

Home Farm Primary School – Parent Forum

Friday 20 January 2017, 14:15

Present – Mrs Jackson; Mrs Harden; Mrs Ciobotaru; Mrs Nesbitt; Mrs Mansfield; Mrs Hayton; Mrs Khan; Mrs Rudkin; Mrs Newson; Mr Travi; Mrs King; Mrs Wright; Mr Potter, Mrs Carlin

Apologies – Mrs Turvil; Mrs Wilkins

Minutes of the previous meeting

1. Mr Potter welcomed parents to the meeting. There were no comments on the minutes of the previous meeting or matters arising.

Zones of regulation

2. Mr Potter provided an overview of a new approach being used in school to help children recognise and regulate their sensory and emotional needs. The approach encouraged and supported to children to recognise which of four 'zones of regulation' they were in. Broadly:
 - Blue – reflected low energy or mood;
 - Green – meant a state of being alert and ready to learn;
 - Yellow – recognised there may be a need for children to calm themselves;
 - Red – was a state in which a child was not in control, e.g. they may be angry.
3. There were two main benefits to the adoption of this framework. Firstly, the approach helped to develop metacognition – enabling children to recognise their needs and feelings and the state in which they learned best. Secondly, the approach helped adults to deploy strategies when necessary and to help catch situations before they happened.
4. Mr Potter explained that the school was at an early stage of adopting the framework. It had been explained to the children and there was a display in each classroom. It was already making a difference in the KS2 classes. Parents asked whether children were asked how they were feeling on a regular basis, and Mr Potter explained that this was the case, and that children were asked to assess themselves. To be able to verbalise how they were feeling was a higher order skill. Parents noted that Year 2 had been discussing this as part of their circle time.
5. Parents asked whether children were asked to self-assess in their books, and whether this would be consolidated with the coloured dots already used to assess learning. Mr Potter explained that there was no single way in which the framework would be used as it had many applications, but that children would be asked to self-assess.

Multi-academy trust status

6. Mr Potter noted that the Governing Body's ongoing consideration of the formation of a multi-academy trust was a standing item on the agenda for the Parent Forum. He provided an update, explaining that six local schools were discussing the formation of a MAT. Individual school identities would remain, but there would be collaboration across a range of matters. If a decision was taken to move ahead with this, there would be consultation with parents and staff.

Essex County Council consultation on the expansion of Home Farm

7. A drop-in event had taken place the previous week, and had focused on the local authority's strategy for school places in Colchester as a whole. Mr Potter provided an overview of the need for additional places in Colchester, in the context of major new housing developments. The local authority was currently considering building a single story extension to Home Farm on the grass outside the Years 3, 5 and 6 classroom, to contain eight new classrooms. A small part of the woodland area might be lost in order to maintain a playground of sufficient size.

8. The tendering process was currently ongoing, and contractors would present design proposals including any remodelling of hall, kitchen and office space. The school placed a high priority on ensuring that the hall was big enough to hold the whole school at once.
9. The Parent Forum discussed the proposals, and the following points were made.
 - In terms of timing, the local authority' intention was for a new EYFS class to be open in 2018. Other year groups would then be open as when there was a need. In the short term, this might mean some smaller class sizes.
 - The build times would be relatively short due to the design – other local schools had had new builds completed very quickly.
 - Any building works taking place during term time would be managed safely and well, with the majority of the most invasive works taking place out of term time.
 - The new building would meet current building regulations in terms of safety and design and the ability to withstand extremes of weather, temperature or other events.

Issues raised by parents

10. Parents asked whether homework days had changed. Mr Potter explained that there had been some changes this term to when teachers had their planning, preparation and assessment time, and this was why the days on which homework was issued had changed. However all teachers gave the children a full week to do the homework regardless of the day on which it was set.
11. A parent provided some feedback from other parents on Earwig, stating that it was not very mobile friendly, and the system did not provide automatic notifications that it had been updated. The school would clarify whether an app was available, and consider further discussion with parents about the use of Earwig.
12. A parent commented on the Scopay online payments system and asked whether there was scope for the system to save card details or for parents to load money in advance to be taken as and when needed. Parents also asked whether there was scope for notifications to be sent when dinner money was getting low or was used up. The school would clarify this.
13. Parents asked whether the school was planning another e-safety evening. Mr Potter confirmed that a date would be arranged. He provided an overview of the teaching of e-safety within the computing curriculum. In terms of e-safety at home, it was difficult to provide definitive advice on apps which were 'appropriate' as what was available moved so quickly, but in general he advised that children should not be left alone to explore the digital world, but should be using a shared device, in a shared place within the home. It was also important to teach children how to respond when they did see something that they didn't like online.

Date of next meeting

14. Mr Potter thanked parents for attending. The next meeting would take place on Friday 10th February at 2:15pm.
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