

Parents' Forum

Friday, January 29th 2010

Attendees:

Mrs Whittington, Mr Garner, Vanessa Marston (Sycamore), Emily Wright (Willow), Nicky Hart (Holly), Selina Miskell & Jane Crouch (Oak), Carolyn McCall (Pine), Emma Thompson (Elm), Michelle Livett (Beech), Tracy Lowden (Cherry), Kelly Clare (Ash), Elaine Prodger (Hawthorn), Angela Batten & Catherine Watson (FoB)

Apologies: Mary Nash (Sequoia), Heather Smith (Cedar)

1. Friends of Burford

Angela Batten & Catherine Watson from FoB attended the meeting to give advance warning of the help required for the Rose Carnival to be held this year on either 19th or 26th June; or 3rd July. Class Reps were asked to help organise a rota of parental help to set up, help on the stalls, and clear up at the end. There will be a rota for each class split into half hour slots covering the day from 11am – 4.30pm. Two parents will be required for each half hour slot. Children should be encouraged to help on the stalls not just the parents.

Parents are encouraged to come along to the FoB Meetings so everyone can find out what is going on, what the FoB targets are and what the money is being raised for - there is no requirement to offer to help! There is always a glass of wine and also cake (kindly made by Dorn Kipping) at every meeting. The meetings are approximately every 6 weeks and the dates can be found on the website. It was suggested that Class Reps attend on a rotation basis to provide a link back to the Parents.

FoB are currently raising funds for a school minibus and a minibus “thermometer” was suggested to give a pictorial view of how we are progressing toward the target.

2. Snow Days – Texting Process

Karol asked how the process of texting, to inform parents of the school closure on snow days, had been received. The general feeling was that it had worked well for most Reps but it had been quite costly for those on pay as you go contracts. Some Reps had used the telephone tree instead particularly if away on holiday. It was generally felt that Parents should be encouraged to check website and emails first to check to see if the school is open and that texting and telephone tree only be used to inform parents of a pending closure when the children are already at school. Karol also recommended parents look at the Bucks County Council website where they are trialling a page showing which schools will be open or closed.

3. Child Achievements

Clarification was sought on the process for Child Achievements. Children are to take into school any certificates they have received in time for presentation at Friday's assembly. The achievements are also recorded in the Newsletter in the same week if they have been received in time.

4. Uniform

Karol clarified that Red tights are not on the uniform list and are not part of the school uniform, only grey tights should be worn.

5. Personal, Social & Health Education (PSHE)

A request was made for improving the children's behaviour to be more respectful and accepting of each other and to ensure that they treat each other fairly. An example was provided when the children use the ball court, there is often the same "leaders" who select "their" team to play. Mr Garner explained that the children are taught respect and acceptance as part of PSHE which is delivered through the SEAL Programme and that this should follow through into the playground not just in classroom. The SEAL (Social & Emotional Aspects of Learning) Programme is a structured programme that has 6 themes focused around anti-bullying and relationships and it is one of the school's main Development Plan Objectives. SEAL will be presented at the Governors meeting on 9th February and details will also be put in the Newsletter. With respect to the use of the ball court, Mr Garner will discuss with the children in the classes concerned and agree the teams with them before they go out to play.

It was also asked if it was possible to have Peer Mediators. Mr. Garner explained the school is looking into this as a possibility, however, it requires an intensive training programme for a member of staff and there is 10 weeks training for the Mediators.

6. Scaffolding in Reception Play Area

The school is not exactly sure how much longer the scaffolding will be there as the contractor has been offsite due to personal circumstances. However, the school has arranged for the covering to go down to the ground to ensure that the children cannot get underneath it and then they will be allowed out to play again. This is due to happen weekend of 30th/31st January.

7. Christmas Bazaar

The Christmas Bazaar was a great success making lots of money and both children and parents alike enjoyed it, however, it was very congested and so the school will look into re-organising the stalls and spreading them out more so there are less problems next year.

8. Calendars

There are a few calendars of both sizes still available at a reduced price should anyone like one.

9. School Photos

Karol confirmed it is not possible to have sibling photos taken as part of the School Photos.

10. Cracking Times Table

The Cracking Times Tables answers should not be learned by rote as this does not help the children to learn. To ensure that this cannot happen the school has prepared 5 different ordering of the questions and one will be chosen on the day.

11. Lip Salve

Lip Salve is not allowed in the school for hygienic reasons. Exceptions will be made for those children who really need it and in these circumstances it should be given to the teacher after each use.

12. Spelling

Some parents of KS1 children felt that the spellings seemed easy and had been repeated from earlier years. Angela Batten explained that the process had changed, as the old way was taking all morning for the tests to be completed. Now the children do the whole lot together. Oak in particular are revising the 100 words that should be known by the children by the end of year one, this may be a reason why some are finding the spellings easier as they were first introduced in Reception. Mr Garner explained that the spellings are often repeated, particularly when the children have spelled the words correctly in the test but not so when they have incorporated them in their writing. The main objective of the spellings is to learn to be able to spell the words correctly when writing, not just for the test. However, the school will look into the specific instances to ensure they are not being repeated or made too easy unnecessarily.

13. School Library

Concern was expressed about some books in the library having unsuitable material for certain age groups. Karol confirmed that this had been looked into and there is no unsuitable material in the library. Children are supervised by their class teacher in the library and should not be choosing books which may have material beyond their age.

14. Transition from Foundation Stage to KS1

It was asked if it was possible to use the area outside Oak class for outdoor curriculum activities similar to how the outside area is used for Reception. Karol informed us that it is already being used as an outdoor curriculum area (weather permitting!) because the school has been working towards improving the transition between Reception and Y1. Mr Garner stated that of course more desk work is introduced in Year 1 as the children start working on the national curriculum rather than the foundation stage curriculum. The transitioning between all 3 stages is seen as an area the school wishes to improve. Mr Garner, as well as going on a course, will be meeting with a local school which has had a recent excellent Ofsted inspection and which has focused on transition as a main objective; to identify best practices for implementation at Burford. It is the school's desire to ensure that every transition is as smooth as possible.

15. Charity Fund Raising (Non-FoB)

It was asked if it was possible for the school to select a single charity to support where the children could, perhaps, visit, or be more involved, and therefore can see the benefit of their achievements; rather than the many charities that we have supported recently e.g. NSPCC, Sierra Leone books, Shoebox appeal etc. Karol explained that the class teachers do discuss with the children the effects that their fundraising has on the particular charity and often the charities visit the school (as with the NSPCC) and involve the children in this way. The school does receive a lot of requests for help from charities and it would be difficult to choose a single one, however, Karol will raise this with the School Council.

16. Lock Down Procedure

This is an emergency procedure that the Government and Bucks County Council have asked all schools to implement in the event of an emergency where it is unsafe for the children to go outside. More information will be provided to parents.

17. Google Group Page for Parents

Rachel Robinson has kindly set up a Google Group page for Burford parents as an email forum and to share information. Class Reps are to make parents aware of its existence and Karol will request a link to it from the Burford school website.

18. Learning Styles

Karol confirmed that it is part of every teachers lesson planning to take into account the different learning styles of the children in their class so ensure that every child has an opportunity to access the curriculum. Every lesson is differentiated and all lesson plans are checked.

19. Lunchtime Supervision

More Lunchtime Supervisors would be beneficial to ensure there is improved supervision at lunchtimes. The school has placed an advertisement for more Supervisors but it is a difficult position to fill due to the nature of the working hours. It was suggested that the school uses the parents as a network to find people locally.

20. School Position on SATS Boycott

There has been some speculation in the press recently of a possible boycott of the SATS tests by some of the Teachers and Head Teachers Unions. Karol confirmed that the Head Teachers Union has not asked its members to vote yet and if they did vote in favour of a boycott it would then be her personal decision, not a school decision, on whether to boycott the tests or not. Karol also pointed out that they are legally required to do them, so any boycott would be in breach of their legal requirements.

Next Meeting:

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