

Minutes of Parents' Forum Meeting 13th June 2008

Attendees:

Mrs Whittington
Mrs Williams

Yr R	Wycamore	Iwona Batterberry
	Holly	
Yr 1	Pine	Samantha Amend
	Oak	Andrew Thorburn
Yr 2	Chestnut	Vanessa Marston
	Elm	Nicky Moss
Yr 3	Cedar	Gillian Bowers
	Beech	Catherine Barlow
Yr 4	Willow	Joy Small
	Cherry	Nicky Moss
Yr 5	Sequoia	Mary Nash
	Juniper	
Yr 6	Yew	Ulla Salmon
	Hawthorn	

Apologies: Viv McMillan (Holly), Sabine Bolier (Juniper)

1. Water bottles

Following from the last meeting, Iwona brought some samples of possible water bottles. The clear one was favoured and will be sold at £2 each (1p profit). **Iowa** to check price breaks & order lead times. **KW** to order and make available for pupils to purchase asap.

Nb: only water may be put in the bottles on the children's desks, but other drinks can be put in the lunchbox bottles.

There was a discussion about having a rack to store bottles on the desk but it was suggested we see if loose bottles work – if they're a problem, then racks may be investigated.

It was suggested that bottles be made available for purchase at the Open Evening. **KW** to organise.

It was asked how to get younger children to drink the water, and it was pointed out that the younger children are asked to have a drink several times in the day.

2. Open Evening/Parents Evenings

A request was made to be able to come into the school during lesson time to observe what the children are doing, as the Open Evening is felt to be chaotic. This was discussed but it was felt that there are enough opportunities during the Open Evening.

There was also a discussion about whether to have a summer term parents evening. Apparently this is not usually done in other schools. Mrs Williams pointed out that there will be a meeting for each year group in September for parents to explain what's going to happen that year etc. which would help prepare for the forthcoming academic year. Also, parents can make individual appointments if they have any specific concerns about their child.

A request was made that school reports are issued before the Open Evening (Thurs 10th July). **KW** said she would try and do this.

There was also a request for more structured feedback about the relative progress of each child in the Autumn & Spring parents' evenings. DW said they can't compare children against each other, but they can identify whether children are above/below average for their age, and indeed will be doing that from now on for each parents' evening.

There was a question about what happens to children who get behind because they don't understand a particular topic. DW explained several strategies, e.g. that all maths topics are covered each term, allowing repeat learning opportunities. For individuals the teacher should note problems and pick them up in subsequent lessons. It is less likely that the teacher will speak to the parents unless the issue is persistent.

There was a question about whether parent helpers should assist with groups of children who are struggling a bit more. DW said that it depends on the circumstances – it might be useful if the children hear the information presented in a different way, but the teacher will decide each time.

3. Healthy Schools

DW explained that Burford has registered for this initiative and are starting the audit. They need to put together a working party, which already has a Governor (Leanda) and Mrs Williams. There was a request for a parent rep. Iwona Batterberry volunteered. **KW** will put some info in the next newsletter.

4. Conservation area

There is a conservation area at the back of the school grounds that has not been touched this year. None of the teachers have the expertise to manage this, so a request was put in for a parent to volunteer to manage it. Catherine Barlow offered.

KW will also put something in the newsletter to see if more help can be gathered. A suggestion was also made to see if Wycombe District Council Rangers/Discovery Centre had any resources to assist. **CB** offered to find out.

5. FOB Communication

KW pointed out that FOB may request help from parents by phoning the Parent Rep for each class and asking them to request info/help from the other parents. It was stressed that the Parent Reps were not expected to be providing the help, but just act as a conduit to accessing other parents.

6. Telephone Tree

There was a discussion about the variety of responses from different classes, and clarification of some of the 'rules'. It was agreed that there will be 1 person per class that the school will phone – usually the Parent Rep, who will contact 2 or 3 further parents etc. If a parent can't be contacted, then the school should be informed. There was a wide range of presentation styles, and it was agreed to create a consistent style, with some wording to explain the system.

KW to put a note in the newsletter to request that any missing parents add their details as it has already proved useful on a delayed school trip to inform parents and save them waiting 1 ½ hours at school.

Once school has all the trees then they will also test the system by doing a 'dry run'.

7. School Gate Congestion

It can be difficult to get into and out of the school gate due to parents congregating just outside and dogs on leads nearby. It was requested that parents wait further away to keep the entrance clear. **KW** to put a reminder in the newsletter.

It was also asked if the dog bin could be moved away from the school entrance. Although it is not school property **KW** said she would find out if it is possible to request a move.

8. Homework

A Year 2 parent asked for a clarification of how much homework their child should be doing as they felt that at times it was excessive. **KW** & **DW** were adamant that they shouldn't be doing hours of homework, and **KW** will clarify the time guidelines.

There was a request to have the homework always related to classwork. **KW** said it should also be. She also pointed out that hopefully by the end of Sept the new ICT co-ordinator will have homework posted on the Moodle site (Bucks Grid for Learning.)

9. Able, Gifted & Talented Programme

This has now been renamed by the Government – ‘Young, Gifted & Talented’. The co-ordinator is going on more training, and in September they will define a register of applicable children, and also use the school tracking system to help identify relevant children (e.g. more than 1 year above their school year.)

It was clarified that talented refers to the creative arts, and gifted refers to academic skills.

A related question was about how are children enabled to work at their own pace. It was emphasised that although children are all taught the same thing, they are given work appropriate to their needs. There are some specific issues with relation to this which will be worked on.

10. Various

A request was made for Beech class to do something as they didn't go to the Ashmolean like Cedar class did. KW said unfortunately it is sometimes not possible for everyone to have opportunities equally among the year group, but we do try to ensure equality as much as possible.

It was asked whether parents would be contacted if their child wasn't at school and hadn't called in sick/requested holiday absence. The answer is yes, once the registers are back.

A request was made that children can remove their ties in hot weather. The answer is yes – but only when Mrs Whittington authorises it, not just when they feel like it.

There was a reminder of the rules of shoes. As per the school uniform policy, no heels, slingbacks or open toes may be worn to school.

A parent was concerned about the lack of ‘purple’ or ‘free’ readers books. KW confirmed that FOB have just provided funds for books which will be used for more ‘purple’ books and some for very early readers.

It was asked whether more adult helpers could attend school trips if the adults wish and there are spare places. KW said no – they only want minimum numbers of adults for safety, that it's important for the children to learn to be independent and not be with lots of adults they know as parents. Also, the logistics of managing a large group of adults can sometimes be harder than just managing the children!

A request was made to encourage children to wear their hats at break time.

There was a discussion about milk and fruit, and it was emphasised that children are reminded to drink their milk/eat their fruit. There is still a lot of milk wasted, but the fruit usually gets eaten.

It was asked why year 3 & year 4 are doing a play together? Does it mean that it's not so interesting for year 3 children? The answer is that the logistics of putting on 7 different plays/shows is overwhelming, so for the school's sake it works much better to group 2 years together. The younger children know that the following year they will have more of a lead role.

There was a concern that children are not given enough time to finish their lunch. KW was pleased to announce that from September, lunch will be eaten at lunch tables in the hall – half the children at 12 and the other half at 12.30, giving longer for eating, better supervision, less mess and smell in the classrooms.

Due to sports-leading teachers leaving this term, there was a concern that sports in Burford may reduce. KW reassured us that they will continue, and probably increase as there will be a new PE teacher, doing football etc.

There was a discussion about next year's school trips for Yrs 5 & 6. Yr 5 will do a PGL as happened this year, which was very successful apart from an isolated incident not related to the venue or the year group as a whole. Next year's Yr 6 will have their trip the week before half term, and there is a choice of 2 venues being decided upon at the moment.

11. Issues for next meeting

Due to lack of time, a question about playground issues, and the assistance given to help children manage problems in the playground, was deferred to be a priority at the next meeting.

Also, it is hoped to have a dry run of the telephone tree before the next meeting.

Next Meeting: Friday 11th July, 2pm.

Minutes prepared by Mary Nash.