

MINUTES FROM THE PARENTS' FORUM

Thursday 18th March, 2021

8-9pm

Attendees: Rachel Davies, Headteacher (RD)
Victoria Rodrigues, Business and Operations Manager (VR)
Joanna Lovatt, Chair and Parent Support Adviser (JL)
30 parents

Apologies from Sarah Inwood, Area Manager, Chartwells Catering

Items for discussion-

Thank you to all the parents who kindly submitted questions. There were two which had very similar themes and so they were combined. Some parents also asked for their questions to be anonymous, for a variety of reasons.

The past year has put everyone in an unprecedented situation which has forced so many into enforced isolation. That has impacted not just the children but also adults. Ordinarily, it would be our aim that anyone involved in the school would feel comfortable sharing their views in a safe and open forum. However, this time, I fully accept that it hasn't always been possible for parents to reach out to others to ensure they feel sufficiently supported. So, on this occasion, it feels right to empathise with those who may feel concerned that their ideas could be misunderstood and so anonymous contributions have been accepted.

- 1. Would there be an option, in the future, for the school to look at more freshly cooked menus for the children in school? Understandably, during the pandemic, there has had to be some flexibility with regard to the menus. Moving forward, could there be more healthier options (and fewer foods that are fast-food types such as Fried Chicken, Wedges, Fish Fingers, Pizza) or at least making those fast-food options home-made? Or even to bring the catering in-house"?**
 - The key part of this question needs to be answered by Sarah Inwood, the Area Manager from Chartwells, who have the existing catering contract with the school. Sadly, she was unable to make the meeting and it was felt that this needed to be an interactive session so this item has been deferred to the next Parents' Forum meeting on Tuesday 29th June, from 9-10am. Hopefully, we will hold it face-to-face in the Assembly Hall, if the Government's timeline goes to plan.
 - VR was able to confirm that Chartwells have 2-3 more years of their contract left before it will go out for a full tender. Both parents and children will be asked for their input when the school assess their requirements at this time, to ensure we gain feedback from as many interested people as possible.
- 2. "Could the weekly teacher's newsletter include a limited number of Keywords (say 3 or 4 at most) for parents to be aware of? For example, in whichever topics may be in that week for any particular subject such as "Alliteration"; "Number Bonds"; "Contrast"; "Judaism"; "Micro-organisms"; "Biomes" etc.**
 - RD thanked the parent for a great idea. Research has shown that children's vocabulary has a big impact on their life opportunities, their attainment and their confidence.

Currently, before a lesson starts, teaching staff will highlight the key words for small groups of children to ensure each child understands the meaning.

- RD is keen to stress that parents should not feel pressured into adding to their current support of their child as there has been so much additional stress for families to cope with during the pandemic. Each family has their own juggling act at any one moment of time so the following suggestion is purely to be seen as one possible option.
- In the short term, there are two main sources of curriculum vocabulary online which are very comprehensive and trustworthy. They are BBC Bitesize and Oak Academy, which have been expanded hugely as a result of the extended lockdown. Parents can feel confident that they provide a very reputable and relevant source.
- In the longer term, the school have already decided to build up a collection of keywords across the whole curriculum, for each subject and for each year group. This is a major project, which will be started during the next academic year. Parents will be updated as to how the project proceeds and, at this stage, the timescale for completing it is unclear.

3. **"During school closure some children may have struggled, for different reasons, to access the curriculum and have fallen behind their perceived ability and/or their peers.**

How will these children be identified (ie how will they be assessed)? What interventions will be offered to them to enable them to catch up? Will they be offered access to the National Tutoring Programme? How do you propose to utilise any catch up funding (whether internal or external to the school budget) to support these children?"

- RD was very grateful for the chance to address these very relevant points. Even before the pandemic, all teaching staff are aware of the differing levels of attainment that each child has in different subjects in each year group. This is something that schools have always worked with.
- The media has highlighted terms such as “the Lost Generation” and “Catch up” which don’t do justice to the wider experiences that many children have had during the pandemic. Whether those experiences have been directly related to curriculum subjects or wider, life experiences (such as learning to climb a tree, preparing a meal, tying their shoelace, performing a play etc), their short time back in school has shown that many have learnt other skills that are just as important to them in life.
- Where staff have feedback is that some social skills, such as group work, will need further work and that is being addressed by each class as it appears. Children will learn if they feel safe and secure, which all staff have been working to ensure.
- Before Christmas, each child had formal assessments taking place with formal levels that had been completed. Since their return on 8th March, each child has been assessed again, both formally and informally.
- On Tuesday 23rd March, each class’ teaching staff will be providing feedback on their initial assessments of the children in their class since their return to face-to face learning.

- In the autumn term, the school were allocated extra funding (based on the number of pupils) of just over £8,000. This is not enough to cover the costs for one part-time TA. The school have used this money to increase the hours of Teaching Assistants where necessary; to buy in extra resources such as reading books as well as adding extra resources to ensure emotional well-being and emotional regulation. In the Spring and Summer terms, extra funding will go towards paying for extra hours for staff, where necessary.
- The National Tutoring Programme is designed to address small groups of between 3-5 pupils. However, having heard presentations regarding the wide variety of providers (based in the UK and abroad), almost every solution is largely virtual. Some of the tutors would be graduates rather than fully trained teachers. Pupils would work either during existing class lessons or during home hours. It would also mean that their attainment target at the end of the exercise would be based on the school's assessment. As such, the school have decided that they would this is not an effective route to use.
- As has always been the case, those children that need stretching, they are will be provided with equally exciting teaching to deepen their learning.
- The school are actively re-evaluating the outdoor space for children as part of their learning environment.

As there was time, some extra comments were addressed.

- What will happen to PE Staffing in the future? This year, with Mr Rick McGregor opting to work for 3 days, Mr Nind kindly stepped in, having already been qualified and worked in other schools with Sports coaching. Next year's staffing has yet to be discussed.
- When will After School Clubs be restarting? Once the bubble system goes (currently, each year group is considered to be in their own bubble), then clubs can start to open up. AKTIVA has agreed with the school that it there is too much to do to try and start up clubs for the Summer Term, even if the Government's timeline goes to plan, so they will be starting up their After-School clubs and breakfast clubs in September 2021. This will be the same for all external clubs.
- Will the Year 6 PGL Trip be going ahead this academic year? At the moment, the trip is due to commence the first day that the government roadmap has planned to ease all current restrictions ie Monday 21st June. As they are all in one bubble, we envision that the trip will go ahead as planned. For the existing Year 5 students, the school will be changing provider and using Kingswood in the Autumn. This is hoped to reduce the costs for families and it is a provider that RD has used in the past very successfully.

The meeting was closed. Thank you to all those who participated.

The next Parents Forum will be on Tuesday 29th June, 9-10am, in the Assembly Hall.