

Home Farm Primary School – Parent Forum

29th September 2017

Present: Mr Potter (Headteacher); Mrs Rivett (Chair of Governors); Mrs Khan; Mrs Turvil; Mrs Hayton; Mrs King; Mrs Mansfield; Mrs Ciobotaru; Dr Catmull; Mr Greatorex; Mrs Nesbitt; Mrs Newson; Mrs Reeve; Mr Reeve; Mrs Wright; Mrs Fisher; Mrs Carlin

Minutes of the previous meeting

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were available on the school website.

Class representatives

2. All parents and carers are welcome to attend Parent Forum meetings. However we also have a system of class representatives. If a parent wishes to raise an issue but can't make a meeting, they can do so through their class representative. The following parents agreed to act as class representatives for this school year:

Class R	Mrs Fisher, Mrs Reeve
Class 1	Mrs King
Class 2	Mrs Turvil
Class 3	Mrs Hayton, Mrs Khan
Class 4	Mrs Turvil
Class 5	Mrs Newson, Mrs Khan
Class 6	Mrs Hayton

Academies

3. Mr Potter provided an update on the school's ongoing consideration of the Government's policies on the creation of academies, and consideration of whether to form or join a Multi-Academy Trust. It was clear that this was still on the Government's agenda. The financial context had changed following the removal of a strand of Government funding called the Education Services Grant, but the role of the local authority as the Local Education Authority was also changing. The Governing Body had taken the position not to proceed with the formation of a MAT at this point.
4. Parents asked whether some of the schools with whom Home Farm had been in discussion were still considering forming a MAT, and Mr Potter confirmed that some were. Parents asked whether costs could be shared when schools grouped together or worked together, and Mr Potter explained that there was scope for sharing costs.

Expansion of Home Farm

5. Mr Potter provided an update on the Essex County Council plans for the expansion of Home Farm. Work on this was continuing, and the local authority was intending to build a new block of classrooms beside the existing school, with a view to increasing the size of the school from September 2018. Mr Potter explained that the plans were to increase the size of Home Farm, not to build a separate school on the same site.
6. Mr Potter provided an overview of the plans for building work, and the changes that were envisaged, including 8 new classrooms, a dance studio or small hall, and reconfiguration of some of the spaces in the existing school. Parents asked a number of questions.
 - Would the kitchen be expanded and would meal times be the same when the school was bigger? Mr Potter explained that although the footprint of the kitchen would remain the same, there were plans to reconfigure the space to allow for a larger number of meals to be produced. Initially, meal times would remain the same. The school may need to look at options as the school started to grow, but it would be important not to impact on educational time.
 - Were children allowed to eat packed lunches outside? Mr Potter confirmed that they were allowed to eat outside if they wanted to.

- Would the school be taking two EYFS classes from September 2018? Mr Potter confirmed that this was the case. There was a considerable pressure on school places in Colchester, and there were lots of children without places who had a continued interest in Home Farm.
- Would the school consider composite age group classes as it got bigger? Mr Potter explained that he would prefer not to do this. In the light of the pressure on school places, the school was also taking some additional children in Year 3 and 4 in the current school year. The school was being proactive in agreeing to this, so that expansion could be managed on the school's own terms. Additional funding resulting from the additional children would be used to employ more staff in those classes, which meant that new staff could be trained and up to speed on the school's expectations and procedures before the wider expansion began the following year.
- How would the new classrooms be used? Mr Potter explained that initially, Years 5 and 6 would move to the new classrooms. This would enable the staff and children to learn and embed new routines in relation to the use of the new building, its communal areas, its entrances and exits and its toilets before a larger number of children moved in.
- Would there be changing rooms in the new block? Mr Potter confirmed that there were not changing rooms, so arrangements for changing for PE would need to be managed, as they were at the moment in the existing block.
- How different would the new block and the expanded school feel? Mr Potter explained that the school should not feel any different other than in the number of children. The leadership structure had been built and developed in order to prepare for expansion and to provide consistency throughout the process.
- Would Shelley Road be made one way? Mr Potter explained that the roads were a matter for the Highways Agency. Any parents wishing to comment on the highways situation might want to consider contacting their local Councillor.
- When the school was two-form entry, would children remain in the same class or group for their whole time at the school? Mr Potter explained that changes to the way classes were organised might well be made during the course of a child's time at the school. Staff would take account of who worked well together. Changing class organisation would be handled with care, and could help to build social resilience and widen circles of friends.
- Would additional children come from within the catchment area or outside? This was difficult to predict. The catchment area had been defined in 1966 and the area had changed significantly since then. The admissions criteria would remain the same – with priority being given to looked after children, siblings, and then on the basis of distance from school.

Prospective parents for September 2018

7. Mr Potter explained that the school was organising its arrangements for prospective parents differently this year, in the light of the large numbers of families wishing to look at what Home Farm had to offer. An open evening would be held on Tuesday 21st November, and this was open to anyone with an interest in the school. Parents living within the catchment area were also welcome to book a space for a tour of the school within the school day. Parents asked whether there was a benefit in existing parents attending if they had another child starting school in September 2018, and Mr Potter explained that it was always useful to have existing families attend events such as this, and that all were welcome.
8. Parents asked whether there would be a tour of the new buildings when they were open, and this would be arranged.

Tapestry online learning journey

9. The school had subscribed to a piece of educational software called Tapestry, which would be used to create and share an online learning journal for Class R children. This replaced the Earwig system which the school had used the previous year. Parents would be provided with log in details the following week.
10. Parents asked whether other classes would use Tapestry, and Mr Potter explained that it would just be Class R, but teachers in other classes used a number of channels to communicate with parents including Open Classrooms; parents' evenings; the school website and their weekly homework sheets.

11. Parents asked whether the school's photos and video had been removed from the Earwig server, and it was confirmed that this was the case.

School photos

12. Individual school photographs were being taken later in October and some samples with different backgrounds were shown to the Parent Forum. The Parent Forum suggested that the School Council be asked to choose.

Issues raised by parents

13. Parents asked why last year's Year 2 had not been on an educational visit. Mr Potter reassured parents that this cohort would have the chance to go on a visit this year. Parents asked whether children *had* to go on school trips that were arranged. Mr Potter explained that the school preferred it if all children attended visits, but children did not have to attend. Attending visits was helpful to build their resilience. In addition, if insufficient parents made financial contributions to visits, they could not run.

14. A parent commented on the Sports Day which had taken place in July 2017, and noted that there had been no running races for KS1 children in the way there was for KS2 children. Mr Potter explained that this year, the school had tried broadening the KS2 Sports Day to cover track *and* field events, and children had been able to express a preference for the events they had taken part in. For KS1, the children had been given opportunities to participate, and there had been competition and recognition involved. The school would consider using the track and field approach with KS1 children next year.

15. A parent asked whether the building work would impact on the swimming pool, and Mr Potter confirmed that it would not. The pool was still operational.

16. A parent asked when the 5th non-pupil day would be this school year, and whether it could be on 29th March before the Easter holiday. The Governing Body would take a decision on the 5th non-pupil day soon.

17. The Parent Forum discussed the use of bad language by parents on the playground at pick-up times, and Mr Potter would address this.

Date of next meeting

18. The next meeting would take place on Friday 20th October at 2:15pm – all parents and carers were welcome to attend.