



PARENTS FORUM MINUTES
8th November, 2022
18:00 via Zoom

Attendees:

Joanna Lovatt - Chair & Parent Support Adviser (JL)

Rachel Davies - Headteacher (RD)

Victoria Rodrigues - Business and Operations Leader (VR)

Up to 38 parents logged online

AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Update on actions from last meeting that are not fully completed - School's Heat Source Pump and Safer Routes to School
3. Aktiva Club – Quality of clubs and miscommunications
4. Sugar Policy – Birthday celebrations and using sugary foods as a learning tool
5. Roofing Works
6. AOB

2. UPDATE ON THE SCHOOL'S HEAT SOURCE PUMP

- Having been one of the first schools to have a Heat Source Pump installed, the school put some notes in a Newsletter. Both staff and classes were invited to a webinar to understand the technology and the impact but it was felt to be too complicated for primary school age children. RD will talk to Josie Baker, the School Lead on Sustainability, about the possibility of leading a new initiative to empower the older students to explain it to the younger ones.

UPDATE ON SAFER ROUTES TO SCHOOL

- Having examined some strategies used worldwide, most were found to have failed because of the administration of finding off-site places which could be consistently regulated for all adult contacts to be safe. Hounslow had provided funding for providing signage along key school routes. Clover Summers (Parent) volunteered to meet up to discuss a working party, along with JL and JB (as Sustainability Lead). JL asked other parents to step forward if they wanted to join.

3. AKTIVA CLUB – QUALITY OF CLUBS AND POOR COMMUNICATION

- The submission to the Forum was that some of the clubs were more like glorified childcare and did not teach the children anything.
There was a 35 minute discussion which covered the following areas:
- **NEGATIVES: Poor communication** from the Aktiva Office, difficulties in getting responses and resolving issues e.g. one parent being chased for payment without their child attending the club, which 7 parents supported; **Poor quality of clubs** and children not being taught the content that had been advertised which 7 parents supported; **Double charging** which occurs when parents are paying for a full afternoon of wraparound care and then also paying for 1 hour of after school club which 6 parents supported; **Lack of variety in the clubs** being offered including more non-sport clubs was supported by 3 parents.
- **POSITIVES** were the **Quality of the staff** onsite, supported by 5 parents and that they offered **Clubs for Nursery aged** children, supported by 1 parent.

- *VR replied on behalf of the School. VR is very disappointed at hearing of these problems. Following the Parent Survey VR had requested that any complaints be copied into the school so that she could monitor any issues.*
- *The school has not been notified of any issues with Aktiva since September. **Please could parents copy in any issues with Aktiva to VR** so that VR can take it up with the Directors of Aktiva. This will help with any future decisions regarding their contract.*
- *VR confirmed that they have had great feedback about the staff onsite.*
- *In the past, the school had run the after-school clubs but the administration of the clubs which includes procurement of club leaders, checking quality of clubs delivered, covering/communicating absences, collecting payments, setting up sign up processes, organising registers and dealing with queries was very time-consuming. The admin team do not have the capacity to manage this. It is difficult to compare schools as whilst some schools may be able to offer a large variety of clubs, their schools are set up very differently e.g. Belmont has several halls set out over 3 floors. Grove Park has limited space including 1 hall and 1 dining room as when it expanded from 1 form entry to 2 form entry communal spaces were not increased.*
- *VR will feedback all comments to the directors at Aktiva, especially the quality of the clubs which is not acceptable and is happy to review this topic again if improvements are not satisfactory.*

4. SUGAR POLICY – BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS AND USE WITHIN CURRICULUM PROJECTS

- *The submission by the parent was that bring sugary foods in to celebrate a child's birthday could be replaced by the class singing to them and having some balloons to ensure a child feels able to be special. The parent is particularly worried by young children in Nursery being given sweets but that it is an unhealthy message for any age. Secondly, is it necessary for a learning experience to use sugary foods to achieve the learning objective?*
- *The debate over the use of sugar, in a variety of areas, raised a lot of discussion. There were three points of view: one was to ban sugar altogether in school; another was to ban sugary foods for birthday celebrations as well as a reward by teaching staff; and the third was to leave the policy as it is.*
- *There were 6 parents wanting a total ban, for health reasons as well as one parent for medical reasons. There were 11 parents who would like to further restrict sugary foods and 5 parents who felt that the policy was fine as it stands.*
- *All the parents acknowledged that it was a sensitive subject with varying viewpoints as to how much responsibility the school should take and how much was a lifestyle choice by parents.*
- *RD replied on behalf of the school. She would take away the viewpoint that within the group there was an opinion shared on reducing or banning sugar. Previous Parent Forums had led to a change in policy such that any food celebrating birthdays or made during a class can only be given out at the end of school, with all children being told to take it straight to their adult. Parents then decide whether the children eat it. Helping children making good choices is part of the school's framework to build on as they get older.*
- *Before any changes are made it is important that ALL parents are given a say.*
- *RD would remind staff not to give sweets as a reward to work within school. Currently, the school curriculum works on the basis of balance and moderation in its approach to sugary foods.*
- *VR commented that parents have the right to request that their children only have fruit at lunchtime. Please email info@grovepark for the attention of Miss Deborah with any requests.*
- *With regards to finding alternative ways to celebrate birthdays by singing a song and having balloons, there are families who don't celebrate birthdays so that would result in them having to be removed from class for any visual and/or audio birthday celebrations. Providing a book*

for a child to donate to the library could also be a problem to those families who need to keep costs to a minimum.

- *RD will reiterate to volunteers who kindly bring along biscuits, out of all the best of intentions, that they should not be shared with children, not just because parents are not able to give permission but also because of potential allergy issues.*
- *Finally, a list will be put together of recommended snacks for children to bring along for morning snacks. They should include items that provide value for money as well as non-sugary items.*
- *The cake sales are run by the PTA so parents should register their views directly to them.*

5. ROOFING WORKS

- VR was asked for a quick update. She confirmed that the work was funded by the borough of Hounslow. The work is in the final stage and will finish as scheduled by the end of this Autumn Term. Disruption, as promised, has been kept to a minimum with one class having to work in the Hall on one day.

6. AOB - MINUTE TAKER

- JL asked if there was any parent who would be prepared to take turns taking the minutes and then typing them up. If so, please contact Jo Lovatt at psa@grovepark.hounslow.sch.uk.

Next meeting to be arranged during the Spring Term.