

Home Farm Primary School – Parent Forum meeting - Friday 5th October 2018

Welcome and minutes of the previous meeting

1. Mr Potter welcomed parents to the meeting. He explained that the Parent Forum meets monthly, and is an opportunity to share ideas and feedback about what's going on in school.
2. The minutes of the July 2018 meeting were available on the school website. Mr Potter ran through progress on the issues discussed. The after-school club was now up and running. Parents made a number of comments on the after-school club:
 - A parent asked why a hot meal was provided and whether a light snack would be more appropriate and would make it possible for the school to reduce the price of the club;
 - Other parents commented that they welcomed the hot meal and that this added value and did make the price reasonable on comparison to the fees that child minders would charge;
 - Parents asked whether a sibling discount could be provided or a reduced fee for a long-term booking;
 - One parent commented that her child had enjoyed after-school club, and that it was very positive that support with reading and phonics was provided at the club.
3. Mr Potter confirmed that the main priority for the school had been to get the club up and running, without generating a financial loss to the school. The school would review the pricing structure once there was some income and expenditure data.

Class representatives

4. Mr Potter explained that in previous years, there had been a parent representative for each class. This was someone who could raise issues on behalf of other parents who were not able to attend or did not wish to raise something directly. Minutes of the meetings were always shared with all parents through the school website. The Parent Forum agreed to continue with the system of representatives. Class representatives for the current school year would be:

Bloom (R)	Mrs Gamble
Rosen (R)	Mrs Wilson
Seuss (1)	Mrs Fisher and Mrs Reeve
Duffy (2)	Mrs King
Carroll (3)	Mrs Turvil
Lear (4)	Mrs Hayton
Zephaniah (4)	Mrs Nesbitt
Rossetti (5)	Mrs Turvil and Mrs Gamble
McGough (6)	Mrs Heard

5. The Parent Forum discussed how to let parents know who their representative was. It was agreed that the school should tell parents through the newsletter and website, and that parents should ask Mr Potter or the class teacher to point their representative out to them if they don't know them.

Update on the expansion and build

6. Mr Potter provided an update on the ongoing expansion of the school. The scaffolding would be removed during the October half-term. There would be some further scaffolding subsequent to that to allow the solar panels to be re-installed on the roof, but this would be done from the car park and would not affect the main areas of the school. The next Open Classrooms session was taking place on Thursday 11th October from 3:15 to 3:45pm, and parents were welcome to come and take a look at the new building.

Progression Assembly

7. Mr Potter explained the system of Progression Assemblies which had been used by the school previously. These assemblies took place half-termly and focused on a specific element of the curriculum, with each class doing a short presentation on what they had been learning. This was being revisited in the light of the expanding school, and feedback from parents was sought.
8. Parents suggested that the school have separate KS1 and KS2 Progression Assemblies, and the school would consider this further. A parent commented that some dates for Progression Assemblies had been cancelled in the previous school year. Mr Potter noted that sometimes things changed for unavoidable reasons, but the school did endeavour to give as much notice as possible of events, and to avoid date changes where possible.

Access to school building at the end of the day

9. Mr Potter updated parents on the way that access to the school building was managed after the end of the school day. As there were children in school in after-school clubs, and the school was a working space, it was important for the school to manage access to the buildings after school. Some parents were asking to use the toilets after playing at the next door playground for a while, and by this point the toilets had already been cleaned, so this was difficult to accommodate.
10. The Parent Forum discussed these issues. Some parents commented that children were leaving school without jumpers or coats, and Mr Potter explained that he had asked teachers to do a final check with children that they had everything they needed. The need to return to school to collect forgotten things would reduce as the children got older, but in the meantime parents should come to the office if something that was needed urgently was forgotten, or ask the teacher in the playground for help.
11. Parents asked where lost property was kept. This was kept in the office, and was regularly laid out at events such as parents' evenings. Staff did endeavour to return items with a name on to children, but there were lots of unnamed items.

School meals

12. The school would be moving to the winter menu from October half-term, and Mr Potter provided an overview of the new menu and the new items on it. The school had to manage a number of different factors including the importance of expanding children's tastes; meeting the school nutritional standards; delivering meals within a budget; and ensuring that take-up remained high as funding was awarded on the basis of take-up. Parents provided feedback on the menu. Mr Potter explained that he was interested in having an 'experimental' day on Week 3 Fridays, in which different menu options were tested and discussed with the children.

Issues raised by parents

13. Parents raised the issue of dogs at the school gate, commenting that it could be intimidating for children who were nervous around dogs. Mr Potter explained that he had spoken to parents when necessary, but that otherwise there were not many courses of action open to him. He explained that the school was creating a second access point at the Burns Avenue gate, which would lessen the pressure on the Shelley Road gate. The Parent Forum discussed how this might work at drop-off and pick-up times. It was agreed that once the new gate was open, it would be opened in the morning only at this point.
14. Parents discussed children bringing bikes to school. Mr Potter confirmed that children were welcome to cycle to school and to leave their bikes in the cycle shelter. Bikes were safe in the school grounds during the day, but should not be left overnight.
15. A parent commented that the playground seemed daunting in the morning for new Reception children, and asked whether Reception parents would be able to drop their children off somewhere else, perhaps directly at the door to the classroom. Mr Potter explained that this was not possible for safeguarding purposes. The drop-off arrangements were also part of the process of building independence and resilience, and parents should be reassured that once they are within the school grounds, they are safe.
16. A parent asked whether children had help to open yoghurts at lunchtime. Mr Potter explained that Midday Assistants encouraged children to learn new skills, but that children could put their hands up for help.
17. Some parents commented that some KS1 children with packed lunches had said that they were being rushed to finish their lunch or were not finishing before it was time to return to class. Mr Potter explained that he was monitoring lunchtimes very closely. The processes had been slow initially when two new Reception classes had joined the school, but things had sped up significantly and the kitchen had generally finished serving all the children having dinners by 12:35. This would be monitored on an ongoing basis.
18. A parent commented that there had been an occasion when there had only been fruit left as dessert for children entering the dining hall later on in the lunchtime. Mr Potter explained that on roast dinner days, the dessert was often fruit or fruit salad.
19. Parents noted the ongoing issues of car parking at drop-off and pick-up times. The school continued to encourage parents to park safely and responsibly.
20. A parent asked whether a follow-up letter would be sent following the recent meeting for Year 1 parents about the expansion of the cohort. Mr Potter noted that all families had been represented at the meeting, but if any parents wanted further information or had any concerns, they should feel free to come and speak to him. Parents asked whether there were plans to expand any other year groups, and Mr Potter explained that this was a matter for Essex County Council, but that it was likely there would not be any further expansion until the next school year.
21. A parent provided some feedback on the service provided by school uniform provider School Trends. An order had been placed in June but items were only just being despatched. The school was happy to provide feedback to School Trends on parents' behalf if necessary.
22. The next meeting would take place on Friday 9th November at 2:15pm – all parents and carers are welcome to attend.