

PARENTS FORUM MINUTES

Thursday 7th November 2024

7-8pm, via zoom

37 Attendees

Attendees: Rachel Davies, Head and Designated Safeguarding Lead (RD)
Victoria Rodrigues, Business & Operations Leader (VR)
Joanna Lovatt, Chair and Parent Support Adviser (JL)

1. WELCOME

- A reminder that all parents and carers are welcome to attend
- This is a voluntary forum so all views should be respected
- Any agreements to take actions forward are non-binding until a full consultation takes place with the relevant groups.

2. CONGRATULATIONS ON THE OFSTED REPORT. The visit took place on the 1st and 2nd October. The report concluded that the school was “Outstanding” in all areas. The Chair acknowledges the parents’ positive response to this and acknowledgement that all staff, at every level, contributed to this fantastic achievement.

3. UPDATE ON PREVIOUS PARENT FORUM of Tuesday 4th June, 2024.

- Jennifer Forakis has offered to initiate a meeting with pupils to discuss how to keep the school buildings cool during future heatwaves. Joanna Lovatt will speak directly to the Eco-Council and the Eco-Warriors Lead (Miss Hart-Winks) to see if we have the capacity to take this forward. JL
- Victoria Rodrigues co-ordinated a Food Tasting session with the new Catering company, the “Lunchtime Co.” for parents/carers to try. 60 families signed up to the tasting session, which was all food that has been served to the children on the current menu. The feedback was positive. However, the school and the caterers are aware that there will always be areas to improve and are open to continued surveys for parental views. The Area Manager attended School Council recently to ensure that they had direct feedback from the pupils as well.

4. NEW ITEMS

WHAT IS THE SCHOOL POLICY ON THE APPROPRIATE TIME ON SCREENS?

- RD stated that the school are very lucky. Over recent years the school has acquired both high quality interactive C-TOUCH boards for each class as well as Chrome books for individual and group work by students, thanks to the generous financial support from the PTA.
- Although there is no direct policy on the amount of time the boards are turned on, there are guidelines as to **how** they are used. For example, during carpet time, phonics, numeracy etc. The staff are all given guidelines to balance out more formal lessons with an input using the interactive board with outside learning, physical skills, group discussions, writing etc. Nursery and Reception teachers use the interactive boards for less time during the day because of the emphasis on learning through play.

- During Soft Start, as children come in to start the day, the interactive boards are used to promote dancing, physical movement and exercises as well as displaying the timetable for the day. This allows staff to focus on safeguarding, “bubble” work, intervention work etc.
- During “Wet Play” some classes may be grouped together in the Assembly Hall to manage the transition to and from the Hub (eating zone) for a short period of time (sometimes as little as 7 minutes) to allow lunchtime staff to smoothly move groups around. On rare occasions, where the staff:pupil ratio was challenging, children may view it for slightly longer but this was exceptional.
- The interactive boards are not used for “downtime”, classes use Mindfulness techniques to help children move into the Green Zone (part of the strategy for “Zones of Regulation” that is embedded for children to be able to manage their own emotions), ready to start learning.
- The interactive boards are a vital and key part of teaching and learning and are the equivalent of a board and chalk.
- At the end of the day, the interactive boards are also used to help with the transition for pupils to go home. It is a short period of time (only a few minutes) and should be educational in its content e.g. a read aloud story, news programme. This allows the teaching staff to be available to parents for feedback, meaningful engagement, ensure children are going to the correct clubs/after care, address safeguarding issues (particularly which adults children are allowed or not allowed to go home with which may need to be double checked with another staff member; or where alternative adults have temporary responsibility) as well as allowing children with difficulties transitioning to be calm and safe (such as those with SEND needs). At the end of the day, most teachers are on their own with 30 children to dismiss and 30 adults to connect with. It is a complex time of day and the priority is safeguarding.
- During the recent OFSTED visit, the inspectors covered all aspects within the classroom as well as the transition to the Hub, the playgrounds, Soft Start, dismissal at the end of the day and external lessons. No issues were raised by any of the 3 inspectors.
- Q: Can less time watching something on the board be achieved by using reading books or colouring books at the end of the day. Also, there was one occasion when their child earned enough dojo points to earn the prize of watching the screen.

A: RD said that whilst they appreciate that reading books and colouring are worthwhile activities, it does not provide a focus enough to reduce movement in the classroom e.g. changing books, sharpening pencils. It can also mean that children seek the teacher when the teacher is trying to focus on parent/carer’s engagement. If there are any additional adults in the classroom at the end day, it is because they are there providing specific support.

- Q: Can the school acknowledge that research shows screens can be over-stimulating for children.
A: RD said that looking at the bigger picture for children meant they balanced it across the whole day. The screens are primarily a teaching tool.

- Q: Can a parent volunteer to read at the end of the day so the board is not needed.
A: RD was grateful for the idea and thankful to all of our parent volunteers, but with some children having complex needs, it would not be appropriate for parents to be supervising a whole class. By the older years, they are able to stand waiting safely in the playground at the end of the day for dismissal.
- Q: A parent asked if children could earn class awards for screen time at the end of a half-term?
A: RD confirmed that if they were able to, parents/carers would be notified in advance.

WHAT IS THE RATIONALE BEHIND THE SCHOOL PROMOTING SPANISH/A SECOND LANGUAGE WHEN WE HAVE A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF FAMILIES WITH ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AND/OR WHO ARE BI- OR TRI-LINGUAL?

- RD said that the National Curriculum includes teaching a modern foreign language in primary school and that progress needs to be shown in one language. Grove Park chose Spanish after reviewing the offerings of the local Secondary Schools that most of our children moved onto, to ensure that it laid the groundwork for Key Stage 3.
- It also provided an opportunity to highlight different cultures across a variety of subjects such as History, Art, Religious Education etc.
- At Grove Park, rather than teachers leading the foreign language along with an IT programme, we chose to use native speakers. The feedback we've had from Chiswick School shows that this is very effective.
- Q: A parent asked if there might be other languages provided after school?
A: VR said that "Little Foxes", who run the after-school clubs, will be asking parents to fill in a survey where parents/carers to ask for this.

WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE FOR A SPECIALIST PROVIDER TO RUN SPECIFIC CLUBS AFTER SCHOOL, SUCH AS ART, RATHER THAN USING A GENERIC PROVIDER SUCH AS "LITTLE FOXES"?

- Having tried this in the past, VR said that there was no-one to oversee the quality of the provision. It also meant much more work for the school office staff to manage staff who were late or missing, making it more costly to provide. "Little Foxes" monitor quality themselves and were chosen because of the range and variety of clubs they could offer. As part of the agreement for securing the contract, the school agreed a no competition clause.
- If at any time parents/carers had issues with the quality of the after-school provision, they should contact "Little Foxes" straight away and if serious please copy in the school using the info@grovespark.hounslow.sch.uk email address.

WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO PROVIDE EXTENDED HOURS FOR THE NURSERY CHILDREN, AS A PAID SERVICE?

- VR did a formal analysis of this service a few years ago, including working with the Local Authority as well as the Governors. It was deemed that it would not be financially viable at GP. If funding rates and local demand changes, the school are may review this in the future.

- Q: Other schools have an all-day nursery why isn't it possible at Grove Park?
A: VR advised that all schools are different and have different numbers of children, building, staff structures and systems in places.
- Currently the school does not have enough space to provide for a larger nursery (with 26 capacity currently). To accommodate higher numbers of children we would have to provide more resources to try and meet the statutory regulations such as a separate sleeping area, changing area, eating area etc.

5. END OF THE MEETING

Please note that the date of the next meeting will be during the Spring term and parents/carers will be notified once that is set.

Thank you to all those who attended this evening.