

Shirley Infant School – Parent Forum – Autumn 1

Date: Thursday 11 November 2021 @ 8pm (Zoom)

Purpose: The parent forum is an important and valued (by both school and parents/carers) communication link. It is an opportunity for parents/carers to provide feedback, seek clarity/confirmation, raise general concerns, and make suggestions. It is a two-way partnership, and the school will also utilise this platform for purposes such as to propose new initiatives, changes, or gain feedback on parental engagement. By working together, we can continue to make Shirley Infant School a great place for children to thrive and support the motto of 'Every Child, Every Chance, Every Day'.

Attendees

FOSIS Chair – Dragana Vukcevic (DV)

Head/Deputy Head – Cate Gregory (CG) / Laura Watts (LW)

FOSIS Secretary – Lynsey Powell

Parent Reps

Attendees	Apologies
Gill McCann (Hedgehogs)	Sarah Willcocks
Sarah Scott (Squirrels)	Hilary Rebecca
Lisa Longhurst (Owls)	Lisa Witt
Zoe Konn (Otters)	Sarah Whicher
Colette Thorp (CT) (Foxes)	Katy Durston
Gayle Doulton (Woodpeckers)	Jo James
Maria Dimech (Moles)	Tabytha Greenhalgh
Natalie Formstone (Badgers)	Tracey Ward
Kerrie Reed (Rabbits)	Gemma Gore

Agenda

1. Positive feedback
2. COVID-19
3. Pick up / drop off
4. Communication
5. School website
6. Administration / school office
7. Maintenance
8. Other

1. Positive Feedback

DV gave a summary of the feedback, giving special mention to the teachers and added extra thanks for all the hard work with children.

- The teachers are all fabulous, especially Mrs Arnott and Miss Chanel.
- We are very pleased with the school and the teachers all seem fantastic, very nurturing and have really helped little one settle in.
- Teachers are all great and you can see that they all love their jobs. My little one comes out of school smiling, that's great reassurance for me.
- Mrs Vogt is great, and she has been so welcoming to parents this first term.
- Big thank you to Miss Ruck for being so happy, caring and settling in my little one - she has been great, and raised an issue with me quickly when my little one had been upset in the day.

- Please thank Miss Ruck & Mrs Dunford for all their hard work and for making the first half term enjoyable for all the little Owls.
- Mrs Kennedy and Mrs Farmer are kind and warm teachers who have made my daughter feel safe and settled at school from the start. She always comes home with funny things they've done to engage her in learning and to boost her sense of achievement (e.g., Mrs Kennedy falling off her chair with shock when the class managed to read a word together). I've found all the school communications to be clear and useful. It's tough getting used to not having a daily update on how my daughter got on each day but I love reading the feedback in the reading diary and I feel confident that Mrs Kennedy would be in touch if there were any significant concerns.
- I am very happy with the school and my son's teachers. He loves them very much and says that he always learns new things he is very happy when he comes to school!! Thank you from the bottom of my heart.
- Excellent transition set up for starting school, children were very well supported and teachers always available for parent queries.
- Children have huge respect and adoration for Mrs Kennedy, excited to go back to school after half term to see her!
- Feedback from parents is that Rabbit Teachers/TAs have settled the class really well, children come home happy and full of excitement from a great day in the classroom, and full of praise for the Teachers / TAs.
- X has really settled well into year 2 and is enjoying it. Mr Hurst seems to be a hit and X is enjoying his lessons.
- Generally, we're really happy with the school and our daughter seems to be enjoying it. We've already noticed how much her reading has come on since September, it's amazing how quickly they're able to pick things up!
- I feel my daughter has settled well into school she seems happy and being new to the school I have found it welcoming. Having staff greet on the gates is nice and something I've not experienced at other schools my children have gone to.
- Overall, we're really impressed! Our child is really enjoying school, making friends, and learning quickly. While I do have some constructive feedback, I am genuinely feeling really positive about school! Their experience is amazing which is absolutely the main thing.
- Love that the gates are always manned on the way out by friendly staff to say goodbye to the kids and parents.
- The Weekly communication is a great idea – please keep sending this.
- Facebook Year R Page – this is very good to keep up to date with information about the school.
- Appreciate the marvellous me messages where they have said something about what's happened that day, like the wolf coming in, as then easy to ask the children about it so more of those when possible would be great.
- Weekly Marvellous Me updates from Mrs Vogt are great, lovely to hear snippets on how the week has been. More please, especially on the topic they are doing.
- SIS weekly newsletters really helpful.
- Thank you for enabling paper books to come home again - so much more preferable than Rising Stars.
- Great theme day for Year 1 - Hero & Villains. The children absolutely loved it!
- PJ day was a big hit! Thank you for this fun end to the term.
- Spellings - really helpful they are printed and sent home as a few parents don't have a printer, and therefore miss doing some things only in Google classrooms as too tricky to keep attention of child if looking on a phone / laptop.
- Theme days / Trips - Children love the themes and really look forward to the event, staff do a great job at making it a special day for them all. Although Dress up day and PJ day one after another was confusing re. donation and close together.

2. COVID-19

- 2.1 Road closures – could the sign be put out on the road to close the road please, as people are still racing their cars through this road at pickup times.

CG reminded the forum that the road closure is manned by members of the community and parents and no longer by the school, this was explained in a weekly communication. On some days it simply isn't possible to get enough volunteers to close it.

DV suggested that the class reps use their channels to promote the need for volunteers.

Please see Appendix 1 for email received from Southampton City Council on the subject of road closures.

- 2.2 Has hand gel been removed?

CG confirmed that the hand gel is still very much in place and the children are asked multiple times through the day to use it.

- 2.3 Several requests to be able to see the classrooms/children's learning. People aware that it has been possible in Juniors with the use of face masks/limiting numbers etc. Would also help parents to meet each other.

CG – acknowledged it was hard and advised that they have been exploring lots of ways to be able to show the school to existing parents but in a virtual way. Whilst the Juniors did trial it for a curriculum evening it resulted in several people contracting Covid. Also, with the spread and R rate for Southampton increasing, and the proximity of Christmas the school is really conscious of not creating additional risk to both staff and children. The classrooms are simply too small to accommodate social distancing.

Prospective parents are coming to the perimeter of the school and being able to look through windows, nothing more. These visits are being handled by the school's SLT and only open to prospective new parents (1 adult per family).

Learning packs coming home at the end of each ½ term to celebrate the work done.

3. Pick up / drop off

- 3.1. Several comments regarding the queues, congestion at drop off / pick up times. Could opening the gates 5 mins early be considered? This would also help facilitate some connection between parents whilst waiting, something that has been missing since Covid.

Pick up

CG confirmed that for pick up they are trying to open the gates at 3pm so people can come in early. This has been in effect since w/c 8 November and asked for parents to bear with them as they used to the new routine.

Drop off

CG explained that the current approach to drop off was introduced as a covid measure but what the teaching staff have seen is that children settle much quicker into the classroom in this way.

CG reminded that the drop off window is 0845 – 0900hrs to allow a more even flow into the school and in the hope to avoid queuing. This info will be reshared in the weekly comms.

CG also advised that the second yellow gate remains closed to protect the children from slipping back through to parents.

- 3.2. Parents are bringing their dogs to pick up and just leaving them tied unattended on the pavement railing. Please can something be done about this? Some of the dogs are quite intimidating and children are just going up to them and stroking them too, not knowing how the dog is going to react.

CG said that this is challenging as the school can't control what goes on outside of the school gates. Polite message to be included in the weekly comms to remind dog owners that not everyone is comfortable with dogs and to be mindful of children.

4. Communication

- 4.1. Several comments regarding the many different channels of communication used confusion over what to expect from each channel and a lack of consistency between some of the information.

CG acknowledged that communication comes up a lot and the new systems (i.e., MCAS) that have come in from the Academy have not helped. CG acknowledged that there were several issues that they were still trying to resolve. The rollout of MCAS for Year R is currently on hold due to the outstanding issues.

A reminder of the channels / uses included in the table below:

Communication / resources	Primary use
Marvellous me	Used by class teacher to share learning specific updates and information (such as what the class have been doing) and to share individual achievements. It is also used for urgent/emergency notifications to share messages as quickly as possible i.e., Covid related
Weekly communication	An important weekly read that comes out on a Friday PM, includes key information for coming week (and further ahead), general updates and information, references the letters that have been released that week.
Letters	When a more detailed explanation is needed (too long for weekly comms) or an important update.
Phone call (02380 771434)	Parents/carers to call to report absence, the school will call parents/carers of injury/illness of child or at other times when required
Email (office@shirleyschools.co.uk)	Please email the office with subject FAO "Class Teacher". This could be to ask a specific question about your child or request a call from the teacher. The school appreciate that parents do not currently have the opportunity to ask a quick question at the classroom door, so please do not hesitate to send an email.
Google Classrooms	Remote learning platform for when required. Will also be utilised for other reasons when of use such as video calls parents evening.
My Child at School (MCAS)	Online payment for trips (not currently rolled out to Year R)
Facebook / WhatsApp / Messenger groups	These are sometimes used by parents / carers / FOSIS etc to help as additional reminders and parent/carer peer support. They are not run by the school and any info or details that is directly school driven/related will have been included in weekly communications or one of above.

Colette shared that she felt communications had really improved. Really clear and as a minimum a parent should read the weekly comms and letters.

CG advised that the school would issue a general letter to reshare the table of channels.

4.2. Could Marvellous Me be used as a two-way communication tool?

LW commented that whilst this would be a great idea in theory, it would be another channel for teachers to keep track of which would impact on their workload and is simply not feasible.

LW advised that Google classroom allows for two-way communication and encouraged the use of email and phone calls to speak to your class teacher. No question is too small so please don't hold onto them.

4.3. Year R parents asking for more frequent feedback on an individual basis.

CG acknowledged that it's a hard transition for parents to make from nursery to school where they have been used to getting daily feedback. It's not possible given the ratios that the schools work with, so the school uses MarvellousMe as a way of sharing significant achievements/learning.

CG reassured by saying if a teacher ever had concerns, they would always speak to the parent as soon as possible.

4.4. Parents evening - can time slots be longer?

LW commented that parents evening as is, is already a challenge (but one they really enjoy) and has a huge impact on the teachers' workload. The focus of Parents Evening is to celebrate and go over their goals. If there is still more to be said, LW encourages parents to book a follow up meeting.

LW also reminded the Forum that a parent can request a meeting at any point with your teacher.

4.5. It would be nice to have someone on the door or in the playground in the morning to speak to if necessary.

CG commented that there are members of staff present in the playground, but the teachers are in the classroom to ensure the children settle quickly. If there is a need to send a message to the class teacher, parents are encouraged to give their child a note that they can pass to the teacher.

4.6. Only slight concern is that we are not getting some of the classroom specific comms sent home. I had to reach out to the school separately to access Google classroom for example and I also don't remember receiving any info on ordering her photos taken at school (but I could have missed this in the weekly newsletter)

CG advised that the teachers do their best to ensure that items go into book bags but there are always cases of paperwork going missing. All key letters do get included on the weekly comms.

4.7. Although communication is getting better it is still lacking in some areas. A video was uploaded to google classroom, but we weren't notified it was there and only found out by chance through another parent.

LW said that there was a balance to be found. Previously when items were uploaded to Google classroom and a Marvellous Me was sent out, the feedback was that it was overwhelming.

LP commented that there is a way to set up Google classroom notifications. LW to share a how to guide.

CT commented that she struggles due to having two children in different years on Google Classroom – LW to share further information on making this work.

Class Reps to support parents who need it.

- 4.8. It would be so helpful if the weekly news email could put in the subject which school it is -it just means when trying to check information we know which one to open.

CG – agreed this is a great idea. The idea of a single weekly comms covering both schools is being considered and CG will raise this in forthcoming meetings.

- 4.9. We both work so we'd appreciate receiving information a bit sooner e.g., we now have 2 possible dates for the nativity, but can we choose? Or will Squirrels just be in one? And what time is 'am' or 'pm'?

CG commented that we try to give as much notice as possible but there is a balance of sharing dates before the detail is ready to be shared which then generates further questions. There have also been changes to some of the office staff so some information may have been missed in the transition.

- 4.10. I think sometimes stating the obvious would be helpful bearing in mind most of the parents have never experienced normal school before, for example lots of questions asked about the Paulton's school trip, would it be a later pick up, are after school clubs still on, etc, probably the information isn't given as it was all as normal, but helpful to have it confirmed.

CG commented that the change in office staff may have been the reason for this and the fact that this was the first trip since pre-Covid. The school is looking at reviewing all school trips and this feedback will be taken into consideration as part of this work.

- 4.11. A couple of pieces of feedback about PE - is the timetable correct on website? As PE states Tues but children say they do it on Monday and on Curriculum letter autumn 1 says Monday Is it inside or outside in the winter? Should a hoodie/jumper be part of the kit?

LW to check / confirm the information has been updated on the website.

CG advised that we ask for PE kits to be in every day for many reasons, back up in case of accident. May need to make last minute timetable changes which impacts the PE day on a given week.

PE bags come home at the end of half term. School jumpers are used for outside so a hoodie isn't needed but shorts/joggers/leggings to be included.

- 4.12. School council - How does it work? Children mentioned classmates have been voted in for Yr. 1 but what happens/roles?

LW advised that all the information on the school council can be found here on the school website:

<https://www.shirleyinfantschool.org.uk/page/?title=School+Council&pid=118>

- 4.13. Are there new values now as per the voting form sent a few weeks ago?

CG advised that there have only been 25 responses to the survey.

Class reps to promote to their classes for more responses – survey window to close on Monday 15 November.

- 4.14. Home learning – what is the frequency and feedback loop for parents?

CG advised that the school was looking at changing the wording for this. The purpose the home learning activity is to consolidate / inspire children's thinking with their parents. It's not new learning or homework so not something that they would provide formal feedback on.

During snack time the children get chance to share and talk about their work and some of it is displayed on boards around the school.

- 4.15. Comments regarding confusion over whether a donation was required for PJ Day. What is the intended frequency of these days or are they ad hoc?

LW advised that PJ Day is one of the ideas generated by last year's school council. They will take place at the end of every half term and no donation is required. Once the confusion was known, the school sent a MarvellousMe message to clarify.

CG confirmed that Odd Sock Day on Monday 15 November – there was a voluntary donation requested and this would go to the Bullying Alliance.

CG advised that it would be made clear for every event featured in the weekly comms whether a donation was requested.

- 4.16. Several parents asking about the Year R curriculum video and when it will be available and looking for further information on WOW moments?

CG advised that there had been a technical glitch with recording and then a subsequent delay in uploading the video and the WOW moments information on the website.

Mrs Kennedy sends her apologies, and both will be uploaded by the end of the week.

- 4.17. Book day with wolf footprints etc scared some children, having nightmares about it (2 parents not in Owls mentioned this).

CG commented that this was tricky to address, what works for some doesn't work for others and finding that balance can be difficult.

CG advised that there were lots of adults around during the activity to support anyone who was struggling. The encourage the children to talk about their feeling and hope that parents have the confidence in their children's teachers to allow them to introduce new experiences.

- 4.18. which day is Library day for Owls? How long does the child have their library book at home? A child somehow ended up with 2 books at home

CG advised that they should have one library book for a week, possibly two if it hasn't been possible to staff the library.

LW advised that Owls library day is Wednesday.

5. School website

- 5.1. A couple of comments regarding the information on the school website and it needing to be updated with some more useful links in the quick links section. A suggestion of a website improvement group to be set up where parents could give their views.

CG commented that it can be hard to keep on top of the content on the website and that the school's focus had been on the weekly comms and the letters.

CG thanked the Forum for the offer of help, but a member of staff has been tasked with reviewing the existing content and refreshing where needed.

- 5.2. This is a very useful link on the website – perhaps it could be highlighted somehow to new parents so they can read the contents - they might not know of its existence:

<http://www.shirleyinfantschool.org.uk/page/?title=Phonics&pid=56>

CG commented that this information is included in all the curriculum evenings.

6. Administration / school office

- 6.1. Several comments about enquiries, emails and queries not being answered by the office, even after a few attempts of chasing.

CG asked that if parents experience this that they put it in a letter, marked for the attention of Mrs Gregory/Mrs Watts to escalate it. They can then investigate on an individual basis where there may have been a communication breakdown.

7. Maintenance

- 7.1. Perimeter maintenance of the school is required, weeds, unattended baggage's etc. The fence falling on the Bellemoor side is creating a poor impression of the school.

CG confirmed that she has asked Mr Davies (school caretaker) to look at the wall on the corner of Bellemoor Road and Wilton Road. CG commented that Mr Davies focus is the interior areas of the school and tries to check perimeter too as often as he can.

CG advised that the school was aware of the bag but were advised by the PCSO not to touch it due to the unknown risk and they would have it removed.

LP to check railings / perimeter on Bellemoor roadside of school.

- 7.2. The puddle which is always outside the exit gate from the playground – can something be done about this at all – concreting the puddle area maybe

CG advised that due to the age of the building and the fact that the drainage systems can't cope with fallen leaves and then rain. CG explained that they try to keep on top of the leaves but it's not always possible.

LP to speak to Jo James re: leaf sweeping committee – possibly delayed due to DBS checks.

8. Other

- 8.1. The milk which is given each day should be put into cups for the children to drink as it smells a bit when drinking from the bottle

LW advised that it's the wrappers that the milk come in that make it smell and that the school will look to remove the wrappers as soon as possible.

- 8.2. Do we know yet who the Foxes teacher will be in spring term?

CG advised that they have successfully appointed someone last week and letters were sent to Foxes class on Tuesday. The letter will also be added to the weekly comms.

- 8.3. It was disappointing to only have one school photo to choose from this year. Several parents had more than one option which suggests the photographers are taking more.

CG advised that it's the norm to only have one photo. By exception the photographer may share two if they are concerned that one isn't quite right. This is down to the photographer and beyond the school's control.

- 8.4. When children are collected by after school clubs, could the teachers help them by making sure the children are wearing their coats if it's raining/cold. When 30+ infants come out all carrying their coats it has been quite challenging trying to get them all on outside, especially if it's raining.

LW advised that if/when it's raining/cold the children are asked to put their coats on before leaving the classroom but inevitably there are some children who then quickly remove them.

- 8.5. There were a number of comments around reading requirements for children, use of reading records and whether reading books could be kept over the weekend.

LW advised that all of the information regarding reading was included within the reading letter which can be found on the website here:

<https://www.shirleyinfantschool.org.uk/site/data/files/documents/1B5E8B5DD6FD802C28F96BAEB75B94DE.pdf>

LW also advised that at the moment, we are asking that books continue to be quarantined over the weekend. Rising stars is therefore the weekend option or books at home. This is an additional covid measure we had to put in and will review after Christmas. We understand for working parents it can be tricky to fit in, we say little and often is best; a few pages 3 times a week.

Summary of Actions

Item No.	Action	Responsible	Complete
2.1	Road closure – promote the need for more volunteers to manage the road closures.	All Class Reps	
3.1	Drop off – Reminder in weekly comms that drop off window 0845 – 0900hrs	CG/LW	
3.2	Dogs at drop off/pick up - Polite message in weekly comms to remind dog owners that not everyone is comfortable with dogs and be mindful of children.	CG/LW	
4.1	Clarity over comms channels used and for what – school to send general letter to remind everyone	CG/LW	
4.7	Google classroom – LW to share guide setting up notification on phones / using for two children	LW	
4.7	Google classroom – promote the how to guide	All Class Reps	
4.8	In generic comms – including the appropriate school in the subject line	CG	
4.10	School trips – to consider including information which may appear obvious when it comes to school trips	CG	
4.11	Correct day for PE – confirm day is correct on website	LW	
4.13	Promote values survey to all year groups	All Class Reps	Y
7.1	Check perimeter / railing on Bellemoor Rd side of school for damage	LP	
7.2	Puddle/leaves in playground – speak to Jo James re: leaf committee	LP	
8.2	New Foxes teacher letter to be added to weekly comms	CG/LW	

Appendix 1

Email received by Shirley Junior School Rep from Southampton City Council on road closures around the school

We understand there are limitations with the current model of stewarded closures due to the need for a daily rota of volunteers, and I know the PTFA has been pushing hard to keep this well manned.

We have been working to get fixed signage installed across all trial School Streets instead of the current yellow “roadworks” signage. This will make the schemes look more official/permanent and we anticipate driver compliance will be improved, even when there is no physical barrier when volunteers are unavailable. There have been issues with sourcing materials and fitting large sign foundations in the footway around existing utilities, but these are mostly resolved meaning signage at School Street sites including Wilton Road will be delivered imminently.

At Bellemoor Road the permanent signage cannot be installed until next year as it will sit in new footway being built as part of a wider scheme. As part of the DfT Active Travel Fund the Council secured funding for physical improvements on Bellemoor Road to support the School Street, giving enhanced pedestrian priority and promoting the existing 20mph limit. The designs are below, build is scheduled for the Easter holidays.

<https://transport.southampton.gov.uk/media/1887/bellemoor-rd-feasibility-design-updated.png>

Where the road layout or legislation allows we do use other School Street models – retractable bollards at St John’s Primary and St Mary’s Primary (only feasible where no resident access within closure); “bus gate” camera at Cantell (for existing bus routes). Unfortunately current legislation does not allow use of ANPR camera enforcement at School Streets outside London, but we are doing the prep work to be able to trial this as soon as additional enforcement powers for local authorities become available next year. Currently the Shirley School Streets resident-only access is only enforceable by Police but unfortunately we cannot expect officer presence due to other pressures. That said, if someone is driving/behaving on the street as such that anyone is in immediate danger you should of course call 999, or can report non-urgent incidents at 101 or online Report a crime | Hampshire Constabulary.

In the meantime, families should be reminded to take care on the route to school and be aware when crossing/walking on the roads, whether or not the road is physically closed. Parents can be reminded it is illegal to drive or park on the road during the School Street hours of operation, even when no physical barrier is in place.

There are schools using existing staff (lunchtime assistants or cleaners) and paying an extra hour or so to steward the School Street every day, alongside volunteers and/or full time staff. This is school-led so not something we are pushing or managing directly but it may be an option at Shirley if additional funding is available. Obviously this is not a one-off cost but perhaps feasible if it’s only a few slots that need covering regularly.