

ONLINE PARENT FORUM MINUTES - 15th JULY 2020

In attendance:

Jo James – Co-Chair
Jo Blondin – Secretary
Cate Gregory – Head of School
Laura Watts – Deputy Head
Mary Capocci – Woodpeckers rep
Hannah Henderson – Owls rep
Victoria Molho – Rabbits rep
Jo Spring – Otters rep
Stacey Sellick – Hedgehogs rep
Inna Walker – Squirrels rep
Monica Longhurst – Foxes rep
Hannah Deakin – Badgers rep
Mel Durman – Hedgehogs rep

Apologies from:

Kelly Winter – Moles rep
Susan Kinch – Co-Chair

Thank You's/Positive Feedback

- A massive thank you from Year 2 parents for making it possible for the children to have an end of school celebration event in person. You have worked so hard to ensure that, despite the ever-changing rules and regulations, the year 2 children have not been forgotten about
- Thank you to the year 2 team. We have loved the zoom calls. We also really loved that the home learning over the past few weeks has covered a range of subjects and especially loved music week! Also a thank you to the whole school, who have been tremendous throughout.
- More thank you's from Year R parents to the school for doing their best for the children in the current situation and making sure they feel safe and happy.
- Thank you for the zoom calls and individual phone calls, which have been really enjoyed by the children.
- A big thank you to the year R team. They have stayed so upbeat for the children. The effort put in to try and keep the home learning fun has been appreciated.
- Thanks from a Year R parent to Mrs Kennedy and Mr Segun. Their daughter has loved going back to school and has been very happy.

- Another thank you from a year R parent for the zoom calls. They have been a lovely way for the children to re-connect with each other and have a sense of belonging and connection to the school.
- A number of parents commented that it has been nice to see how the children and staff in school have adapted so well to the 'new normal.' The school have managed this in a very positive way.

Discussion Points

Trip money

- With respect to pre-paid trips that have not happened, are parents able to obtain a refund or have the money credited towards a future trip?

Cate Gregory (CG) apologised as she thought this had been communicated already. The payments will be credited towards future trips and for year 2 children, will be carried forwards to their junior accounts. If anyone is really affected, please email the school and they will consider individual cases.

Transition concerns

- Some Year R parents whose children have not been in school since March are concerned about the return to school in September and transition to year 1. Would there be any possibility, during their party, of the children being able to see their new classrooms and have a quick wave from their new teachers?

CG said the children unfortunately will not be able to visit their new classrooms due to the risk assessment. For the transition days so far, the teachers, teaching assistants and office staff have come and waved and been pointed out. This will also be the case for the other transition days this week.

CG also wanted to reassure parents that those children currently in school have not been able to visit their new classrooms either, so their transition has been exactly the same as for those children at home.

Parents felt the zoom chats had helped with transition and the children getting to know their new teachers.

CG wanted to remind parents that there is a new class booklet for each class on the website under the home learning pages – just click on the picture of your child's new class animal. There is a social story and introduction to the new classes.

Differences in Teaching Contact Time

- The current restrictions have resulted in differences in the level of teaching input children have had since March. Many year R children returned to school in June. Some of the parents of those who have been unable to do so, are concerned. Is the school able to provide reassurances as to how they will ensure that these children are not disadvantaged by this?

CG referred parents/carers to the new booklet about September which is now on the website. There is lots of information about the school's 'recovery curriculum.' Teachers are used to planning differentiated learning and extensions for individual children. September is not phasing them as they will do what they usually do – carry out a base line assessment and move each individual child's learning forward from that point. What has been tricky is thinking about and planning how to incorporate the missed learning objectives. This is why the school needed to retain the inset day. Topics will need to be re-visited before moving on as the children will need that initial learning as a foundation for the new learning.

CG said that even if topics have been covered in the home learning, teachers will still want to check and re-cap the children's understanding. They totally understand that personal circumstances will mean that children will have done different levels of home learning and that working parents may not have been able to manage the same amount. CG wanted to stress that if parents/carers have not been able to cover it all, please do not worry. They are not expecting us to return having ticked everything off.

CG said that the Summer holidays will be quite different this year and the home learning will be left on the website so it can be re-visited if people wish.

September return

N.B. As mentioned above, since the Agenda for this meeting was prepared, the school has released a booklet, which is on the website and answers most of the following questions.

- If it will be up to individual schools, please can the school advise whether parents will be penalised should their children not return to school in September, due to concerns about the corona virus.

CG said they want to work with parents. They totally understand how parents are feeling. The Senior Leadership and attendance team want to be able to reassure parents/carers that returning to school will be made as safe as possible. They will work with anyone who has particular concerns.

- It is indicated on the website update that the re-opening plans for September will not be shared until the end of term. If this is the case, how will parents be able to respond?

Jo James (JJ) said the plans have now been shared. CG said they had initially said Friday just in case earlier was not possible to allow for parent forum. They had always intended the information to be released prior to the end of term.

- Will other siblings be considered in the potential staggered drop off and pick up times and is a return of all pupils being anticipated?

It has now been confirmed that a return for all year groups is being anticipated.

CG said that catering for siblings in staggered drop off's/pick up's is difficult. She has discussed it with the Junior Head, Annette Hixon. Currently, critical workers can wait for siblings to finish but that is only due to the small numbers of children currently in school. In September, with 90 children per year group, there will not be enough space for children to safely wait.

They may be able to review the situation mid-September but at the moment, for collection, the parent/carer would need to collect their child with the earlier collection time and then join the 'train' again for the second pick up.

There was some discussion as to whether Infants could be dropped off through Juniors if their start time was later. CG said this would mean the year R child having to walk the full length of the playground on their own as parents are not able to come on site.

If there are 2 siblings at Infants, they can arrive together at whichever is the earlier drop off time for them. If one sibling is in Infants and one in Juniors, the Junior child can come in with their Infant sibling.

A point was made that there is a half an hour gap between some of the drop offs – this is quite a long time to wait, especially if it is raining. For a drop at Juniors at 8.30 a.m. and Infants at 9 a.m., CG said the parents/carers could join the first Infant drop at 8.45 a.m. She is happy for parents to try this and let the school know whether it works. LW said that the infant children should always come in via the infant entrance.

- Will hot lunches be available, or will it be packed lunches only? Will snacks and milk continue to be provided by the school?

This is answered in the booklet.

- Shirley juniors have recently announced that, from September, children are to wear PE kits instead of their uniforms. Will this also be the case for the infant children?

This is also covered in the booklet – children are to wear their uniforms with either school shoes or, if they wish, trainers. CG has said this is for Autumn 1 initially, but she is anticipating it being for the whole of the Autumn term. It will be kept under review. By allowing trainers, the school just want to give parents another option, at the same time as promoting more physical education from September.

- Some parents have heard from teacher friends about the 'recovery curriculum,' which they understand is designed to help children settle back to school. Will Shirley be adopting this approach and if not, what provision will be put in place to support the children's emotional

welfare when they return? A number of parents are concerned about how their child might respond, especially if their child struggled with the initial settling in at school.

This is also covered in the booklet. CG said the Government has referred to all schools needing a 'recovery curriculum' but have given no guidance as to what this should look like. All schools will have their own version and it is just a term the Government are using.

CG spoke about how much the current critical worker children have enjoyed their nurture sessions (and the Rich Tea biscuits!) For the first 3 weeks in September, the focus will be on well-being and social development, with added nurture sessions. It will just be an extended transition – very staggered and slow.

- Please could the school advise what their catch-up curriculum will look like? Would, for example, the school be considering longer days and/or utilising small focus groups?

This is explained in the booklet.

- How will toilet breaks be dealt with?

CG said that the toilets have been and will continue to be cleaned lots each day. The children in years 1 and 2 will have to go with an adult due to the need for doors to be kept open for ventilation. The children currently in school love going in little groups and quickly got used to the changes. The children will be encouraged to go to the toilet at break and lunch times but will of course be able to go at other times if needed.

- Will any additional support be put in place to help support children who will be returning to school but may be feeling particularly anxious about being back in the school environment/surrounded by people after prolonged shielding? What will any such support look like?

CG said they hope that the carefully planned transition, holiday pack and the booklet will help. If children are still anxious, the school has access to lots of other nurture resources. From September, emotional literacy (ELSA) sessions can re-commence. Some sessions may have to be through zoom.

In the past few months, the school have made calls home to support all the children and their families. They have already spoken to certain parents but if there are any other parents/carers who are particularly concerned about their individual child, please can they email the school.

- In the case of a second wave, will families shielding be supported if they decide to keep their children home to minimise risks?

CG explained that the new government guidance says that all children should return in September unless they are shielding themselves. The school will work with all families and try and address any concerns.

Children will be grouped into class bubbles. If there is a confirmed case of covid in a bubble, the

whole class would have to self-isolate. The plan would be for the whole class to then move to online learning, led by the class teacher, who would be self-isolating as well. Staff will be trained in September on Google Classroom. The school are hoping to introduce more video activities etc. If a child is shielding, it is anticipated they will also be able to access Google Classroom from early September.

- A parent said they had noticed the recent update on the website says that comments from the parent forum are likely to be considered by the governors and head teachers when making decisions regarding children going back in September.

With this in mind, a year 1 parent wanted to feedback that, personally, they think it is really important that all year groups get the opportunity to return to school, ideally full time, but if this is not possible then at least part time. The parent feels that the children need to be around their friends and back into some sort of normal structure more for their mental wellbeing than anything else.

JJ – this point has been superseded. The school have since shared their plans and a return of all year groups is anticipated.

Home learning

- Parents had understood from previous communications that home learning set would be solely to reinforce topics already taught in school and not to introduce new concepts. Some of the more recent home learning, including multiplication and division in Year 1, were entirely new topics. A number of parents found this challenging and daunting and they felt that perhaps a pre-recorded lesson by their child's own teacher would have enabled consistency and a better understanding for the children.

LW (Laura Watts) said they completely understand why this was raised. Unfortunately, due to the amount of time schools were closed, they had to move to introducing new learning in summer 2. This was in line with what other schools were doing. The activities were supplemented with links to BBC bitesize and Oak Academy. There were also some short teaching videos. These were really good and if children have just watched these they would have taken in enough. LW said they really do not want parents to worry – these topics will all be re-visited in the planned recovery curriculum.

- Some parents have found the home learning has given them a positive opportunity to understand and be more involved in what their children are learning. When schools return fully, would it be possible for the school to continue sharing weekly class topics or goals with parents, so that those who wish to are able to continue to reinforce these focusses at home? This continuity would also make it easier should children have to return to home leaning due to needing to self-isolate or policy changes in the future.

LW said that this is great to hear. Every half term, a curriculum newsletter will be sent home. This includes a topic overview and details the objectives that will be covered in Maths and English. Further subject overviews for each half term can be found on the class page section of the website.

Writing support

- A year R parent asked whether the school able to give any guidance in relation to how to help 'reluctant writers?' Also, any examples of the standard expected including the amount of writing?

LW advised to get children writing little and often - fit it in when you can. Find out their interests and things they want to write about. You could use lists or write using different materials – chalk, paint brush and water, etc. Make it fun. The year group expectations for writing standards can be found on the class pages of the website by clicking on the curriculum evening presentations.

Subscriptions

- Please could the school advise which online subscriptions they will be using from September, so parents can prioritise familiarity with these during the holidays.

LW said the school will be continuing to use Oxford Owls, discovery education and espresso. They also anticipate moving to using google classrooms and will review the subscriptions ready for September.

Communication

- Parents have again raised that the number of different communication platforms used by the school can be overwhelming and they are concerned they will miss something important. Some suggestions include that information is shared in all 3 places (email, Marvellous Me and the website), that the school could use a calendar and/or that when details or letters are added to the website, that the links for these are added to Marvellous Me/emails.

LW said they completely understand this concern. They have always said that Marvellous Me may have to be used in emergency situations, which has been the case recently.

In September, the school will go back to using the website for communications and Marvellous Me will just be for teachers to communicate and to celebrate success.

It was also confirmed that the calendar on the website would be updated.

Reports

- Some year R parents were confused as to how to interpret the marks/letters referred to in the reports. Could an explanation about what the levels mean please be shared? (check report – did it not have a covering letter?)

CG apologised for this. As the reports used the same assessment as pre-schools, they thought parents would have been familiar with it. They will add a little explanatory statement and send that out. There would usually be an explanatory statement when assessing the children against their early learning goals. However, as the children have missed some of the curriculum, this assessment could not be made.

Reading Books

- An enquiry was made as to whether parents would be able to take reading books home over the summer. Due to the timescales, this point was answered by Mrs Gregory prior to the parent forum as follows:

'I'm afraid this is not possible due to the risk assessment which is in place.

Paired reading will work really well. This is where you read any book with your child – for example, the Bear Hunt, The Hungry Caterpillar, The Tiger Who Came to Tea etc. The adult reads the book and then the child taps the page when they see a word or sentence they can read. They tap again when they've finished and the parent carries on. The child would then tap again when they want to read.

Comprehension also massively supports a child's reading and writing skills. You can focus on the inference skills of reading for your child and asking questions about what happened when...? What do you think will happen next? How would you feel if this happened to you?' etc. All of these skills develop a child's reading and would support their skills over the summer.'

Any Other Business

CG said she wanted to say thank you for all the support, from the whole team. The pamper bags gave the staff a real boost when they needed it the most. Parents have been really patient with communications, especially the daily letters at the start of lockdown. They are so grateful and honestly know how hard it is (as parents themselves). Parents/carers did not sign up for home learning and whatever has been done is fine. Please do not panic and feel you need to trawl back through all the home learning on the website.

JJ thanked the school again. She also said that the guiding principles document has been finalised and is ready to be shared. We will need to remember that every decision taken has been made with a purpose.