

PARENTS FORUM Minutes

Tuesday 18th January, 6.30-7.30pm

Attended by 20 parents/carers, with Rachel Davies (Headteacher), Victoria Rodrigues (Business and Operations Leader) and Joanna Lovatt (Parent Support Adviser and Chair)

WELCOME.

JL explained that the meeting had been postponed from December as no questions had been received for the Autumn Term meeting.

Meetings are not currently recorded at present but open to recording in the future.

TOPICS UNDER DISCUSSION

1) Competitive team sports - Currently there are no team sports being played competitively with other schools. Besides the physical benefits, having this in place for the children will help them with teamwork, focus and other important life skills. In addition, working hard to progress in a competition will really lift spirits. Is this something you can look into please? One more idea from my husband, related to sport, is the one mile run which many schools have taken up.

RD agreed with the benefits of competitive sports. Grove Park is part of a group of schools who take part in local team sports and competitions with a company who organises these across the local authority called "Sport Impact". However, due to Covid-19, these competitions have been cancelled. A variety of competitions were available previously for participation by different year groups. Indoor and outdoor Athletics, netball, football, tag rugby, swimming, long distance running. Some were for Key Stage 1 but mainly for Key Stage 2. And prior to Sports Impact, a variety of events had been organised by Cavendish School.

Mr Rick (PE Teacher) is attending a conference in which Sports Impact will discuss competitions and their future plans. Hounslow is committed to returning to team sports. The school is using PE lessons to build competitive skills.

Question: Could competitions be organised between the four houses within the school?

Answer: RD said that she would talk Mr Rick. The children had already fed back their enjoyment of house events through the School Council.

Question: How can the school provide opportunities for other sports to encourage children to try/enjoy other sport e.g. Hockey etc?

Answer: JL will highlight some other sports in the local community using her newsletter. In previous years, professional cricket and tennis coaches came into school to teach the children during their PE lessons. The school always buys the service of external companies during "Healthy Schools" week in May and this will continue this year.

The "Daily Mile" initiative has been considered. However, due to the way that learning is timetabled using the outside areas (for the focus on Outdoor Learning and for PE), there is no room currently for it to be provided.

Question: Could it be trialled over "Healthy Schools" week?

Answer: This could be explored in the future. The school already has a daily workout in the playground every morning during Healthy Schools' week, which the children enjoy and has been a great success.

2) Celebrating diversity more - Last month was Diwali and my son informed me that the teacher read the whole class a Diwali story and explained how it was celebrated. The result of this was magnificent. Many children in the class, regardless of creed, lit a candle in the evening during their family meal. Can we please do more of this across other areas to continue celebrating how diverse we are and crucially being inclusive. I would encourage the school to get ideas directly from parents on this as each family will have different ties to diversity.

The diversity of the school community changes over time, so the school reflects this within the curriculum to ensure that diversity is included all the time. For example, artists of different genders, cultures and disabilities. The RE syllabus has also been updated this year to include a wider coverage of religions and places of worship, to deepen the understanding of how people worship differently.

Question: Could parents suggest further events and add these to the school calendar, to be shared with the community? An online survey could be used to ask parents about further cultural events.

Answer: Yes, this question could definitely be incorporated into the annual parent survey.

Point: The teacher workforce is not very diverse, although there is better representation amongst the teaching assistants.

Response: The school has a diverse leadership team which is made up of men, women, different ages and a variety of ethnicities. The school is committed to equal opportunities and this is a key part of the recruitment process. On the day of interviews the school will always appoint the strongest candidate.

Question: Could an Equalities and Diversity Group be set up amongst the staff?

Answer: Although the school is relatively small, it could be proposed. Staff surveys include questions on diversity for staff input and this has not been raised as an issue.

Question: Is there a diverse enough range of books for both students and teachers available?

Answer: The English Leader has been looking at both the school library and class book corners by auditing both, covering breadth of gender roles, culture, background etc. A Voice Panel has also been carried out with some children. Literature and genres will always need to be updated to reflect the school and wider context, to ensure diversity is not just 'a moment in time'. It is important to reflect those children from multi-racial backgrounds, to ensure that they can celebrate all aspects of their culture.

Point: Children need to be able to see themselves reflected in books. Anything that can promote meaningful discussions and communication at school and at home.

Response: The schools "Reading for Pleasure" commitment means that teachers are also reading Children's Literature. Aspirations need to be meaningful and ambitious for everyone. The school would be happy to encourage books, literature etc from families to encourage their diversity and experiences. As long as the books are of good quality. Thanks to the funding provided by the PTA (Parent Teacher Association) it means that this year the school can buy more books than normal. The school asked that parents do not bring books to school due to the time it can take to audit the quality of texts. Instead, school will reach out to parents if there is a particular type of genre/book we need.

3) Climate change - It would be good to get more visibility on how the school is approaching this and teaching the children the different ways we can all contribute. A big area where we can really make an impact as a community.

Josie Baker, Year 4 teacher, leads on Sustainability within the school and has a real passion for all aspects. She has, and will continue to, embed Sustainability both within the curriculum formally as well as across the school community.

- ✓ She has set up additional recycling initiatives in school, so that we can reuse and recycle what we can (pens, plastic etc).
- ✓ During 'Walk to School Week', 'Road Safety Week', 'Healthy Schools Week' etc, the whole school goes through safer and more sustainable travel options.
- ✓ Launched two years ago by Johnny Hibbert, the ECO Warriors (composed of students) will be helping the school to further embrace green ideas. They will also be helping to implement any related initiatives that come out of the School Council.
- ✓ Reception Bikes have been serviced and a Bikeability course has been booked for Year 5 and Year 6 to encourage sustainable travel.

Although not officially on the curriculum, Climate Change is taught in a cross-curricular way in many subjects. We talk about it when we can, such as recycled paper, winter decorations and card boxes for Picasso pictures. The school are also looking to reinstate regular litter picks around the school and local area, recycling those items that can be.

Sami Taylor, through her role with Outdoor Learning, is also leading staff on how children can take ownership of their immediate environment.

Question: What would be the school's view on children who attend organised protests against Climate Change?

Answer: The Local Authority would deem it an unauthorised absence. The school would encourage children to lead on assemblies, as they have in the past, with one having been initiated recently by Year 6. The school will respond to children's concerns.

Point: If the school are looking for further schemes to recycle, TERRACYCLE.COM recycle glue sticks.

Question: Have all the children been educated on the school new Groundsource Heat Pump?

Answer: Year 6 have been given some information on it but RD will ask Brian Hardman (Site Manager) if he could talk about it to the whole school. It has also been promoted to other schools and was an article in the school newsletter.

Question: With the current energy crisis, many families may be facing hard choices between energy or food. Can the school and/or parents who are in a position to help, work with those families to ensure all children have access to healthy school lunches?

Answer: The school uses discretion. Pupil Premium (PP) funds are used to provide healthy snacks, with those families eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) still receiving free vouchers during school holidays. Those who are vulnerable, but may not qualify for FSM, are addressed on an individual need basis. All families are encouraged to apply for FSM through the local council.

4) Could the school allow (and even encourage) the children to walk on their own to school to help develop a sense of responsibility and independence, as is common in other countries such as Germany. My son is in year 2 and as parents we would be comfortable with him learning this responsibility and walking alone on occasion, however I understand it is forbidden until the children are much older.

The current school policy is to allow Year 5 and Year 6 children to walk independently, only with parental consent. This is largely to do with how children of different ages can manage risks. For example, strangers approaching children; children seeing fights and the emotional impact this may have; seeing adults intoxicated; being injured or ill along the way etc.

Currently, the school uses the national curriculum to support parents and to cover all those "what would you do if...." situations, through the Personal, Social, Community and Health (PSCHE) subject. The aim is equip children with the skills and knowledge they need. The school is conscious of treading a fine line between not being overly controlling but trying to find the middle ground. Other initiatives

such as the Bikeability lessons for all Year 5 and 6 children also help, along with the local road improvement schemes for safer school streets; 20 MPH roads locally; Quiet Streets etc. The school will revisit the policy to ensure a fair reflection is made of the existing situation.

Question: What does the school insurance cover in terms of children getting to and from school?

Answer: Legally, the school has a duty of care for any age group. Hounslow have a "Schools' Watch" initiative, which issues an immediate alert to any school (primary or secondary) in the borough (such as a formal report of a stranger approaching a child outside of school), so that school staff can feed this straight back to students. The school's insurance does not cover anything outside of the school gates and/or once the children have been released to their appropriate adult.

Point: Initiatives in Australia include working with local shops to provide a temporary safe place for children to do if they are concerned, ill/hurt and need to seek adult advice. Traffic around the school has changed with a growth of delivery vans, electric scooters and other vehicles, as well as more people cycling on the pavement. In the past, the police have confirmed that there is no clarity on who can use the pavement so it is down to the local police.

Answer: JL suggested that since this is an issue that Chiswick School have previously worked on with Grove Park, it would be worth reaching out to them to see if they could get a working party together to address the types of issues that currently prevail. For example, by chasing the borough to see if funding is available for the further road and cycling safety issues that were identified in Oct-Nov 2019 locally; talking to the bus and delivery companies about the initiatives they have in place; talking to local businesses to see if there is a way forward to have safe places to and from the school. Another parent has already come forward to offer help with find safer cycling routes to school.

The meeting ran over time, to ensure that all four topics were discussed. JL, VR and RD thanked all those attending for a very useful and constructive discussion.

The date of the next meeting will be sent with the Summer Term dates.