

Parent Voice
Monday 20th March 2017
The Barn

1. Welcome and introductions

2. Minutes of the last meeting and action points

- **Class structure policy**

The decision to include Year 5 in the class structure policy from September 2017 was going to be upheld by the school, for the reasons listed in the last minutes.

- **Parking outside the school**

No meeting had yet been held with the council but the suggestions will be presented at the earliest opportunity.

- **Parents' Evenings/Open mornings/Sharing pupil information**

The days chosen for open literacy lessons in the Summer term had been set to ensure they were different than the maths lessons in the Spring term.

The idea of having parent consultations for Years 3-5 in the hall so as to cut down on travel time was being considered for October.

- **Uniform**

Mr McIntosh confirmed that, at present, it was permitted for the girls to wear black tights and black or grey skirts.

3. School uniform – views on possible changes

Mr McIntosh posed the question about possible changes to the school uniform policy:

What did parents think about introducing shirts and ties instead of polo shirts?

Parents were largely opposed to this idea.

Would parents support streamlining some of the colour options currently available, i.e.

- *One colour of trousers/shorts/skirts*
- *One colour of tights/socks*

Parents were happy for this to come into force with a good amount of notice and the majority preference for trousers/shorts/skirts was grey.

4. Forthcoming events in the Summer term – views, suggestions, improvements, etc.

Some notable events were discussed in order to gain views and opinions for improvement this year, all of which Mr McIntosh will take back and offer at the appropriate planning stage.

- **Sports day**

Suggestions for improvements/comments were as follows:

- Publish the timetable in advance so that parents who are not able to attend the whole event will know when their child/children will be competing.
- Communicate the colour of the t-shirt required with plenty of notice.
- Put the date on the school calendar (if not already on) and publish in the newsletter from now on.
- Create an optional activity for the children who are not competing to engage in, at least for some of the time, so that they are not just sitting and watching for the whole morning.
- In the afternoon, allow more time for each of the activities as the bell often rings before everyone has had an opportunity to participate. Possibly create this time by eliminating the water station?
- Ensure siblings are in the same group so parents do not have to choose who to watch and support.
- Adults who are running the activity to try and make sure different children start than those who began the last activity, to try and ensure the same children are not at the end of the line and only get one go of everything.
- Use a louder bell or a better PA system that reaches all areas of the field.

- **Summer Fete**

Suggestions for improvements/comments were as follows:

- Spread out the stalls more around the field as these seemed to close and therefore quickly congested last year.
- Ask for more parent volunteers and people who own gazebos to offer their help/resources so that the stalls can be spread out.
- Advertise the Year 6 enterprise stalls in a better way so that they attract more customers.
- Rope off the field until the official starting time of 3.30pm – this will enable all stalls to be manned before people start wandering around.
- Hold a whole-school assembly in the afternoon so that teachers can come out to the stalls briefly and be better informed about what they are running before the start of the fete.

- **Summer homework**

Suggestions for improvements/comments were as follows:

- A simple and summer-related task works well, e.g. the postcard/letter to the new teacher from two years ago was well-liked.
- Feedback from homework helps to encourage pupils and families to engage with the next piece.
- It should remain optional as some families simply want a break from work and some are away from home for almost the whole period.
- Could there be an alternative reading scheme to the library challenge? Some parents, particularly those who have to work throughout the summer, find it difficult to make the time to get to the library regularly enough to complete this scheme. Some sort of incentive, such as that used currently in school with raffle tickets, would help encourage participation.

- A series of year group-specific maths worksheets with answers that could be put up on the website would be helpful.

5. **AOB**

• **Parent volunteers**

A question was raised regarding opportunities for parents to volunteer at the school, e.g. listening to readers, attending trips, helping with productions, etc. Many parents enjoy getting involved with school activities and for some, this can be a way of meeting others and enriching the parent community. Mr McIntosh was positive about the impact of parent helpers and commented that the school does use parents for trips, residential visits, career talks, clubs, special one-off lessons, etc. and their input is much valued. The school doesn't tend to put out a general request for volunteering but rather asks for help for specific projects; sometimes this is successful (e.g. with trips) and sometimes this can get a poor response (e.g. the recent tree-planting request resulted in only one parent volunteer and had to be supplemented by employees from Essex & Suffolk Water). If parents wish to volunteer their time, they can always speak to their child's class teacher and let them know what they could possibly offer and when.

A good alternative is to volunteer to be a part of the schools' PTA, Friends of Barnes Farm Schools, which always needs helpers to run events and members of groups to plan them. They are currently very under-manned and this could begin to have a negative impact on what they are able to offer to pupils and the school in terms of events and fundraising.

• **Homework**

Parents asked if the option to complete a book review could be included in the in-flight menu for each year group each term. It was also requested that the prompt questions that parents can use to help develop their child's comprehension skills (previously issued by the school) could be included in next year's Pupil Passport. Mr McIntosh would pass these requests on to the relevant teachers.

More consistency in how reading is rewarded was suggested as this is not the same in all classes throughout the school. Mr McIntosh would ask Mrs Summers (the school's subject leader for reading) to look into this after Easter.

Some parents asked if the reintroduction of Mathematics could be considered as this was considered to be a good way of practising basic skills regularly that was simple for parents to monitor and assist with. Another parent suggested the use of 'Times Tables Rockstars' as a possible online programme the school could use. Mr McIntosh would ask Mrs Cole (the school's subject leader for maths) to look into this after Easter.

• **Mandarin lessons**

A parent asked about the teaching of Mandarin, which Mr McIntosh confirmed was taught in Years 3-5 by a classroom language assistant from China. The assistant

changed every year because the scheme through which they are sourced only allows for one 10-month release from their own school in China. Our school has a certain amount of input into the choice of the assistant but we are also dependent upon a third party administering the programme according to their selection criteria.

- **Polling day – 4th May**

A question was asked about the school remaining open or being closed on the upcoming day of the county council elections. Mr McIntosh confirmed that, as usual, the school had been appointed as a polling station but because of the advance notice of our use as such, that we would be remaining open. This was only possible due to the organisation of a school visit for all year groups, details of which would be issued to parents this week. This allowed for the security of the site and safety of the children to be managed in such a way so as to allow us to remain open on this occasion.

- **11+ preparation in Year 4**

A parent asked if children were given the opportunity to prepare for the 11+ test as early as Year 4. Mr McIntosh stated that the school did not include specific 11+ preparation in its curriculum, but that an 11+ club was open to all Year 5 children from the start of the year, running right up to the 11+ exam date in the following September.

- **Year 5 changing for PE**

It was requested that consideration could be given for separate boy/girl changing for PE in Year 5, in the same way as occurs in Year 6. Some of the Year 5 girls are particularly conscious of getting undressed in front of the boys and would appreciate a degree of privacy. The challenges in accommodating this were discussed, but Mr McIntosh would take the request to the Year 5 teachers and ask if anything could be done.

6. Date and time of next meeting

Tuesday 20th April at 2.15pm (tea/coffee from 2pm) in the Barn.