to come into read because of this. Another representative raised the point that allowing children to spend time choosing a book when doing individual reading was wasting valuable reading time and decreasing the number of pupils a parent could cover in one hour from 10 – 15 down to 5.

Teachers need to prioritise who requires individual reading and are keen to encourage independence of children from their parents. This has necessitated the list from which parents now work. It was suggested parent helpers should have one child choosing a book whilst they read with another to speed up the process. Feedback on how this is working will be useful at the next forum.

7. Encouraging children to drink and stay hydrated during class time

Parents wanted to know what the policy was on encouraging drinking during class time, and felt their children did not like to go to the front of the class to drink. Some would prefer each child to have a water bottle to hand on their desk to encourage drinking.

Children may have a water bottle (no squash or fruit juice please) in class. This must be labeled and must be non-spill in design if it goes on a child's desk. A volunteer on the forum will also

investigate the possibility of sourcing a non-spill / non-toxic plastic school water bottle. To date each teacher has decided if the bottle can be on desks or on a table at the front of the desk.

8. Advertising and Booking Extracurricular Clubs and Activities

Parents voiced concerns on how information on extracurricular clubs was advertised and booked. The first-come-first booked process meant children who had been off sick or on holiday missed opportunities to join in. Sometimes parents do not receive the forms advertising a new club and are not aware what is on offer.

The Notice board advertising events at the school gate has been very useful for parents. It was suggested a second notice board be erected near the stamping shelter to share this type of information. A single list of all clubs and activities could be compiled listing appropriate year to which the club is available, day of the week time and contact information. Booking on to a course will not be first-come-first serve, but will still have a deadline. Where a club is oversubscribed selection will be dependent on which children did not previously get onto that club, or where this is a new club, selection will be randomized out of a hat.

9. Pedestrian Gate

The pedestrian security gate is not working.

Mrs Whittington and Paul Collinswood are aware this has not been working for some time and are urgently pursuing the company who are awaiting parts to fix this. The school is chasing hard to have this repaired as soon as possible.

10. Tripping over Roots of Tree next to the Stamping Shelter

This has been causing ongoing problems with roots raising slabs. Mrs Whittington will look into removing the tree, repaving the area and planting a replacement tree elsewhere in the school grounds.

11. Eliminating paper newsletter to parents

Parents who requested electronic newsletters are still receiving paper ones and not all information is coming through electronically.

This is work in progress. Those who have subscribed to e-mail newsletters from school will slowly stop receiving paper once the transition is complete. There is an administrative task to which will be looked into over the coming weeks. Greater sign up to e-mail is encouraged please.

12. SATS

Why do children sit different maths papers?

Yr 2 and Yr 6 SAT are statutory. Yr 3, 4 & 5 SAT results are for the teacher's information only. Children in Yr 4 sit one Math paper depending on the ability the teachers have assessed. Therefore some sit levels 2 & 3 and some sit levels 3 & 4 in Yr 4.

13. The Impact of Supply and New teachers on Classes

Parents in Yr 4 were concerned that if teachers take too much time out for PPA and are replaced by assistants, other teachers or supply teachers, the behaviour and concentration of the class may be impacted.

Parents are encouraged to use the upcoming Parents Evening to discuss concerns with their teachers. All teachers are allowed to have 10% of their class time covered by someone else to complete PPA (Planning, Preparation and Assessment). They may also have time to complete TLR's (Teaching and Learning Responsibilities). All teachers also need to have time to complete ongoing training (CPD). The behaviour of the class is closely monitored. All Parents will be informed what class teacher their child will have for the next year before the next Parents Evening so that they can meet the new teacher then.

14. Yr 4 Feedback on Parent Assembly

The Parents of Yr 4 were recently invited to share an assembly with their children and thought this was wonderful. Many would also like to spend time in class seeing their child's work as it was felt parents evening was often too busy for this.

Mrs Whittington suggested having repeat afternoon assemblies by year where parents could be invited to share time with their child.

15. Termly one Pager update for each year

*Parents in some years received a termly one pager update listing each subjects, the topics to be covered and a reminder of day trips and activities.
Parents for every year would like this each term.*

This will be looked into and could be made available on the web.

Date for next Parent Forum will be Friday 13 June 14:00 - 15:15 pm.