

Beaford Community Primary and Nursery School

Minutes of the Parent Forum Meeting

Thursday 15th October 2015 - 9.00 am

Present : Annette Yates, Mel James, Lucie-Alice Williams, Amber Bowen

Apologies : Sam Doidge

1. School holidays

Term times and holidays have always been pre-set by the County. This has changed and schools are able to set their own dates. There are many potential benefits to Beaford being able to set its own school term times but there are also many factors which need to be taken into consideration. Beaford will be liaising with GTS and discussing the potential for change. The parent forum felt that it is essential that there is an opportunity for all parents to be part of the decision making process and that a questionnaire should be the first step. Beaford needs to know how parents feel and what they would like to see, in order to be able to take this to other schools in the area.

Some areas for consideration are :

Siblings : Many families have one child at primary and siblings at secondary school. It would be very problematic for those families if the two schools had different holidays.

Staff : Staff views need to be taken into consideration with any major change to holidays.

6 weeks holiday : This could be scrapped entirely. Some people are of the view that a 6 week break from learning is far too long and children's learning slips back over the long summer holiday. The long summer break is, historically, part of the education system to fit in with the farming calendar. Children were needed to help harvest crops etc. This is no longer relevant to today's world and some would question whether this long break is now needed. Vulnerable children in particular can find the long break from school extremely difficult.

Cheap holidays : If schools are setting their own term times then holiday companies will no longer be able to charge a premium for particular weeks as schools will all be on holidays at different times. With more affordable holidays possible then hopefully nobody should need to take time out of school for holidays.

Class transitions : Beaford would have much more flexibility and would be able to manoeuvre class transitions more easily. Late summer born children may particularly benefit from this. Once exams are finished in May then there is a whole term before the summer holidays. GTS would be happy to discuss an earlier transition for year 6 pupils which could run alongside a new term time structure.

Optimum Learning : 6 weeks blocks of learning are thought to be the optimum learning time.

Working parents : It may make finding childcare easier if there are smaller holiday blocks instead of the long summer holidays.

These are just some of the issues the parent forum brought up but we are aware that it is a topic that many parents are going to have an opinion on. In the first instance we need to collect up the views of as many parents as possible which we can then take to the secondary schools. In particular views regarding Christmas holidays ie. how much time would people like at Christmas 10 days, 2 weeks, 3 weeks ? and Summer holidays, 3 weeks, 4 weeks etc.

AY will draft a questionnaire for the Parent Forum to look at.

2. Website/Newsletter

The school would like to move over to a system where a newsletter is not produced weekly and sent out to all parents. This is fairly time consuming. The information that is currently put onto the newsletter would all be incorporated into a new website that is currently being developed. An email would still be sent to parents on a weekly basis with news/dates and a link to the website. Printed screenshots will be available for those without access to the internet. The parent forum all thought this was a great idea and wouldn't make much difference to parents. Parents are used to going online to look at the newsletter.

3. School Facebook page

There was a brief discussion about the school facebook page. It was felt that this is a good platform for the school to share information and news. Only photographs of those who have consented are used on the page and all the schools usual strict risk procedures are carried out.

4. E-safety in School

Schools computers are heavily filtered and there is a system in place for reporting and logging any inappropriate websites that are accessed. Miss Down shows year 5 and 6 how to safely set up apps and social media. KS2 also have a questionnaire to complete.

A police child safety officer has offered to come into school to do both child-led and adult-led talks and this will be arranged.

Meeting ended : 10.15 am

Next meeting : Friday 20th November at 9.00 am