

Home Farm Primary School

Parent Forum - Friday 11th January 2019 – Minutes

Present: Mr Potter; Mrs King; Mrs Reeve; Mrs Fisher; Mrs Wright; Mrs Jackson; Mrs Wilson; Mrs Williams; Mrs Hayton; Mrs Turvil; Mrs Whiteford; Mrs Lambert; Mrs Gamble; Mrs Nesbitt; Mrs Carlin (minutes).

Welcome and minutes of the previous meeting

1. Mr Potter welcomed parents to the meeting. The minutes of the previous meeting had been posted on the Parent Forum page of the school website.

Update on expansion

2. Mr Potter provided an update on the ongoing expansion of the school. The additional Year 1 class was now open and accepting pupils. There were currently 41 children in the Year 1 cohort. Mrs Marks and Mrs Ketley were team teaching, and all of the children had the chance to spend time in both classrooms with both teachers. Mr Potter noted that he had been impressed with the way the Year 1 teachers had hit the ground running in terms of working together as a single unit.
3. The children had been divided into Seuss A and Seuss B for administrative purposes (for recording the register and ordering school meals). At the end of the following week, staff would look at how the children were working together in different combinations. The cohort would in due course become Seuss class and Donaldson class.
4. Parents asked whether there would be any further expansion this school year. Mr Potter explained that the school was accepting children into the places in Year 4 and Year 1 as and when applications were made. There was considerable pressure for places in Year 2 and Year 5. He did not anticipate any further expansions in this academic year, however this was a matter for Essex County Council.

Issues raised by parents

5. Parents from Rosen class had raised a number of issues through their class representative Mrs Wilson. Parents had asked about the school's safeguarding arrangements for the Christmas performances. This was with specific reference to how the school controlled who was in the audience, and how the school managed the opportunity for parents to take photographs at the end of the performance.
6. Mr Potter explained that the school had offered all parents the opportunity to have two spaces in each day's performance. There had been no physical tickets as this added a layer of complexity to the administration. School staff were present in the hall at all times during the performance, and the school took account of the photographic permissions already in place. Some parents had used their two spaces for each performance by attending twice, and some had used them for extended family members. School staff generally knew the families, and the risk involved was managed and very low.
7. The Parent Forum discussed the way this had worked and it was agreed:
 - That the school would do a general request to parents at the beginning of performances not to share any photos on social media;
 - That the school would investigate having photos taken centrally (by the school, or HFSA for instance) and then making them available to parents.

8. Mr Potter explained that as the school continued to expand, in the school year beginning September 2019, EYFS and Year 2 would take part in Christmas performances, and not Year 1. The Year 1 children tended to have the smaller, chorus parts in the Year 1 and 2 Christmas performance, and they would have another opportunity to participate when they moved into Year 2.
9. Parents had asked whether there would be any changes to the After School Club menu this term. There were no plans for immediate changes, but the school was very happy to receive any feedback from parents on this. The menu needed to meet the School Food Standards but the meal did not need to be a hot meal. Food was prepared in the afternoon and then kept warm safely until 4:15pm, so any menus used needed to be suitable for this. The school agreed to seek further comments from parents on this.
10. Parents had asked when the non-pupil days for the 2019-20 academic year were. These had been confirmed and they were:
 - Tuesday 3rd September 2019;
 - Wednesday 4th September 2019;
 - Monday 4th November 2019;
 - Monday 20th April 2020;
 - Monday 1st June 2020.
11. Parents asked when new EYFS children would start school in September 2019, and Mr Potter confirmed that induction was likely to start on Thursday 5th September.
12. Parents had asked whether it was possible to organise a phonics workshop for parents – Mr Potter would discuss this with Mrs Child.
13. Parents from Seuss class had raised some questions through their class representative Mrs Reeve. Parents had asked why they had not been kept up to date about the teaching arrangements for the expanded Year 1 cohort. Mr Potter explained that the plans had been outlined to parents at a meeting in the Autumn term, and this had been followed up with a letter once new teaching and LSA staff had been recruited. A further email had been sent to parents the previous week explaining that pupils had been divided into Seuss A and Seuss B for administrative and registration purposes, but that this did not represent a final decision on class allocation. Mr Potter noted that there had been some discussion of some of these issues on a Whatsapp group, and Mr Potter encouraged all parents to come and speak to him directly if they had any concerns or questions.
14. Parents had asked why new teachers had been paired with new LSAs rather than more experienced ones. Mr Potter explained that teaching and LSA staff working in Year 1 were all highly experienced, and that he had every professional confidence that experienced staff who were new to Home Farm would pick up the processes and ethos of the school very quickly.
15. Parents had commented on blue books being checked for messages. Mr Potter confirmed that these were checked regularly, and that he and Mrs Smith also checked these in terms of regular reading at home. Other parents present commented that an alternative way of passing on an urgent message such as a change of collection arrangements for that day was to email the school office – the email address is admin@homefarm.essex.sch.uk.

16. Parents had commented that their children were not drinking enough during the day. Mr Potter confirmed that children were allowed access to their water at all times, and would drink when they were thirsty. Water was very readily available in school; and sometimes water bottles were re-filled during the course of the school day.
17. Parents had asked whether there could be an allocated space where each class stood when leaving the school at the end of the day. Mr Potter explained that the procedure was that staff bring the children outside, with the adult at the head of the line, and that children leave in an orderly way. He confirmed that KS1 children left at 3:10, and KS2 children at 3:15pm. Parents present noted that they welcomed the senior leadership presence on the playground at the start and end of the school day, and encouraged other parents to make use of this and to speak directly to staff if they had any questions or concerns.
18. Mr Potter invited any other comments or questions from those parents present. Parents asked whether there were plans to do any further first aid training for pupils and Mr Potter confirmed that there would be further training for KS2 children. The Parent Forum discussed the location of de-fibrillators locally, including whether details of locations could be shared by the school on its website, and whether the school itself would consider being a location.
19. A parent asked what kind of assessment information the school received from previous schools when children transferred mid-year, and how the school avoided children reading books they had already read. Mr Potter explained what kind of information the school received from previous schools – this included the child's Unique Pupil Number and assessment information. In terms of reading books, staff would identify an initial reading band for a child, and then children can choose their reading books from within that band. In some cases that choice was 'guided' by LSAs. Staff would adapt the banding regularly until they were confident that this was right. Sometimes children chose books that they had already read because they were familiar to them. Teaching staff were very experienced in dealing with these issues and the school had lots of reading books and schemes available.
20. Mr Potter provided an update on 'Food Taster Fridays'. Meal uptake for the beef bourgignon had been 120 meals, and for fish pie it had been 74. Uptake of the main meal on a normal Friday was closer to 150 – 165 meals. Parents asked how they would know if a child was not eating at lunchtime. Mr Potter confirmed that children were encouraged to eat by MDA staff, and if there were any concerns, parents would be informed.
21. Mr Potter noted that he had included an article in the newsletter that week about uniform expectations. The school had always taken the view that if expectations for all children were the same, nobody had to battle to look better than anyone else. He noted that the school expected shoes and not boots, and no nail varnish should be worn.
22. Mr Potter thanked all parents for attending. The next meeting was taking place on Friday 15th February at 2:15pm – all parents and carers were welcome to attend.