

ONLINE PARENT FORUM MINUTES - 14 MAY 2020

Attending:

Cate Gregory – Head of School
Laura Watts – Deputy Head
Jo James – Co-Chair
Susan Kinch – Co-Chair
Jo Blondin – Secretary
Mia Caruana – Treasurer
Nina Hickman – Woodpeckers rep
Katy Durston – Squirrels rep
Mel Durman – Hedgehogs rep
Monica Longhurst – Fox's rep
Eve Dyer – Otters rep
Hannah Deakin – Badgers rep
Laura Martin – Rabbits rep
Hannah Henderson – Owls rep
Lucy Lacey – Moles rep

Apologies:

Kelly Winter (Moles)
Fiona Brown (Owls)

Thank You's/Positive Feedback

- A parent said they are really enjoying the variety of work given out and the games for year R Maths in particular are very engaging, which makes it much easier to do with the children.
- Another year R parent said they like the home learning and feel it is just the right amount. They also particularly like the Maths games, which their child really enjoys and is fully engaged with.
- Thanks from a year 2 parent to the school for their efforts with the home learning and keeping in contact with the children and teachers.
- The personal cards sent to the children by their teachers were lovely and lots of parents wanted to pass on their thanks for these. The children were really pleased to receive them.
- Parents wanted to again say thank you to the school for everything they are doing and the teachers for their hard work.
- Parents are very pleased and grateful that work is now available on Friday's for the following week. This has made a big difference!

- There was positive feedback in relation to the new story section on the website. A year 1 parent said their child has been enjoying them and is looking forward to more! The parent feels that the amount of work being sent home feels about right and is manageable.
- A year 1 parent fed-back that, for their child, the work and activities have been perfect in terms of level and volume – it has clearly been carefully planned and prepared - thank you very much!
- A year 2 parent wanted to say thank you to Miss Leggett, the year 2 team and the Senior Leadership Team for their continued letters, emails and messages of support.
- Another year 2 parent wanted to praise the school for the support, communication and level of work being provided. When chatting to friends whose children go to different schools, the parent said they were all amazed by the level of work, supporting documents and communication our school provides.
- Jo Blondin (JB) also shared additional feedback received after preparation of the Agenda - Thank you from Otter class for the lovely messages and pictures from Mrs Gregory and Mrs Powell about their Otter marathon. The children loved them.
- Jo James (JJ) said that a key worker parent whose children have remained in school had said the daily feedback introduced following the last parent forum was great.

Discussion Points

Insertion of page numbers on home learning

- It is great that the learning is now headed with the Year groups at the top. It would be really helpful if it could also be numbered, which would make it easier to organise when printing multiple pages.

Laura Watts (LW) said that page numbers will be added to any newly set home learning.

Home learning paper copies

- A year 1 parent has asked whether the school is able to provide paper copies of the home learning sheets? They are doing a huge amount of printing, which is hard to sustain financially and there are also ecological concerns. As an example, the English work this week was 32 pages.

The parent is trying to limit the amount of printing by reading the resources and completing activities in an exercise book but is struggling with this as they do not have a computer so are having to use a mobile phone. Additionally, when they have printed out worksheets, their child engages much better with the learning, especially as the sheets are often colourful and appealing.

- *LW acknowledged that the English tasks from the previous week had been particularly long – this was unusual and future tasks would not be that length.*

Unfortunately, the school are not able to provide paper copies of the home learning tasks. There are resourcing and social distancing issues. LW said the tasks are prepared so that parts of the work can be copied into exercise books or children can work from the screen where possible. Please can parents continue to do this?

- A similar point was made other year 1 parents, who commented that the more condensed the work is, the easier it is to follow/digest and print. Perhaps some thought could be given to reducing the length of the materials and combining documents so there are less attachments?

LW said that generally, the work is quite condensed - most of the packs are one document with few attachments. She asked if it could be clarified what particular work the feedback was referring to. JB confirmed that it was in relation to the WWF Geography project. LW acknowledged that this was different and hard to follow.

TT Rockstars

- Is there a plan for the year 2 children to be introduced to TT Rockstars remotely, prior to their transition to Juniors?

LW explained that the year 2's are introduced to TT Rockstars until Summer 2, as part of their transition to Juniors. A letter explaining how this will take place will be sent to Year 2 parents in due course.

Doodle Maths

- A year 1 parent has found Doodle Maths (currently being accessed via a free trial) a good extra resource for her child to manage independently. Does the school have any licences or subscriptions for this or similar programmes which the children could use? Alternatively, could TT Rockstars be extended to Year 1 children?

LW explained that the Infant school do not have a licence for Doodle Maths and that there are not resources to purchase one. They would encourage parents to use Education City, which is similar. LW said thank you do raising this and pointing out that Doodle Maths does offer a few trial.

LW said that there are no plans to offer the use of TT Rockstars to Year 1 children. This is made available to the Year 2 children as part of their transition to Juniors. Year 1 children are still mainly working on the grouping element of times tables.

JJ mentioned that TT Rockstars now have a new game called Numbots. This can be accessed using the TT Rockstars passwords and is suitable for younger children. It could be useful for those children with older siblings already at Shirley Juniors.

ID for Junior school transition

- A parent has asked whether copies of birth certificates already held by the Infant school can be passed over to the Juniors, as opposed to parents being required to bring the original certificate back in?

LW said that this has been checked with Juniors who have confirmed that copies of birth certificates already held by Infants can be passed over to Juniors.

Spellings in completed home learning

- A year 1 parent has asked whether they should be correcting their child's spellings, as they are still writing words as they sound.

LW said that writing words phonetically is exactly what children of that age should be doing. If the children were in school, staff would be starting to correct the spellings of the common exception words and tricky words. Children can copy these off the lists. Apart from that, please do not worry.

Teacher communication

- It would be great if the methods of communication between parents and their teachers could be varied slightly. As discussed at the previous forum, the possibility of a recorded video message from teachers to their classes or a recorded class story were suggested as possible examples. The children are missing their teachers and this would be lovely.

Cate Gregory (CG) said that, following the last parent forum, staff were made aware of the news that Mrs Hearne would not be returning to school so they wanted to be mindful about adding to staff's workloads at such a difficult time.

The teachers are very keen to have more communication as they are also missing the children. Some have recorded stories which are already on the website and others are still working on theirs. CG apologised for the delay in the stories and teacher challenges being made available – the school thought they had been uploaded. This has now been sorted out.

- Would there be any possibility of teachers arranging a short telephone call with parents and/or children to 'check in' with them? This could also be an opportunity for parents/carers to ask any specific questions about their child or get some personalised guidance on what would be a good focus area for their learning. The parent is aware of this having been successful in other schools.

CG explained that this is very difficult as due to the government's advice about shielding, not all members of staff are coming into school.. Staff cannot be asked to make calls from their own phones.

CG reiterated that parents/carers can use the info email address. Quite a few parents are doing this, including to send in videos of their child reading to ask whether they need to move up a colour band. CG feels that this email communication is working well. For a personal element, all the staff sent the children cards, which they can keep.

Protective Equipment for staff

- A parent has asked whether there is anything they can do to help keep the teachers and staff safe, as they are in school looking after the key worker children without any protective equipment.

CG said the government guidance does not advise education staff to wear PPE. Despite this, HAMWIC have said that they feel it should be staff choice so they will provide it. Staff are acutely aware that it may worry the children if they wear masks. It is hard enough that they cannot be given hugs – staff use their faces and particularly their smiles so much in everything they do.

Although school currently have enough cleaning products, hand gel etc. as they have recently had a back order delivered, supply chains going forwards may start to struggle. If anyone has access to a surplus supply of hand gel or wipes, any of these items would be very gratefully received.

Class changes

- A number of parents from different year groups have asked whether any decisions have been made as to whether the children's classes will be mixed up going into their new year groups in September?

CG said that they have been thinking about this really carefully. She will be writing a letter to the children next week to explain that the Year R and 1 classes will not be mixed in September. CG said she understood that some parents may be disappointed that the classes would be staying the same but the matter has been given much consideration. It has been talked through with the Leadership team and the overall view is that it gives the children one less thing to worry about at an already very difficult time.

With respect to the year 2 children, CG has been discussing this with the Junior leadership team. Their situation is slightly difficult as they take children from other schools so they need to look at numbers. They are mindful and are taking it seriously but Mrs Hixon was unable to confirm their decision prior to this meeting.

- Some parents in Otters have asked whether consideration could be given to keeping the classes the same when entering year 1. This may well be the view of other parents after such

an unsettling time but the point was specifically raised by Otter parents, as the class has already had a number of different staffing changes to adjust to.

This was answered above.

- Similarly, a number of year 2 parents feel it would be beneficial if consideration could be given to not mixing up the classes going into Junior school. They feel that this would help ease some of the anxiety over the transition.

This was answered above.

Any Other Business

- As mentioned already, there has been some really positive feedback in relation to the new virtual library on the school website. A suggestion has been made that parents who wished to could film their child reading their favourite story and that these could be uploaded too. Would this be possible?

CG said this a lovely idea but they just do not have the capacity to action this at the current time. Parents are welcome to send videos in and they will be uploaded but probably in about 3 weeks.

JJ said that parents/carers understandably have a lot of questions following the Government's announcement that schools should plan to re-open for Year R and 1 children from 1 June. However, they know it is too soon for school to address these.

CG said she would really appreciate it if the parents/carers of key worker children, Year R and Year 1 children could complete the survey on the website about the wider re-opening of the school. CG wanted to reassure parents that it will be parental choice for those eligible – there will be no fines or judgments. CG said it would really assist planning if the survey could be completed by tomorrow to give an idea of numbers. JJ said she would highlight this via the Facebook groups.

Finally, CG said she wanted to say thank you again for all the positive comments and support. It really helps keep her and the staff going. She said that even though times are different, they are still here for the school community virtually and really hope that everyone stays safe.

It was agreed that we would have another meeting in 3 weeks time.