

Minutes of the Parent Voice meeting – Friday 18th September 2015

Held in the Barn

1. Welcome and introductions

Mr McIntosh (Deputy Head Teacher) welcomed parents and, for those who had not attended a Parent Voice meeting before, outlined the purpose and procedure of the meeting.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and action points

- **Homework**

- A summary of what will be studied in the forthcoming half term has been produced and shared with parents (formatted as a 'jigsaw'). This will be repeated each term/half term.
- The school's calculation policy, outlining which mathematical methods are used in the school, as dictated by the national curriculum, gave detailed examples of how pupils should replicate work in their Learning Journals.
- The 'In flight' homework tasks would be requested earlier in the week preceding the display afternoon, to allow time for improved feedback. Because the homework menu and learning passports had taken more time to be produced this term than normal, this would be put back by one week and would be on Friday 6th November, the week after half term break. Pupils would be asked to bring their work in from the Monday.
- Mrs Cole, one of our new teachers and our Maths Subject Leader, was going to be designing a school-wide times table programme this half term that would be put into place by the end of the term. Many classes had already started their own times tables testing on a weekly basis while this is finalised.

Discussion took place about the online methods of homework that the school employ. Abacus home learning details had just been sent out that week and would be used very soon by teachers to set homework for pupils. This would help to ease problems experienced by some parents who found it challenging to help their child in maths. The school's Mathletics subscription was likely not to be renewed in order to concentrate solely on Abacus. It was acknowledged that Mathletics was a good site, but that from the school's point of view, its popularity and use amongst pupils had definitely waned since being introduced several years ago. SAM learning, used exclusively in Year 6, was felt not to be worthwhile; there were issues with children being able to find ways to cheat on the tasks and it also gave no informative feedback about the tasks completed to either pupils or teachers.

- **Home-school communication**

Parents should have been asked, via a data collection letter, for their current contact details in the last week in order to collate email addresses for bulk emails to be used to send out information in the near future. If letters had not been received yet in every year group, these would come out in the next week. Movement to an electronic distribution system would occur with plenty of notice and certain notices or letters would still be sent out in hard copy.

Some new Year 3 parents shared their opinion that the information given at transition between Year 2-3 was poor; for example, parents did not know if a snack would be provided at break time, how to provide dinner choices, how to use ParentPay, etc. This information could have been included in a letter sent to Year 2 parents in the last few weeks of the summer term so that families started at the Junior School more prepared. Some parents had to rely on Facebook in order to get information, particularly over the summer as the school was closed when parents needed this information. Mr McIntosh was grateful for the feedback which would help improve the experience for next year's Year 2 families.

It was noted that there were also problems encountered on ParentPay at the start of term which some parents assumed occurred because so many people were using the site at once. Mr McIntosh would ask the school business manager to investigate in time for the start of the new term in January.

- **Ofsted – to be addressed in main agenda**
- **General scheduling of parent-attended events**

This had been discussed at both schools and by the PTA (Friends of Barnes Farm Schools) and changes had been made as a result. Next year's events have already been scheduled on different days, with the Infant Sports Day on a Monday, the Junior Sports Day on a Thursday and the Summer Fete on a Friday (15th July).
- **Summer Fete scheduling**

This had also been discussed by the school's leadership and the PTA. Next year's fete would take place after school. It was vital that the PTA had help from more parents otherwise the viability of an event like this, judged as extremely successful this year, would be diminished.
- **Contact with teachers via email**

Details of how to log on to parent accounts on our website were issued yesterday. This would enable parents to send messages to teachers if required. However, a glitch with the registration system had caused a delay in Eschools being used for online registration, therefore it could not be confirmed that teachers were looking at their online account regularly. It would be best to maintain other means of communication with teachers for the time being until indicated otherwise.
- **Reading**

As for Maths, a new Subject Leader for Reading had been appointed and one of her first priorities this term would be to investigate systems of reading in the school, including Guided Reading sessions, and to bring about greater consistency of approach and feedback to parents.

3. Ofsted

Mr McIntosh gave an update:

- The school had continued to make progress towards the improvements identified by the inspection report and long term improvements that the school had been working on prior to the visit, e.g.
 - o the development of a new, wide-reaching Teaching and Learning Policy that uses Ofsted criteria for 'Good' practice and outcomes as our minimum expectations and 'Outstanding' practice and outcomes as our targets.
 - o Governor training and visit schedule in place
 - o Establishment of a new senior and middle leadership structure to better reflect our improvement plan targets (including the creation of new subject leader positions for Reading and Writing, previously a combined role)
 - o the development of a new assessment policy, a new safeguarding policy and a new child protection policy and procedures
 - o the analysis of end of Year 6 results from this year in order to identify further areas for development
- The school's Primary Improvement Board, chaired independently by the local authority, had met early this half term and had been positive in its review of the school's evidence towards improvement
- The school had received a letter from the local authority's Acting Director of Commissioning (Education and Lifelong Learning), Clare Kershaw, confirming that there had been clear evidence of an upward trajectory in improvement in the school's performance data, though more progress was required.
- The expected visit from an HMI (Her Majesty's Inspector of schools) within 12 weeks of the inspection report publication had not yet happened. This was not within the school's control.

A question was raised about our performance against other similar schools, namely those in the local area such as Chancellor Park. Mr McIntosh would investigate, though this may not be possible at this time because of the nature of the data being unvalidated and therefore not published in the public domain. Mr McIntosh did refer parents towards data that parents could freely access themselves, including the Data Dashboard.

A letter had been sent to Parent Voice for discussion regarding the three commitments made by Mr McTaggart in the Governors' Parent meeting of 8th June. This was sent anonymously from a group of concerned parents. It was viewed that, because of the nature of the issues raised and concerns made in the letter, it would be more appropriate for the Governing Body or Chair of Governors to decide how best to respond to this. This should not be viewed as a reluctance to consider the letter, but rather a reflection of how seriously the school regards its commitments in taking it to the senior level of leadership of the school. While Parent Voice should indeed be seen as a forum in which to raise any issue regarding the school, Mr McIntosh always made it clear that it might not always be the best vehicle through which to work through any and every issue. Mr McIntosh assured parents attending that attention would be given to the letter and though the full governing body had met on 8th September and the next

full meeting would not be until 24th November, the letter would be sent to the Chair before that time.

4. AOB

- A question about assessment in one of the classes who have a teacher jobsharer situation in place was raised. Mr McIntosh would be better able to respond to this with particular details being provided.
- A question was raised about the possibility of the school having all of its 5 INSET days in one block before a holiday period, in order to allow parents to book at least one week of their holidays outside of the normal school holiday period and therefore take advantage of lower costs of booking a holiday. A similar set up was apparently in place in some schools in Wales. Mr McIntosh explained that INSET days were officially set by the Governors mid-way through the preceding year and in conjunction with the Infant school, that they were usually spread throughout the year so as to allow the school to respond to training needs that occurred during the year (not usually predictable 18 months in advance) and that they were almost always placed just before or just after a school holiday in order to minimise disruption to parents when arranging childcare (if necessary). However, Mr McIntosh would bring this suggestion to the attention of the leadership team and also to the Governors.
- Peripatetic music lessons were being timetabled at the same time for a whole half term and parents were worried that children would be missing out on the same lessons each week because of these fixed times. Mr McIntosh would investigate the possibility of having these on a rotating timetable.

5. Date and time of next meeting

Thursday 15th October at 8pm (tea/coffee from 7.45pm)