

Parents' Forum Agenda –27th of November 2014

Part 1 General:

Children in need (Y3)

Why did the school decide not to support Children in Need this year? It seems a shame that the event passed without even a mufti day. The school has agreed to concentrate efforts on two charity events per year, one local and one national. This year the national Charity was NSPCC. However, the leadership team acknowledge the importance of children in need and aim to support it at least once every two years.

Homework (Y3)

I feel that the children are too bogged down with homework. Year 3 are working on their first project which needs to be completed in weekly stages, in addition to Maths, Literacy and Science weekly homework, weekly spellings & times tables practice and daily reading expectations. Some parents feel that weekends should be a time for families to spend quality time together and the volume of work is affecting this. What is the role of home learning in the schools view? What is the home learning policy and expectation for each of the key stages? Mr Thompson acknowledges that homework needs to be a balance between consolidating the learning at school and engaging parents in the process of school learning, whilst allowing there to be time for play and quality family time. This is why the school has a homework policy, which clearly outlines the expectations per year group, including the time that should be spent on home learning. The weekly times stated should include both homework and work on school projects. Children are encouraged not to spend more time than is indicated for each task, and to let their teacher know if they are regularly unable to complete the task in the allocated time.

The school policy is on the website at http://www.groveparkprimary.co.uk/docs/Homework_Policy_2013.pdf. Note the policy is due for renewal in 2015 and parents can feed into this process through the info@grovepark.hounslow.sch.uk; their teachers and a planned parent's forum on this theme.

Catering and lunch (Y5)

There are still issues being raised about food running out by the time the older children arrive, and so they have less choice. Is there a timescale for improvement? The school was aware that providing food for all the early years would be a challenge and so they have been keeping a close eye on the catering and are keen to receive feedback from parents and carers, in addition to the feedback they elicit from the children. Inevitably some food will run out. In order to minimise the adverse effects of this they are rotating the classes, so it is not always the same class that has less choice. They have also asked the caterers to monitor the more popular items that run out and adjust their catering accordingly. Mr Thompson agrees that the basics such as bread, fruit and salad should never run out.

Attendance (Y2)

Is it time to reinforce a humorous "Be on Time at 5 to 9" in the newsletter. It causes a jam at the gates as parents pour out and at least 30 parents were still arriving through the gates after the bell this morning. Mr Thompson agrees that late arrivals are disruptive to the class and he takes it very seriously. This is an area he plans to focus on in the coming term and he will raise it in school communications, including the newsletter. The school will also work with those families who are frequently late to help them find solutions.

Post expansion -outside the new building (Y2)

Thank you to everyone for Louis' memorial and to Mr Hardman for creating such an amazing space. Are there any plans to sort out the puddle at the entrance gate on a wet day? The school is planning to concrete over the muddy area at the back entrance.

Part 2 Aktiva: (present Ben Douglas and his team)

Cost of After School Clubs:

Why are the after school club activities so costly at Grove Park Primary School? Are there plans for Aktiva to reconsider its prices and harmonise with other schools in the area? Other local schools in Chiswick charge less, for example Belmont charge £3 per session so if there are 10 sessions in a term it would cost a parent £30 and St Mary's School are charging £35 for a term. For a parent who has two boys they would have to pay £120 per term for both of them to do football. Aktiva noted this concern, however, pointed out:

- Other schools such as Belmont organise their own after school clubs and thus have a mixture of commissioned clubs and in house clubs. This gives them the freedom to, for example, subsidise one club through another club.
- Aktiva noted that the clubs they run, such as football, are priced at £5 per session as have been agreed during the initial parent consultation. Some clubs such as Glee are cheaper as it is run in-house. Other clubs such as Ballet and Make and Paint are outsourced and are more expensive, due to staff and cost of material
- Parent's at the forum fed back that "Make and Paint" has been a huge improvement on previous Art clubs and the quality of material provided and the work produced is fantastic
- Children on free school meals can receive 50% subsidies for after school clubs

AP1: Aktiva to note the concern around costs of clubs and to consider ways in which cheaper prices on popular clubs (e.g. football) may increase uptake and create economy of scale.

AP2: School to make sure that parents are aware of any subsidies available.

AP3: Positive feedback for "Make and Paint" to be conveyed.

Breakfast club:

Please consider changing start time for the breakfast club from 8am to 7.45 am. Those 15 minutes make a huge difference for those with longer commutes who are trying to get to the office by 9am (especially via train). More parents may be able to use the breakfast club if the start time was only 15 minutes earlier.

Aktiva would be happy to do this if the school can accommodate an earlier start

AP4: School and Aktiva will explore ways of changing the start to 7.45 without substantially effecting school staff working days.

Class schedule

Can it be organised so there is something for every Year group on every day? Currently for example year 2 have nothing on Tuesday and lots of choice on Monday and Fridays. Reception doesn't have something every day and yet both ballet and football are on a Tuesday. Are there possibilities of introducing two sessions 3.15 to 4.15 and 4.30 to 5.30 and thus have more clubs as the school expands?

Aktiva took on board these concerns and will look at balancing the schedule to increase flexibility and choice. However, they are limited by the space available in the school. Also all attempts at a second session have not previously worked, although they are happy to revisit this.

AP5: Aktiva to review the class schedule with a view to ensuring there are fewer clashes for the same year group on the same day

Staff recruitment, training and supervision

There has been concern that the clubs are not always run professionally, for example the coaches are not engaging the children or keeping their attention. What are the criteria that human resources use to select staff and coaches? What training do they receive and for how long? How is ongoing supervision provided? And what is the process for dealing with complaints and removing coaches?

Aktiva gave detailed explanation of their recruitment and selection process. This includes a selection process, which includes a focus on recruiting professional coaches and staff with early years training, interviewing, and CRB and reference checks. After recruitment they are trained in child protection and safeguarding and Aktiva's standard operating policies. As a cross borough company they can use the excellent child protection and health and safety training facilities available through Harrow and Ealing. The staff performance continues to be monitored through on site observations, appraisals and professional development. Aktiva welcomes feedback on the clubs and staff.

AP6: Aktiva and school to inform parents/carers that feedback through grovepark@aktivacamps.com is welcome.

AP7: Aktiva to provide parents/carers with mini biography of the people who facilitate and run the clubs.

Football Club

Football in particular has had multiple concerns raised directly to Aktiva and through the forum, and yet no change has been made. The specific concerns are that the coach yells rather than instructs, gives unclear instructions and then shouts at the children for failure to follow it and he is abrupt. This has been raised several times by parents and directly to the Aktiva team and yet he remains the coach. Many of the older year groups are unhappy and may not continue football if he remains coach next term.

The concerns regarding this coach were raised by many parents/carers present. Aktiva, reassured parents/carers that they have fed back these concerns to the coach in question and they have been monitoring his performance and providing training. Parents present made it clear that many children would not continue football if the coach remained unchanged. It was also suggested that the breakdown in relationship between the coach and some children would not be conducive to good learning and a change in coach would be strongly advised.

AP8: Aktiva to take on board parents/Cares concerns and feedback their decision.

Organisation feedback

Clubs seem to be quite variable regarding the time they end and it is unclear what time children should be picked up, can this be made clear? The Aktiva invoicing system is a mystery. When will invoices arrive?

Aktiva explained that club leads want to give the children a full hour and so if they start late they end late. Following a very useful discussion it was agreed that it would make organisational sense to allow for the time it takes for the children to change and make way to the clubs in the schedule.

AP9: All clubs to start at 3.30 and end at 4.30

AP10: Any changes in time or pick up site to be communicated in a timely manner

Choice of activities

There was a request for more team activities, in particular team sports that girls may prefer, e.g. netball and opportunities for those who play musical instruments to work in groups e.g. orchestras/ quartets/quintets or bands? Other suggestions were perhaps having an outdoor club that takes older kids on outings to explore history and nature in the local area. Other thoughts were science clubs, yoga, more languages, film clubs, circus skills, and drama for the older kids etc.

AP11: Aktiva to explore new clubs and to test popularity through timetabling and not sending out surveys, which have a poor response rate.

Other

The discussion suggested that parents/carers are keen to better understand what their children learn and do in the clubs. This would not only market the clubs, but would help parents/carers understand the product they are paying for. There was agreement that the current system of applying by email or in person for clubs and a first come first served method is the fairest and most acceptable of methods tried to date.

AP11: To have watching week for parents/carers to come and see a club in action.

Ap12: To have a club booklet that provides information on the club contents and to provide mini biographies of the club leads and facilitators.

AP13: No change to the afterschool club application process at this time.

AP14: To feedback to the ballet club that parents/cares would welcome clear information around the process and training needs for ballet exams.

Next Parents' Forum 5th of February 9 am in the school café