

**Home Farm Primary School Parent Forum meeting**  
**Friday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

Present: Mr Potter; Mr Travi; Mrs Khan; Mrs Hayton; Mrs Reeve; Mrs Fisher; Mrs Turvil; Mrs Mansfield; Mr Greatorex; Mrs King. Apologies – Mrs Nesbitt

**Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**

1. Actions from the November 2017 meeting had been taken forward, including communication with parents about pen licenses. There were no other matters arising.

**Update on school expansion and build**

2. Construction work on the new classrooms was due to begin during January 2018. Mr Potter shared some plans which showed how the construction site would be laid out and secured. Once it was established, health and safety on the site was the responsibility of the contractor Morgan Sindall. Access to the site would be through the Burns Avenue gate. Deliveries would take place outside of school drop-off and pick-up times.
3. Part of the current playground would be within the construction site, and the school had put in place plans to manage break times and lunch times within a smaller space. This included zoning the available areas and making use of the EYFS play area, the play equipment and the playground. This would only be an issue whilst the field was too muddy to use, and as soon as possible, the children would be allowed back on the field again.
4. The car park was being levelled and improved, and it was possible that the playground might need to be used for parking for three days in the week beginning 26<sup>th</sup> March, but further details about this and the impact on pick up and drop off would be provided.
5. Between now and April, the children would be allowed to enter the classrooms when they arrived at school in the morning during wet weather. This contingency might also be used in dry weather if it was necessary but Mr Potter would monitor this. The school might also consider Class R and Class 1 children being picked up from outside the hall (as had been done during the icy weather) but parents would be informed if this was the case.
6. Parents asked a number of questions about the plans:
  - Was the pond being removed? – the pond was being removed to accommodate the new classrooms, and the wildlife area would be re-shaped. The willow dome would remain in place. An ecologist would supervise these works. There would be some further trees removed from the site but new trees would be planted.
  - What would happen to the vegetable garden? This was being relocated to the area next to the EYFS play area.
  - Would the topsoil bund be fenced off? Yes, this area would be fenced and secure.
  - Would there be a covered walkway between the two blocks? This was not included in the Essex County Council-funded project but the school would look to fund this in future.

**Academies**

7. Mr Potter explained that there was no further update on the Governing Body's ongoing consideration of the academies agenda at this point.

## Issues raised by parents

8. A parent had raised two points by email:
  - Homework sheets were not always being posted on the school website – Mr Potter would monitor this. The old school strapline was used on some sheets – the school would address this.
  - Year 5 parents had been asked to pay a deposit for the Kingswood residential at the same time as a voluntary contribution for the astronomy roadshow. Mr Potter noted this and the school would continue to ensure that contributions were scheduled appropriately.
9. A parent commented that Class 1 children were sometimes leaving school after 3:10pm. This class was further away from the playground and it was taking some time to get all the children out and to the playground. Mr Potter would address this.
10. A parent commented that there was sometimes a time lag between things happening in the EYFS class and observations being published on Tapestry. Mr Potter explained that there was always likely to be something of a time lag due to the limited availability of staff to upload observations.
11. A parent asked about issues with the school roof as referred to in a recent newsletter, and whether there were any safety implications. Mr Potter explained that a number of surveys had been carried out, and there were not any safety implications, but the roof was leaking in a number of places. The school was in discussion with the local authority about this.
12. Parents commented on extra-curricular clubs, and noted that the Monday after school girls' football club had been extended to Year 3. Parents asked why there were charges made for some football training sessions and not others, and it was noted that this depended on whether the school had to pay for the adult providing the coaching. If there was a cost to the school, a small amount of this was passed on to parents by making a small charge for the club.
13. Parents discussed the autumn term reports issued for children in Years 1 to 6 in December. The reports had not included a 'general comment' about the child – there had been a reference to this made in the covering letter in error. The Autumn and Spring term reports were less extensive than the summer term one, due in part to the staff resources needed to create the more personalised summer term reports. It was important to get the balance of teacher time right between teaching, assessment and reporting to parents. Reports were sent before parents' evenings so that more personal feedback could be given during the parent – teacher discussion. The school would review the EYFS to Year 1 transition letter to explain this.
14. Parents discussed the maths packs which were available in KS1, which contained maths-related games. Mrs Marks was looking at the possibility of handing these out to Class 1 children to take home to play at home.
15. Parents asked for clarification of the school's policy on snacks at break time. All children in KS1 were provided with a free healthy snack. Children could buy snacks from the tuck shop – these were reasonably healthy snacks but not fresh fruit or vegetables, and for this reason the tuck shop was only available once or twice a week. Children in KS2 could bring a healthy snack from home. The school asked that parents do not send in sweets, crisps, chocolate or nuts and that snacks were as healthy as possible.

16. A parent raised a specific question about the availability of Cool Milk in Year 3 – the school would investigate this.
17. Parents asked whether children having packed lunches were supposed to take drinks available to children having school dinners. Water was always available at lunchtimes, but milk was for children having school dinners.
18. Parents asked which reading scheme the school used. Mr Potter explained that the school did not use a single scheme, but mixed and matched the best of a number of schemes. He provided an overview of the school's approach and how it worked. Parents sometimes commented to class teachers that their child needed to 'move up' and Mr Potter explained the importance of the children being able to decode and understand texts and answer questions about them before they moved on, as well as being able to read the words. This included understanding social issues which were sometimes reflected in the books, or understanding the way that grammar was applied. Book bands were not a race and should not be treated as such – it was important that children were able to build up their understanding.
19. It was important for children to be heard to read aloud at school and at home, even when children were proficient readers. This could help with confidence, pronunciation and inflection. If stamina was an issue when reading aloud, a useful approach could be for the child to read a page, and then the adult to read a page.
20. Mr Potter thanked parents for attending the meeting. The next meeting would take place on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> February at 2:15pm – all parents and carers were welcome to attend.