

Home Farm Primary School – Parent Forum meeting

Friday 25th November 2016, 2:15pm

Present – Mr Potter; Mr Macfarlane; Mrs Rivett; Mrs Hayton; Mrs King; Mrs Mansfield; Mrs Wright; Mrs Nesbitt; Mrs Wilkins; Mrs Turvil; Mrs Newson; Mrs Khan; Mrs Harrison; Mr Travi; Mrs Heard; Mrs Rudkin; Mrs Carlin

1. Mr Potter welcomed parents to the meeting.

Earwig online learning journey

2. The school had recently started using an online tool from Earwig Academic which enabled staff to create a digital learning journey, and Mr Potter invited feedback from Class R parents who had had a chance to try it. Mrs King commented that she liked it, and it had been good to see video as well as photo. It was not clear how parents could send comments back to the school and whether photos would be automatically deleted after three months, but the school would seek clarification on this. The Earwig app referred to the ability for parents to pay a small sum to download all of the photos of their child, but Mrs King had asked Earwig about this and they had said that the functionality was not available yet.

Lunchtimes

3. The school had obtained eight new large round dining tables which folded and unfolded automatically. The Parent Forum commented that feedback from children had been very positive and that children liked the way the tables enabled them to mix with others outside of their year groups.

Twitter feedback

4. The school was trialling a Twitter account to enable it to communicate with parents in different ways. Parents asked whether the school had considered a Facebook account and Mr Potter confirmed there were no plans for this at the moment, and Facebook was not accessible in school due to the local authority filters. Parents noted that it was possible to set up an account to enable comments to be moderated before being published. The school was also setting up the newsfeed on the website (which linked to the mobile app) to be able to publish class news.

Breakfast Club and after school club

5. The school was consulting on breakfast and after school club provision, but so far there had only been a small number of responses. The Parent Forum discussed the likely level of interest in after school club provision and the range of options available including the type of food available and the possible pricing structure. The school would resend the link to the online survey to parents.

Class 3 and 4 PE changing

6. Mrs Khan thanked Mr Potter and staff for finding a solution to the issue of Class 3 and 4 changing for PE.

Homework

7. Some parents asked the school not to provide any homework over the Christmas holidays, but it was noted that there were varying views on this. Parents asked whether more space could be provided on the homework sheet for the answer to maths practice questions to be written. Although children could show working out on the back or in their homework book, some liked to write the final answer next to the question. Mr Potter would look at this and the school would keep monitoring issues relating to homework.

Security of personal possessions

8. A parent asked whether the school would look at issues relating to the security of personal possessions such as pencil cases and earrings, and whether the school would provide lockers for the children. This had followed an incident in which a pair of earrings had been lost after being removed for PE. Mr Potter noted that the school did not expect children to bring possessions such as pencil cases to school as everything they needed was available in school. The incident referred to had been a one-off and there was not an issue with security in school. All classes had been reminded that earrings, if worn, should be removed for PE and put on the teacher's desk, although it was better if earrings were not worn on PE days. Mr Potter explained that the school didn't have space for lockers or the money to purchase them, and he did not see that there was a need for them.
9. It was noted that it was now County policy that earrings were removed for PE – they could no longer be taped for health and safety reasons.
10. Parents asked how phones were kept in school, and Mr Potter explained that if older children brought phones in, they were locked in the cupboard by Mrs Smith, and the children had to demonstrate that they were turned off.

Fundraising

11. A class representative passed on a query about why the school had not had any fundraising activity for Children in Need. Mr Potter explained that the school had raised money for Children in Need in previous years, but tried to be selective about supporting charitable causes so that there were not too many requests of parents. The school was likely to support other similar national events later in the year such as Comic Relief.

Parents Evening

12. A Class R parent asked why there wasn't another Class R parents evening at the end of this term. Mr Potter explained that the school ran three parents' evenings a year for each class – one per term. The Class R parents' evening in the autumn term took place earlier than for the other classes, so that parents could discuss how well children were settling in. He noted that parents were welcome to speak to teachers at any other points in the year if they wanted more information or feedback, or to discuss something specific.

Diary dates

13. A parent asked for clarification of the date of the Christmas carol service. This was taking place on Tuesday 20th December at 9:30, with the children's Christmas lunch taking place later the same day. An email was subsequently sent to parents clarifying this. Mr Potter noted that the school was considering Class R *not* attending the carol service this year. The school would reserve seats for helpers again this year.

Essex County Council consultation on school expansion

14. The Parent Forum discussed the recent announcement that Essex County Council would be consulting on the expansion of Home Farm to a two-form entry primary school. Parents asked whether there would be any parental involvement in the plan for the new buildings. Mr Potter explained that there were no designs as yet, but that these would be put together by the local authority and there was not likely to be much scope for parents to be involved in the designs. Parents would however be kept informed of progress. The current plans involved using space which was not particularly useable in its current form.
15. Parents asked which classes would be moved to the new building, and Mr Potter explained that it was likely that older age groups would be in the new classrooms, as space standards for new classrooms were smaller than for some of Home Farm's existing classrooms. However if it was the case that KS1 and KS2 were split

between different buildings, they would still very much be part of the same school, and aspects of school life valued by parents, such as the 'buddy' system, would be retained.

16. Parents asked how new classes would be filled, and Mr Potter explained that the school was currently oversubscribed and was likely to be able to fill two reception classes each year relatively quickly. When the local authority deemed there were sufficient numbers in a particular cohort, they would ask the school to open a new class further up the school. Total numbers in the cohort would be divided between two classes, and there may be smaller class sizes for a while. New classrooms would either be closed, or used for other purposes until they were needed.
17. Parents asked whether the council would consider making the road one-way. Mr Potter explained that he had asked for this previously without success. Parents discussed the value of them lobbying the council if they wanted to influence decisions on traffic. The Parent Forum discussed the need to be respectful of local residents and their interests.

Date of next meeting

18. Mr Potter thanked all those present for attending the meeting. The next meeting would take place on Friday 13th January 2017.