

**MINUTES FOR ZOOM PARENT FORUM - 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

**In attendance:**

**Cate Gregory - Head of School**  
**Laura Watts – Deputy Head**  
**Jo James – FOSIS Co-Chair**  
**Susan Kinch – FOSIS Co-Chair**  
**Jo Blondin – FOSIS Secretary**  
**Mia Caruana – FOSIS Treasurer**  
**Laura Sparks – Squirrels rep**  
**Marle Coetzee – Otters rep**  
**Lynsey Powell – Hedgehogs rep**  
**Gayle Daulton – Moles rep**  
**Mel Durman – Owls rep**  
**Katy Durston – Rabbits rep**  
**Audrey Cooper – Badgers rep**  
**Tom James – Foxes rep**  
**Amy Mayhew – Woodpeckers rep**  
**Cath Dixon – Woodpeckers rep**

**Thank You's/Positive Feedback**

There has been some really positive feedback from parents, which is shared below:

- Thank you for allowing younger siblings to be dropped off at the earlier time if their older sibling is in juniors.
- Thank you for everything the school is doing during this unusual start. (Year R parent)
- A big thank you to the staff for welcoming our Year R's, and making it seem as normal and calm as possible. (Year R parent).
- 'X' child has settled and transitioned really well. (Year 1 parent)
- I am really pleased how starting back at school had been handled. It is really nice to have the focus of the Recovery Curriculum whilst everyone gets used to the new routines. Although the queue at drop off is long, it is managed efficiently and quickly once the gates are opened. Credit to the school for doing an incredible job! (Year 1 parent)
- Thanks for efforts to settle the children. The morning drop off is going smoother and I am grateful for the continued aim to improve it. (Year 1 parent)

- Children are really enjoying school and loving the teacher and teaching assistant. They are very smiley and so kind to the children. (Year 1 Mole parent)
- My child is enjoying the classroom routines and reward systems in place. (Year 1 parent)
- Thank you for the messages on Marvellous Me to encourage the children and reassure the families. (Year 1 parent).
- Thank you for keeping children in same classes, it has helped the children to re-settle. (Year 1 parent).
- Drop off and collection is working well (A number of Year 1 parents).
- I'd like to say a massive thank you and well done to Mrs Gregory and her staff for making the transition back in as smooth and safe as possible. It has made a real difference. (Year 2 parent)
- A massive thank you for all their hard work. (Year 2 parent)
- 'X' child has come home happy every single day and you can't ask for more than that. They've tried to keep things as normal as possible whilst also being as safe as they can. Really appreciate all they are doing. (Year 2 parent)
- It has been a really smooth transition back. 'X' child is happier going into class now than ever before. (Year 2 parent)
- 'X' has been a lot less anxious than before lockdown. I think the queuing system has made the whole process of going into school much calmer. (Year 2 parent)
- School have done a great job (A number of Year 2 parents)
- A big well done – not an easy task and 'X' child is happy (Year 2 parent)
- 'X' child has been bouncing home and as always, has really enjoyed school. Always so grateful to school and staff. (Year 2 parent)

## Introduction

*Co-Chair, Susan Kinch (SK) thanked all the class representatives for volunteering and introduced herself, Jo James (JJ), the other Co-Chair and Jo Blondin (JB), secretary. She explained the format of parent forum and that the responses will be minuted and shared. Mrs Gregory (CG) echoed the thanks to the class representatives and support for the school.*

## Discussion Points

### Drop Off

- Please can it be clarified where parents who have both infant and junior children are meant to queue? A parent with both a year R and year 4 child, whose drop off time is 8.45 a.m. said that on a recent occasion, there were 2 separate queues – one for the year 2 children going down Wilton Road and a second, shorter queue towards Bellemoor road, which appeared to only include those infant children who also had a junior sibling. The second queue was quicker, but the parent is now unclear where they should be queueing.

*CG apologised and said there had been some confusion with a couple of families and child minders. This has now been rectified. There should be just one queue going up towards Winchester Road.*

- Parents are concerned about the safety of queueing on Wilton Road. In order to get past, some people have to go into the road and there is a concern that children are also doing this (perhaps not realising that only part of the road is not accessible to cars.) Has thought been given to forming a snake-like queue around the playgrounds and fields?
- Does the school feel there is anything else that can be done to try and reduce the number of vehicles using/parking on Wilton road? A suggestion was made that perhaps a poster could be put up at the entrance, requesting that the road is kept clear during drop off and pick up?

*CG said that her and Mrs Watts (LW) have been monitoring the situation this week and agree it has got a bit worse. They trialled snaking the queue in a 'u' shape around the emergency field gates but this has not worked as cars are still parking in that area.*

*Prior to re-opening, the senior leaders of both schools had met and talked about whether to apply to close Wilton Road as well as Bellemoor. They had hoped that closing Bellemoor Road, coupled with a plea to parents not to use Wilton Road at drop off or pick up times would have been enough. Unfortunately, the situation has not got any better and an application has now also been made to close the top bit of Wilton Road. The first stage will mean letters being sent to residents to see if they have any objections.*

*CG said that, to close Wilton Road as well, they would need 8 volunteers in both the mornings and afternoons for the Infants and Juniors, which could prove tricky. Wilton Road is especially bad for speeding bikes. If the road closure application is successful, it is hoped*

that the barriers might slow them down or may encourage cyclists to get off and walk as they do on Bellemoor Road. The result of the application is not expected until after October half term.

The reason parents cannot queue on the playground or field is that the DFE guidance states that schools must limit the amount of time parents are on site. Parents could accidentally contaminate areas that children touch, for example, the fence around the astro pitch. The current queueing system is in line with the risk assessment, trying to keep everyone safe and giving the children as much time as possible outside.

A parent representative commented that it should only be residents who are using Wilton road. It appears that it is mainly parents parking there and there was a discussion about whether those parents could be approached and asked not to park there.

CG confirmed that the school still have a 'park and stride' agreement with the Range that means parents can park there and walk up to school. CG will ask the office to promote parents parking and walking from the Range in the weekly communication letter.

CG said that some of those parking in the area by the emergency field gates are residents or hospital staff. All school staff have been asked to sign a pledge not to park there. The police community support officers have been patrolling the area but cones have been moved and people park on the curb, therefore avoiding parking on the yellow lines.

A suggestion was made that the school could put polite notices on the cars, including those belonging to parents, asking them not to park in those areas and explaining why. CG said this was a possibility but there was also concern about the possible conflict this could cause. We do not have capacity with manning the gates and soon the road to do it. Hopefully, we can stop it with the road closure.

As a final point, CG said that by monitoring drop off this week, the school wanted to make it clear that there is a window for each drop off time. They thought they had made this clear but apologised if this had not been the case. The drop off windows are now explicitly explained in a letter which was added to the website on last Friday. CG said that recently, there was had been a situation where some year 2 children were stuck part way back in the year 1 queue. Hopefully making the drop off windows clearer will mean that not all parents will be queuing at the same time. This should make the queues shorter. There will also be boards at the front of each queue labelling the which year group window is currently open.

- Some parents are struggling with the lengthy time between the drop off window for their different children – which can be up to half an hour. The queue to enter at the first infant drop off time of 8.45 a.m. is very long and can stretch almost back to the Range. There is concern about how this would be managed in the cold and wet weather. Would there be any possibility of infants opening at 8.30 a.m. to accommodate those with junior siblings needing to start at 8.30 a.m.? This would dramatically reduce the length of the year 2 queue.

CG explained that, if infants were to open earlier, it would also have to close earlier. This is what the juniors are doing but they have of course got one more year group than infants. To meet the government requirements of staggered start times and social distancing, whilst not reducing learning time, staff are splitting their lunch breaks – some are taking part in the morning and others are finishing a bit earlier. There would not be enough staff without

*closing earlier.*

*With respect to how the queue will be managed in the cold and wet weather, CG sympathises but this is what is required to keep everyone safe. Either her or a member of her staff are stood out there with parents/carers whatever the weather conditions and they are not looking forward to the Winter either!*

- Would there be a possibility of the infants and junior schools liaising to ensure that the pick-up windows do not clash? As an example, year 1 and year 4 children both have a collection time of 3 p.m. which causes difficulties when there are siblings in both year groups.

*CG said that, in her discussions with Mrs Hixon, they tried to make sure that collections did not clash. They did their best but were unable to accommodate everyone, due to the extra year group the juniors have.*

*If parents have two pick-ups at the same time, CG asked them not to worry. Staff are aware and understand. If a parent is slightly later, staff will of course look after the children until you arrive. Hopefully by the time parents have collected one child, there will not be a queue to collect the second.*

## **Reading**

- Parents have asked how the children are reading in class and whether they have access to reading and library books?
- Please could the current policy on children being unable to bring books home be reviewed? Some parents commented that they do not like their child constantly reading online books through Oxford Owls, especially around bedtime. It is understood that other schools, including Shirley juniors and libraries have managed the concerns around covid by introducing book drops and quarantining returned books. Is this something the school would consider?
- If it remains the case that books cannot be taken home, please could the children's updated reading levels be shared with parents? Are teachers able to advise/suggest any specific books for individual children to read?
- Please can the school advise whether they would like parents to record their child's home reading in their reading diaries and whether new diaries will be issued (including but not limited to those children who have finished their old ones)?
- How often will children read with their teachers and how will parents be advised about their progress? If children change reading levels, please could a communication be sent home, for example, via Marvellous Me? This will enable parents to select appropriate books to support their child.

*LW said there is now a very detailed letter addressing these points on the website. It was always planned that it would be sent out this week, as the first 3 weeks have been focussed*

*on settling the children. Teachers have also heard each child read 2 or 3 times and, where relevant to that year group, they have been considering the children's comprehension and phonics.*

*The school have decided, in line with their risk assessment that now is not the time to be sending books back and forth. Juniors are doing so but the children mainly read thicker texts, which makes using an online reading system harder.*

*The school's English Lead spent a long time looking into the best online reading system. The one selected very closely aligns with the books the children are reading in class. The reading levels for all children should have not been communicated via Marvellous Me.*

*With respect to the concern expressed around using screens at bedtime, LW said that as a parent, she would not personally do this. She would use other books she already had at home or invent stories. She would do the online school reading at another time.*

*LW also said that on the website, under the reading tab, there is a curriculum list of books which could be borrowed from the library. The school have thought hard about how to manage reading at home and have spent a long time looking into it. They feel like the new online resource is the best route for now and wanted to thank parents and carers for working with them.*

*For clarification, the log in details for the new resource are the child's first name and then the first initial of their surname. If there are any problems, please email them in. Please continue to use the library, use the paired reading strategy we suggested in our September opening booklet and read books at home too.*

## **Communication**

- *As parents are no longer able to have a quick chat with their child's teacher at drop off or pick up, could consideration be given to a short individual message being sent home, perhaps once a fortnight on Marvellous Me, to say how they have been? It was suggested that Marvellous Me could be used for other purposes, in addition to being an administrative tool.*

*CG acknowledged that Marvellous Me was used more as an administrative tool during lockdown, to communicate emergency information. It is now back to being used for the purpose it was originally purchased – for badges and curriculum communication. CG reminded everyone that school is not like pre-school and parents would not have been getting daily feedback anyway. The school are very aware that they have lost the face-to-face communication which was been achieved through the open-door they are proud of . This is why they offered a phone call home to anyone who had concerns about their child, ahead of the parents evening next term. They have had very few requests back.*

*There was some discussion that, although parents did not have specific concerns, a phone call to say how their child had settled would still be nice. It was agreed that perhaps parents had been spoilt with the level of weekly messages during lockdown and were finding it a bit strange to get used to having less again. LW explained that because parents evening will be held as usual in the first week or two after half term, they have asked that phone calls at this*

stage are limited to those parents who have concerns.

*LW wanted to reassure parents that the school would always call if they had concerns about a child. If there has been no contact, please be reassured that they are alright. CG also said that the first 3 weeks have been about settling the children back, trying to build up their resilience and help them cope with the tiredness etc. As the curriculum learning starts to pick up from next week, the Marvellous Me messages will begin again telling parents what the focus was each week for Maths and English.*

*In relation to parents evening, CG said they were hoping to have used Google Classroom but a technical issue has meant this will not be ready. They are considering zoom or phone calls home, with slots being pre-booked online as usual. It is likely that to accommodate everyone, it will have to be split over a week and a half. Further information will follow in due course.*

### **Timetable**

- Is there any possibility of timetables being shared so that parents/carers have a better idea as to what their children's days are like? A few parents have commented that their children seem to be doing lots of colouring and not as much formal learning, including reading. Having a timetable would be really reassuring and would also assist in encouraging discussions at home.

*LW said that each classes timetable is on the website (click on the picture of your child's class animal). So far, there has not been as much formal learning. As CG mentioned, the focus has been on the children's wellbeing and nurture. The children have needed to learn how to learn again. The same focus was applied for the key worker groups in the summer and it worked well. Some children will have found it really hard to come back into a classroom and learn again. The staff have really cherished having this time to settle them. Most children are settled and happy and now ready to move on to more formal learning next week.*

*LW reassured parents that the children have not been colouring all day - they have been doing some mindfulness colouring. With respect to television, due to the current restrictions on sharing, cleaning toys etc, there are limitations as to what the children can do for golden time. They therefore may have watched a part of a film. Similarly, in wet play, they may have watched an educational programme such a Number Jacks.*

### **Staff Absence**

- If a teacher is unwell or unable to come to school for another reason (for example, due to training) could consideration be given to sending home a notification about this on Marvellous Me? Some parents feel that, especially in the current situation, this would help to ease anxiety.

*CG said that this issue comes up every few years and there are pro's and con's. If some children are told the day before, they may worry and not sleep. Some prefer to deal with the change as they arrive. CG explained that all cover teaching is done by regular supply staff*

*who the children know, or skilled Teaching Assistants will cover with support. There may be occasions that a teacher who knows their class really well will say that they will not be in and explain who will cover but as a whole, the school are not able to offer prior warning of staff absence.*

### **Groups**

- Are children being put into ability groups for the different areas of their learning? (This was a year 1 query but is equally applicable to other year groups).
- How will the school adapt the learning and continue to stretch any children who are exceeding their learning targets?

*LW said that that the children are not necessarily put into ability groups but that all learning is tailored to meet the needs of all pupils and there are robust assessment systems in place. Teachers know at which stage all the children are at and will plan accordingly. This includes planning at a greater depth level too.*

### **Illness/Isolation**

- If a child is unable to come to school, is it better to call or email the office?

*CG confirmed that parents should call and if they can't get through, leave a message or email.*

- If a child needs to self-isolate, what support will they/their parents be given to continue their learning at home?

*LW said that she gets a daily update as to which children are isolating. A 2 week programme of home learning will be sent out via Marvellous Me. This also provides information about where to go for additional support, resources etc. Children can also continue their online reading at home, including completion of the quizzes. If isolation continues into the second week, the class teacher would call home. There is another system in place in the event of a bubble closing or another lockdown. LW said they would of course track how long the absence is, which in the event of isolation, should not exceed 2 weeks.*

### **Clubs**

- The junior school have re-started after school clubs with Team Spirit. Is this something the infants are planning to do and if this is not possible at the current time, could this decision be reviewed in the future?

*CG said that the current decision not to run after school clubs was taken after lengthy discussions with the club providers in the summer. The risk assessment means that the children cannot change in school and Team Spirit were concerned about holding sessions outside, especially for younger children in the Winter. CG is aware that clubs have re-started in the Juniors but those children are wearing their PE kits to school each day so changing is*



*not an issue. CG is hopeful that clubs will be running again in the Spring but this is not certain. In response to a question, CG confirmed that Team Spirit are not currently leading P.E lessons.*

### **Toilets**

- Is there any possibility of adding in a quick comfort break shortly before the children are collected? Quite a few parents have said their children are coming out of school needing the toilet, which is creating difficulties, especially if they then have to wait for another sibling. Some children have said they have not been allowed to go to the toilet when they have asked and they have referred to a number of children being upset about this.

*CG explained that the toilets have been a real issue. In the first week, the year 2 children especially were in them a lot and appeared to be a novelty. The children have to go in pairs and it started to create difficulties. The situation had to be redressed slightly, resulting in children being asked to wait a short while unless they were desperate. It is also the case that, in order to maintain social distancing, only a limited number of children are able to use go to the toilets at the same time. CG said staff are aware that a few children have found this difficult. The parents of those children have been spoken to and different systems have been put in place. CG said it is probably the year 2 children that the wait affects the most, due to their earlier pick up time. There was a discussion and it was confirmed that the feedback had come from a year 1 parent but it appeared to be a wider concern.*

*The toilets have been quite difficult to manage. In the summer, the staff were accompanying the children but this was taking them away from the learning and it was also hard for the children to not feel the pressure of knowing an adult was waiting for them. CG said they have tried to find the best system. She reiterated that if anyone is concerned their child is getting distressed about using the toilets, please get in touch. CG will speak to staff about checking with children.*

### **Covid testing**

- Parents are concerned about the inevitability of children catching colds, especially over the Winter months. These can of course often be accompanied by a temperature or cough. Parents had asked for further guidance from the school about when to keep their children off and have them tested.

*(N.B - Since this query was raised, it is noted that the school have shared a flowchart, addressing this point. Is there any further guidance the school wishes to provide?)*

*CG understands this is difficult. She said that if a child is really full of cold and has a cough but you would otherwise have sent them into school before covid, then it is fine to still do so. If staff are concerned about them during the day, for example, if they were to go a bit floppy or look ill, school would take their temperature or of course call home.*

*If, on the other hand, a child does not have a runny nose or sore throat but they have a new continuous cough / temperature then CG stated that parents should call the covid advice line to take the advice from the medical teams. CG said staff are aware that children are likely to*

*catch colds. LW said that parents should also trust their instincts and they will usually know whether their child has a cold and an associated little tickly cough or something more.*

*CG confirmed that parents should follow the covid flow chart on the website, which should assist them if they are unsure what to do.*

### **Temperature checks**

- It is understood that some classes in juniors have had their temperatures checked, which has caused parents anxiety. Has this also been the case in the Infants school? If not, can the school envisage any circumstances when that might be required?

*CG said this was because there was one class in juniors with lots of coughs and colds so they were double checking. There is no requirement to temperature check. It is not normal practise. It may be necessary in some situations, but staff would have to use their instincts.*

### **Social Distancing**

- Although parents understand the importance of social distancing and hand washing, it is understood that some children are finding being constantly reminded about this hard and it is causing them to feel that they are in trouble.

*LW said that no child would be in trouble for forgetting the new rules. They have been incorporated carefully and are called 'rainbow rules.' The children are able to play alongside each other but are reminded not to make physical contact – hand to hand, face to face etc. LW said staff appreciate that it is difficult. The children have been great and are in fact seen reminding the staff at times!*

### **Pick ups**

- Would it be possible to combine pick-ups for siblings in the same way as happens at drop off? This may well have already been considered but it would reduce the number of people waiting around outside school to pick up another child.

*(N.B – This possibility was discussed at the last parent forum and Mrs Gregory said it would be kept under review. Is the school able to give any further feedback on this issue?)*

*CG said they are constantly reviewing this because of the learning time which they are not allowed to reduce and the government guidance, it is currently not possible.*

### **Communication**

- Although it is appreciated that the office staff are very busy and this is certainly not the usual situation, a few parents have found that recent emails they have sent have not been responded to or acknowledged. Please could this be addressed?

*CG said she will talk to the office as they are usually really efficient. If a delay has happened, CG apologises. She said that if an email has not been replied to, please do not be afraid to re-send it.*

### **Curriculum topics**

- Parents are keen to know what their children are learning in school each week, including key concepts in areas such as Phonics and Maths. If these could be shared, it would assist parents to continue supporting their children's learning at home.

*CG said that all the curriculum newsletters are coming out tomorrow in line with moving towards more formal learning next week.*

### **Curriculum Evening**

- Is there a plan to have any virtual curriculum evenings this term? Parents have found these really useful when held previously. It would be great if any presentations/slides could be recorded or shared and made available for everyone to access and refer back to at a later date. It was also suggested that the curriculum evenings could be followed up by virtual zoom sessions, perhaps per class, where parents/carers could ask any further questions.

*LW said that all the normal curriculum evenings will be happening but they will be virtual and will be uploaded to the website before half term. Parents/carers can email if they have any questions.*

### **Curriculum Adaptations**

- Please could the school advise how the curriculum has/will be adapted this year to take into account the impact of school closures due to lockdown?

*LW said that the school are currently focussing on the recovery curriculum. It involves too much to detail here but is at the forefront of their minds. If parents/carers have any personal questions or concerns about their child's catch-up. Please email in.*

*A question was asked about whether year R would get the usual lists of sounds and tricky words? LW said that there is a section about reading on the website and the phonics expectations are set out within this CG said the year 1 curriculum evening will focus on phonics and the test at the end of year 1.*

*CG later confirmed that the year 2 children who missed their phonics test due to lockdown will take this in Autumn 2.*

### **Lost Property**

- Please could the school advise where any lost property is now and how and when parents can come and check for lost items.

*CG said that they are unable to store lost property as was the case pre-covid. Please make sure that everything is named so it can get back to your child if lost. If your child has lost anything specific, you could send an email to Karen Allen, who is based in the community room to see if she has seen it.*

### **Any Other Business**

There were 2 additional items which CG had pre-approved:

1. Could consideration be given to reviewing the policy of children not being able to bring bags into school please? Many parents are reporting their children are struggling to carry packed lunches, water bottles and coats etc. It is understood that some children have been bringing bags in recently so please could the school's position be clarified?

*CG apologised but that some of the Year R's had brought their bookbags and with everything else they had to deal with she had let them take them in. On reflection now we are a few weeks in we are happy to go back to children bringing a small bag but this has to be small as it will be kept on/by their chair (as Year 1 and 2 are unable to use their coat pegs). It was highlighted that the children must be able to pack it themselves, as often what happens is the bag becomes something extra to carry as they still carry the lunchbox, water bottle and coat too. This is escalated by the virus, children packing it themselves. It will go out in Weekly comm on 2<sup>nd</sup> October.*

2. Would there be any possibility of parents having a photograph of their child(ren's) classrooms? This would be nice as they are (understandably) unable to see them in person at the moment.

*CG said that they will add this to the list but it is not something that they can prioritise at the current time.*

The following further matters were then raised:

3. Is there any information as to when hot dinners might be re-instated?

*CG said as part of the risk assessment, this is due for review in week 5. They will re-assess staffing, cleaning the hall etc. The current situation may have to continue until Christmas. Phase 2 of the risk assessment includes a possible move to whole year group bubbles. Hot dinners may be trialled for one year group at a time.*

*CG said they want to offer them – they are very aware that for some children, it may be the only hot meal they have each day. The school has their census soon and may lose funding. On census day, the numbers of children having hot dinners is counted and that this directly affects the amount of funding the school gets for the provision of free school meals. If*

*numbers are down, funding granted will be less. The school are having to make very challenging decisions that are right for the safety of the children and staff but affect the bigger picture too.*

*The school's caterers, Chartwells are very keen, as are the school. It is a difficult decision.*

4. *A parent had heard that book bags needed to be sent in so work could be brought home. Is that correct?*

*CG said she certainly had not heard anything about this. If children have done a colouring and want to bring it home, it needs to be quarantined for 72 hours first. She is not sure what has been said.*

*LW said that year R have been taking book bags as they can use their pegs. Following a parent saying that they had been asked not to, CG did explain that was the case but that she had allowed Year R too as the children were so excited on their first day and it was so important to them.*

*CG will check and confirm whether book bags should be brought in.*

End of meeting.

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