

Parents' Forum

Meeting held 19th November in the Willis Room 1930

Staff :

Mrs P. Foster (Headteacher)
Mr A. Rowley (Deputy Head)
Mrs E. Day (Assistant Head)
Mrs P. Giles (Assistant Head)
Mr E. Sharkey (Director of Studies)
Mr R. Ainsworth (Senior Teacher: Pastoral)
Mr J. Ashcroft (Senior Teacher: Community Links)
Mr B. Sheldrick (Senior Teacher: Resources)

Apologies: Mr D Povey

Parents:

Mr R. Deter
Mrs E. Chew
Mr S. Richardson
Mrs V. Goodfellow
Mrs R. Lewis
Mrs L. Gibb
Mrs K. McTear
Mrs R. Gregory
Dr M. Brown
Mr J. Allen

Mrs Foster welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited each person to introduce themselves to the group. Mrs Foster introduced the agenda which she said was likely to span several of the meetings. However she would be happy to add items as and when they arose.

HOMEWORK:

- It was generally felt that there was a good balance of homework and that it was a good thing that homework was not set every night.
- It was commented that parents do not always know the method a child has been taught to use when tackling homework tasks. This was especially likely in maths. It was felt that it would be good to have some guidance as to the approaches that were now used so that parents could support the learning taking place in school.
- Parents said that it would also be good to have homework that regularly focussed on the learning of multiplication tables so parents could use this as an opportunity revisit tables with their children and secure their knowledge. Mrs Minall is to be asked to review how each maths teacher encourages the pupils' to learn their multiplication tables.
- Mrs Foster said that Mrs Minall hoped to hold a maths evening for parents which would hopefully address the above issues.
- Several parents requested that they would like more feedback as to how their children were doing when learning spellings for a test. There was little feedback to parents at the moment. They also requested that rather than receive the spellings on a piece of paper they would like to have them in a books that they were all kept together.
- There was a general feeling that the school had worked hard to modernise homework. It was suggested that it might be a good addition to have homework which involved learning by heart.
- It was also suggested that homework could from time to time include opportunities for an open ended extension activity.
- In addition to homework normally set in Yr 6 it was suggested that perhaps children might be set mini homework for other subjects.

REPORTS AND REPORTING TO PARENTS:

Mrs Foster posed the question - Do they tell you what you would like to know?

- It was established that parents do not get regular reports from Visiting Music Teachers [VMTs] so parents don't really know how their children are progressing. The same was true for external Drama lessons.
- It was agreed that Mr Rowley would investigate the music reporting and Mrs Day would investigate Drama with the aim to have reports once a year at the end of the academic year.
- It was noted that there had been several changes to report writing and it takes quite a time to get used to the new format. Mr Sharkey would look at simplifying the amount of information. A rainbow guide to levels would be issued in summer and put on the website.

ASSESSMENT AND LEVELLING:

Mr Sharkey (Director of Studies) explained that in the past reports used percentages and parents were able to relate this to Year Group averages (YGA's). However, this does not give parents information with regard to standardised levels of attainment or ongoing progress measured from a baseline or allow for differences in assessment papers. We are now grading pupil performance using National Curriculum level grades. When seeking information about Year 6 pupils sitting the 11+ the Senior School asks for predictions on SATs. It is felt therefore that parents should be informed of the levels at which their children were performing as this is a more consistent measure. Patterns of assessment also enable us to chart progress. The question was asked if assessments take account of age. National Curriculum levels are awarded according to criteria in relation to the pupil's individual performance using level descriptors and therefore are not standardised by age. It was mentioned that it is therefore harder for younger pupils to achieve the higher levels of 2A/3 in KS1 assessments. By the time the pupils sit the KS2 assessments age has far less influence and bearing.

LEARNING SUPPORT IEPS:

- Parents are sometimes surprised when they receive a letter concerning learning support because they feel that they have had no warning. They can be similarly surprised when they are informed that their child is being placed on an individual education programme (IEP). Mrs Day explained the structure of learning support:
 - step 1 – monitoring in class
 - step 2 – IEP plus support
 - step 3 – Educational Psychology reports are used to determine the nature of support
- Letters which request parental permission for a LASS assessment again seem to take parents by surprise. The LASS assessment is a computer generated assessment that enables us to identify the areas of learning with which children are experiencing difficulties. The letter which parents receive after the assessment always invites parents to seek a meeting with the Learning Support Co-ordinator, Toni Squire, and to look at the data if they would like to do so. However, relatively few parents request this.
- A request was made that more information about learning support generally should be put in the Guide for Parents.

READING:

The School has noticed that, overall, children are becoming less literate. It is becoming more difficult to establish good reading habits. Some parents felt there was a decline in reading in the classroom in KS2. Mrs Foster pointed out that since September 2008 the school has tried to address this by creating ERIC time (Everyone Reading In Class together). It was asked whether the children were heard to read less often in KS2. Mrs Foster explained that the frequency of when children were heard to read was determined by reading ability with less fluent readers being targeted to be heard daily whenever possible. Teaching Assistant support teachers in hearing reading. Class teachers are expected to regularly monitor the reading and record this in the reading diaries. Some parents find it a battle to get their children to read. Mrs Foster said that it had now been arranged for Yr 6 children to come and read with children in Yrs 3 / 4 during ERIC time.

CO-CURRICULAR:

- One parent was concerned that their child missed out if they did not meet the deadlines for applying for a place to take part in a co-curricular activity. Mrs Giles (Co-curricular co-ordinator) said that in KS2 children had to take some personal responsibility. Mrs Giles said she would put a warning in the newsletter in the weeks before the club letters are sent home but then it was the responsibility of the child to get their form in on time.
- Parents observed that in the autumn term they do not know about clubs until a few weeks into term. Mrs Giles explained that this was always going to be the case in the autumn term as the club forms could not be given out prior to the start of term because of the new children who join the school, also teachers are not always fully aware of their teaching commitments until the start of term and are therefore unsure as to which evening they can plan to hold a club. On the other two terms, the places are issued before the end of the preceding term.
- It was mentioned how popular the KS2 residential trips are. A new trip has been introduced for Yr 5 pupils, however the number of pupils who are able to be taken on this trip is relatively small and therefore there is a long waiting list. The School is investigating the possibility of an alternative venue in the future so that more pupils can be involved and, hopefully, this will avoid disappointment.

SPORT:

- Parents requested that children who are not so naturally sporty may on occasions be invited to represent the school at matches. Sport is perceived by parents and pupils to be of major importance within the school; this is particularly the case in the Senior School. All the children get opportunity to have high class quality input in Games lessons, regardless of ability and, as such, are enabled to improve their skills. The School is endeavouring to ensure that all pupils in KS2, regardless of ability, are given the opportunity to represent their School in matches.
- It was mentioned that some pupils believe that when there are clashes with music and sport that music is always expected to give way. Mr Rowley said that the School tries hard to make sure that there is no dilemma. It was felt that it would be helpful if the school could explain sport selection. Mr Rowley said that the School could certainly do that. Parents observed that the access to playing fields guidelines are being ignored by parents and security staff are still letting parents drive into fields. Mr Rowley said he would investigate.

HEALTHY EATING:

- Mr Rowley explained that the School is concerned that some children are having the same lunch every day while others are eating very healthily. We are hoping to be able to educate children and parents to ensure all children have a healthy diet.
- Parents would like drama pupils to have hot lunch although given the timing of the lunchtime drama this is not possible.
- There is a tendency for many pupils in KS2 to bring unhealthy snacks to school. School would like to restrict KS2 to fruit/vegetables and nutritious cereal bars.
- Charity cake sales are restricted to one a week.
- Fizzy drinks/crisps are not on sale to Junior School pupils at lunch times.