

## PARENT FORUM MINUTES – Monday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2019

### Attendees:

Jo James – FOSIS Co-Chair  
 Susan Kinch – FOSIS Co-Chair  
 Cate Gregory – Head of Infants School  
 Ryan O’Hearn – Director of Teaching and Learning  
 Becky Evans – Class rep for Hedgehogs  
 Amanda Webb – Class rep for Badgers  
 Lucy Lacey – Class rep for Squirrels  
 Rebecca Wright – Class rep for Owls  
 Cindy Knight – Class rep for Moles  
 Nina Nash – Class rep for Rabbits  
 Kelly Winter – Class rep for Badgers  
 Laura Honan – Class rep for Foxes (also representing Otters)  
 Peter Gould – Chair of Governors

Apologies from Otters representatives.

### **Thank you’s/Positive Feedback**

- Thank you to the school for facilitating Karen Allen to run a parenting class which was requested by parents and which has recently started. Thank you to Mrs Saville for assisting with the course.
- Thank you to the school for the quick installation of the amazing new play equipment and to FOSIS for their funding contribution towards this.

### **Discussion points**

#### **New play equipment**

Parents felt it would have been useful if the rota arrangements had been shared with them in advance, so they could have assisted in managing the children’s expectations – children thought they would be able to have free use of the equipment immediately after the Easter break.

Is the rota system currently in place for the new play equipment going to continue permanently or is it only until the children get used to using it?

- *Mrs Gregory (CG) said the delay was due to health and safety – the company should have signed off the equipment over the Easter holidays.*
- *The new equipment is challenging for some children and it was important that they were taught how to use it safely.*
- *The school wanted to have a grand opening. Team Spirit held an assembly encompassing the learning values including that of cooperation.*
- *The children are used to using rotas for play equipment. The previous rota system was stopped 18 months ago as the children were less interested in the older equipment so it wasn’t needed. With the excitement of the new equipment, it has been re-introduced.*

- *The rota system means that for morning play, one class is allowed on the equipment. For lunchtimes, it is available to a year group.*
- *Mrs Gregory (CG) said the school did not think about sharing the details with parents as they were just reinstating an old system. She apologised if any issues were caused at home over this.*
- *The new equipment is great – the children are learning cooperation and perseverance – waiting and taking turns. The school have seen improved behaviour – play times have more of a focus and there is a very positive feel.*
- *The plan is to keep the rota going – the year group staggered lunchtimes mean that this works well. The equipment is also being used for P.E warm ups and as part of the golden mile - it has made a huge difference to physical activity opportunities.*
- *CG reiterated how grateful they are to FOSIS for the funds which topped up the P.E grant and made the new equipment possible. It was a big community project with lots of support from the Governors as well.*
- *A parent raised the difficult issue of children using the equipment before school and asked whether a member of staff could supervise it? CG said they can do this after half term but need parents support with re-enforcing it for the children. There have been occasions when, if a member of staff has seen children using the equipment out of school hours and they do so again, they have had their names moved down.*

### **Pick up from Juniors**

Parents remain concerned that they have to wait with infants by the busy main road – there are reports that more recently, they haven't been able to get into juniors until 3.25 p.m. Can anything be done about this? Perhaps the first set of junior gates could be opened at the same time as Infants, which would mean parents wouldn't be waiting by the road?

It has also been suggested that maybe parents/carers could walk through the field to the juniors, which would lessen the congestion by the main road – is this something which could be considered?

- *Mr O'Hearn (RO'H) said opening the side yellow gate at the same time as the infant ones can be done but previously, this has caused an issue with the bike sheds and confusion over scooters amongst some of the older children. It can be looked into again.*
- *It was confirmed by parents that the congestion issue was a daily concern, with parents regularly feeling they have to walk into the road to get around the people waiting outside juniors.*
- *The school listened to the concerns and RO'H said that the suggestion of opening the first set of junior gates at the same time as Infants would be implemented.*

### **Marvellous Me**

There appears to be inconsistencies between classes in relation to the number of notifications being received. A number of parents who have children in both year R and year 2 say they get more notifications for their older children. They would especially like to see more personal award/badge notifications for their year R children if this is possible.

- *CG explained that personal award/badge notifications were never the original plan for Marvellous Me. It was introduced so that the school could share the learning values with parents and feedback on learning.*
- *Parents should get a weekly curriculum update for Maths and English. A number of parents present confirmed that this was not always happening.*
- *CG said that some teachers have chosen to praise the children via Marvellous Me instead of using stickers in class. This is entirely the decision of each teacher.*
- *There was a discussion about some of the issues parents have had with the system – mainly finding it hard to retrieve earlier notifications. CG said that the new websites should help – the school are looking to make these a quick way of accessing information.*

### **Year 2 play**

Are the Year 2's doing a leavers play as in previous years? If they are, please could a date be advised so parents have enough notice to be able to make arrangements to attend?

- *The date of this has now been confirmed.*

### **Sports Day**

The school would like to discuss sports day and how to run this with the new pitch. Parents have asked if the date for sports day could be advised please.

- *CG said that for the last 2 years, this has been held on the infant's field. The fence around the new astro turf makes space very tricky. The school would like it to remain a whole school event and not be by year groups (one reason being to minimise the number of days parents with multiple children would need to attend).*
- *CG wants to think about other options – possibly having a few groups on the playground and some on the field as they used to do at USH? The school are open to ideas. Sports day cannot be hosted at USH because of the building works.*
- *St James park was suggested but CG said as that is a public place, it wouldn't be appropriate for safeguarding reasons.*
- *CG asked whether there was general agreement to have some groups on the junior playground and some on the astro? This seems to be the best option, together with trying to utilise the grass down the side as suggested by one of the parents at the meeting.*
- *The date for sports day will be advised shortly – CG wanted to discuss the running of it at this forum first. It will not be in Healthy and Active week as it has been previously.*

### **Television**

It is understood from a previous parent forum that television is used as a hook to some of the curriculum topics but there remains concern in year R about the amount of television watched. Would it be possible to know how much television the children watch and when this happens?

There was a concern raised about some of the specific films the year R children have reported watching - for example The Greatest Showman, Cars2 and The Incredibles. Is the school able to provide any reassurances?

- *CG spoke to the year R teachers about this point as she was concerned children had reported watching the Greatest Showman. Year R children were not shown this. One class had requested a specific song for a dance and were just played that clip. One class have watched The Incredibles in small sections across their golden time sessions.*
- *RO'H said they will continue to monitor the use of television. Apart from in golden time, the children sometimes also have the option to watch television during wet play.*
- *Jo James (JJ) pointed out that on the GDPR forms, parents were asked whether they agreed to their children watching PG films, so presumably if they did not, they could ask to remove their child.*
- *The school will continue to monitor the use of television but it was made clear that children are not watching whole films, as appeared to have been the concern.*

### **School dinners**

At the last parent forum, concern over a drop in the quality of school dinners was discussed. Mrs Gregory acknowledged this and said the school would be looking for an improvement if the caterers' contract was to be renewed. Unfortunately, concerns over the quality of the meals remain.

Parents also reported their children struggling with the choices on the new menu. One example being that cabbage is always one of the vegetables provided with the roasts, which a number of parents said their children wouldn't eat. A parent also said that recently, instead of having the pudding on the menu, their child had been given a biscuit with sugar sprinkles.

Is there anything that can be done to address the ongoing concerns about the quality of the meals and to make the new menu more desirable to the children?

Many children had liked the jacket potato option previously offered on Wednesdays – can this be reinstated?

- *CG said that the menu has already been challenged and 5 meal options were changed before it was finalised. There was a suggestion about having another tasting session.*
- *The quality of the food was discussed at a recent meeting between the head teachers of the local JEP schools and the caterers, Chartwells.*
- *As a result of the meeting, the school agreed a further 2 year contract with Chartwells, in return for them providing some major investment in the school's kitchens. The main investment will be in the provision of new hot plates, which are like mini ovens. This should make a huge difference and mean that, for example, pasta dishes are fresher. The other schools in the group are happy with the food quality because they have on site kitchens. Chartwells are aware that Shirley schools won't continue the contract unless there are improvements.*
- *In juniors, they are also looking at a grab and go lunch bag for year 6, with stickers being used to encourage healthy choices.*
- *Chartwells have been very proactive in trying to address the concerns and make improvements. They are looking at how to support schools with their cooking/courses.*
- *With respect to the possible reinstatement of the jacket potato option, CG said she can ask but in reality the children eat more of the beans and cheese than the jacket itself. They would*

*need to look at the best day to offer jackets as an alternative – perhaps Mondays as children do not seem very keen on the burgers.*

**Action Point** – CG to give consideration to requesting the reinstatement of jacket potatoes on the menu and which day it would be most appropriate to offer this on.

- *With respect to a parent's concern that their child had received a sugar sprinkle biscuit instead of the advertised pudding, RO'H said that one recent option was a home-made cookie and this it was perhaps this that the child had been referring to. Neither CG nor RO'H was aware of the children having been given processed biscuits.*

### **First aid policy**

- *With reference to the circumstances in which red notes are given as discussed in the previous parent forum, the school would like to remind parents that the school's first aid policy can be found on the website.*

### **Home learning**

Would it be possible for teachers to provide feedback/acknowledgment of home learning projects which understandably take time and effort to complete? For example, if would be good to know if games made at home have been played with at school.

- *CG said this is not something which has ever been done. There was a general discussion at the meeting and the general view was that home learning is something which should be acknowledged at home. It is optional and teachers do not check/comment if it is not done. A few parents commented that they were aware the games their child had made had been played with at school.*

### **Comments from Peter Gould (Chair of Governors)**

PG said he had attended the meeting to introduce himself. He said the Governors were keen to foster good relationships with parents and know how they feel about the school. He said Shirley Infants is lucky to have parents who are very engaged with the school.

PG said that a few years ago, the Governors had invited the parent representatives to a Board Meeting, which had been used to answer any questions and explain about the role of the Governors, how parents can get involved etc.

PG said that every year, the Board consider the responses to the questionnaire available to parents/carers which highlight any issues which need to be dealt with. PG explained that it is the Governor's job to hold the school to account, including in relation to how money should be spent etc. They may look at inviting the current parent representatives to a Board meeting again – PG said the Governors want to be approachable so that parents can share positives and negatives with them.

Cindy Knight (CK) (previous FOSIS Co-Chair) said she had been to the previous meeting and found it useful. She thinks other parents would too, as the role of the Governors can seem quite remote from every day school life.

Jo James (JJ) said it was nice to have PG at the meeting and suggested forwarding the Governors Minutes from the parent forum meetings, which PG said they would appreciate.

A parent present at the meeting commented that the Minutes from the Governors Board Meetings are no longer on the website. PG confirmed that they had been removed as it was not clear whether they were being read and OFFSTED restrict what can go on school websites.

PG suggested that they could share information about the HAMWIC trust/JEP on the school newsletters. PG agreed that it would be good to have the Governing Bodies' photos and contact information on the website.

JJ said that the involvement of the Board, in particular Stefan Bleeck, with the provision of the new play equipment has made the Governors position more visible recently.

PG said it would be useful for parents/carers to think about what they want from the Board of Governors – perhaps this can best be communicated during a question session at a Board Meeting. CK said that one topic of the previous Board Meeting had been about raising awareness of the Governors involvement with the travel campaign so perhaps the Board need to consider what is most relevant to their aims at that time.

#### **Parking/Travel Update**

- *In relation to the ongoing parking issues, a parent asked whether the school could request that traffic wardens attend more frequently. CG said they are doing their best – the current position is that the local authority is considering permitting the roads around the school.*
  - *The vacancy of a lollypop person remains unfilled. The local authority is looking at putting double yellow lines on the corners of the roads. There would still be an ongoing issue with cyclists.*
  - *It was confirmed that the Governors are still involved with this issue and are looking at poster bollards.*
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