

Parent Reps Minutes 23rd March 2018

Present: Mrs Robinson, Mrs Oakenfold, Mrs Hofener, Mrs Delves, Mrs Jones

1) School Dinners- Julie Watson from Nourish attended to address the following concerns raised by children/parents (parents comments in black, school comments in blue)

- Portions too small - they are always hungry
- Beans are dry and jackets always burnt
- Beef and dumplings - beef was so chewy it was inedible. – This is now off the menu
- Cheese is never grated properly and has big lumps which don't melt.
- Pizza very little sauce and very doughy
- Ketchup is running out before the older ones get in
- Dirty cutlery, plates, cups and trays. This is unacceptable not to mention unhygienic. A half-eaten biscuit was found in one of the cups. A new dishwasher was installed yesterday
- Payments in advance and refunds still slow and time consuming
- Still getting complaints from my two re: school lunches - small portions, food not nice or they have run out of what they wanted
- Same here re school lunches. Portions too small, not hot enough, cutlery dirty, etc! We are all asked for feedback, we give it and then it seems that nothing changes!

KCC on the spot check recently scored highly, but Nourish will investigate this. They will look into everything raised, and parents are encouraged to feed back through the school kitchen for the attention of the Kitchen.

Reps asked for parent taster sessions at 3.15pm pick up time. The payment system will be changing.

2) Should we do more to address negativity and disparaging comments about the school and staff on facebook and other forms of social media? If yes, how can we do this? or should staff and school leadership just ignore negative and malicious posts? This is a challenge for us at the moment so need your help in how best to deal with this.

Mrs Owen read the following comments that had been sent in for discussion:

- I personally don't think negativity or disparaging comments on social media are helpful at all or acceptable and can have a harmful effect on the school's reputation and I do think there should be some repercussion if it is of a harmful nature. That said I am not sure how that can be done. Perhaps the school can have a social media policy that applies to the parents stating that any disparaging comments that are deemed unacceptable will result in Mrs Owen speaking with the parents and taking any appropriate action ... can they do anything else? Not sure if that'll deter but I don't know what else they can do
- I feel that the school should be involved. Perhaps either the Bishops Down page or a phantom member of staff could join each Facebook class group so that if issues arise they can then monitor, address the issue and in extreme cases remove the offender.
- I believe the discord follows a breakdown in communication and a build-up of frustration. The school needs to look at why these people are so frustrated. Could they have listened better/ responded differently? Communication between those involved needs to be established and a clear form of action set up.
- Also do those parents know the correct formal complaint procedures? I don't believe many do and this should be pointed out to parents.
- on social media - one person said maybe best just to ignore
- On a more personal note, as a parent of a larch class child too, I'm not comfortable at all with the idea of the social media issue being debated widely with all the class reps.

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- We do understand that it might be right to remind people to be considerate on line, but think it should be left at that. Otherwise, this risks making the situation worse
- Maybe there should be a reminder of where and how parents can raise concerns and they need to know how they will be responded to.
- I would say ignore it. Just because somebody posts negativity onto social media, it doesn't make what they're posting true. There's two sides to every story and then there's the truth as they say.
- I came across an organisation called The Key for School leaders. They aim to provide information and guidance for school leaders. They have advice and protocol for negative posts on social media, might be worth a look: <https://schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com/pupils-and-parents/engaging-parents-and-carers/resolving-issues/parental-online-abuse-of-schools-advice-and-recourse/>
- Also can't help thinking Kent Council should provide some hand holding in this area-as well as the general guidance.
- This is very tricky as it comes down to freedom of speech, however unpleasant it is you can't tell people not to talk about things.
- However if specific accusations/allegations are being made then that falls into a potential libellous category and then intervention should be required but in an official/police capacity.
- It might be worth the school seeking legal advice on how to word a code of conduct to make it extremely clear how the behaviour is categorised eg Libel vs Slander etc and that that would involve the police etc
- Surely we have parents / ex parents in the legal profession who could advise?
- I'm attaching a letter that was sent to parents at XXXXX school last year from the Chair of the Governors. Some very valid points. Maybe remind parents of the correct procedure- teacher/ head/ governor? A reminder from the head governor could be quite powerful? (I think this was about a lot of criticism aimed at a particular teacher who ended up having a bit of a break down so it really needs to be stopped if it's happening at BD).
- There will always be criticism but if there are malicious posts then people need to be made accountable for that.
- I think there needs to be a code of conduct for parents. We are meant to be teaching our children to be careful on the internet and social media and yet some people do not follow that themselves.
- I completely disagree with any attacks on individual people on class pages and as you are more than aware this class has had its fair share of problems on FB but luckily the people who seem to cause the problems have left. I am aware that one person in particular who has left still seems to bare a grudge.

Mrs Owen explained that KCC and the police will be involved if there are malicious or threatening posts and the school will do this for extreme cases. A new initiative of 'tell us first' will be announced on the newsletter to remind parents to talk to us first before posting concerns on social media. Lot of things the school does ignore on social media, but the comments can upset staff. Reps want reminders out to parents about what is acceptable to discuss on social media and where the borders are, and to give the school a chance to deal with the issue first. Mrs Owen will do more drop in sessions to give parents a chance to raise issues. The reps suggested a meeting for the administrators of the various Facebook class pages to discuss what is acceptable?

3) How can we generate more interest in the PSA?

Mrs Owen read the following comments submitted by parents:

- new parents know very little about the PSA. People would like to be involved but are not sure how and what is involved and often can't make meetings due to the times. Perhaps there could be a welcome talk etc?
- someone mentioned that the PSA are not very approachable?
- PSA interest has been an ongoing issue since I started 5 years ago! It is always the same people. I think we need to engage parents lower down the school and continue to do so from a succession planning point of

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view. Perhaps at the class assemblies a PSA committee member could plea at the end showing how they can make a difference and that they can be involved as much or as little as they can. And at the beginning of any events eg quiz, dinner dance a plea for help!! I know both the treasurer and chair are stepping down so perhaps sending out a PSA newsletter showing the events that are organised and highlighting the money that's raised and what it is spent on and explaining without people willing to step forward, this won't happen.

- encourage parents from the outset. Get them joining as soon as their class starts in reception. Remind them why it's important and ask what they want from PSA.
- Enthusiasm is waning due to ongoing demands on the same people over and over.
- Maybe classes could organise events rather than 1 committee ? How do other schools manage?
- on PSA - one parent said she hadn't heard about the meetings or anything else - but she is a newish parent (so maybe need to check is everyone on parent mail?)
- Maybe hold a shortened meeting after the school day with biscuits and juice, tea coffee etc. Might attract a different crowd?
- truly don't know, parents are simply too busy with work etc etc or have children that are too young , and tbh everyone knows it's a thankless task!!!!
- maybe we could move to a donations system instead?
- PSA is always a tough one and having done a year on the PTA at XXX school, I have nothing but respect for those who are on the committee. However, I'm not actually sure what they are raising money for? Just generally or a specific project? We always knew at XXXX what money was being raised for (e.g. new toilets) and that gave it more of a focus (I may have missed all of this having joined in November). I've had a look on the website and there are only 4 PSA members listed- maybe expanding the numbers? Is there an information day for new parents in the summer with the reception teacher/ head/ governors speaking? The PTA at XXXX would do a small presentation and recruitment campaign at that, even asking for a direct debit to be set up for the governors fund. New blood would always come from the new reception parents. They regularly raised £25k plus a year but were more aggressive in their going after your money! They were also very pro-active in approaching local businesses for raffle prizes- vouchers, tickets etc etc. This is in no way a criticism, I'm just saying that this is what they did to raise funds and that there's a totally different culture there.

The PSA do need more help! The school is getting smaller and so will have less parents and therefore less money.

4) Feedback on Breakfast Club and Afterschool club since Jo Green has been in post. Have you as parents noticed any changes, what do your children think?

Mrs Owen read out the following comments from parents:

- Everyone happy with WAC and not aware of any changes with new management.
- 3. ASC - both mine seem really positive about the new lady. 'X' in particular really likes her, she's really calm and kind (his words!). He commented she is always in ASC which I am not sure was always the case with the manager previously.
- two parents (out of 2) gave positive comments and said Jo is great.
- I've found Jo really friendly, she's made a real effort to get to know the children & their needs. Always happy and chatty most importantly she opens the door on time at breakfast club!!
- My boys love wrap-around care - and always have! As above, Jo seems v friendly and welcoming.
- Not noticed any changes in WAC so far!
- Jo seems very friendly and the children like her – no real changes noticed yet, but it has only been a few weeks.

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Mrs Owen explained that Jo Green had separated out the older children for part of the ASC sessions.

Invoices – plans are in place to change to looking at parents booking online for spaces and the school is currently getting quotes. Parents currently find invoices confusing so Jo hopes to simplify these for September.

5) Behaviour monitors

Mrs Owen was aware of the concerns that Y6 monitors have been over zealous, so Miss Hepden is holding a meeting with behaviour monitors today. Mrs Owen clarified that year 5 as well as year 6 were monitors.

6) Class specific feedback

Nursery: no comments

Chestnut: parents really happy with the school, and impressed with how they coped with the weather and the great communication.

Beech: Thanks to all the staff for what they do. The children are enjoying Yoga. The spelling carousels are welcomed

Apple: no comments

Maple: Thank you for how the snow was dealt with.

Hazel

Forest school is still a big hit and the opportunities such as the author, henna, tai chi are great experience for the children. Very happy with all these activities, thank you so much to the teachers for offering so many fun and educational things to do.

Sycamore: no comments

Redwood: no comments

Pine

- Well done to Miss Ritchie for getting to school from Crowborough during snowmageddon - respect!
- Well done Mrs Owen and the school for coping with the snow. The right decisions were made and another thank you for letting the children play in the snow whilst at school – they all loved it.
- With regards to the cost for swimming lessons - (which never fails to incense me as it's part of the curriculum !) can we request a proper breakdown of the coach cost, swimming instructor etc I'd love to see the charge for the coach for a round trip to and from the pool! [£95.00 per coach per visit](#). Sorry to sound like Scrooge but I feel like I'm forking out every payday at the moment what with camp out, the residential etc etc

Oak: Parents want to know what is happening about the missed swimming session. [This will be refunded to the parents who had paid, as there are not enough weeks left in the term to make it up.](#)

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Larch

- Air conditioning unit for the classroom?
- SATS - Preparation [These take place in May](#)
- Swimming - refund for last lesson? [A letter has gone out about this.](#)
- Fun trips/ activities planned as morale is low. [Y6 Production will be launched to them after SAT's](#)
- Date for Sports Day - Will KS2 be in the morning? [Yes](#)
- Teacher change [This was discussed and a letter sent out to parents of the school's plans.](#)
- Finally, a further concern raised was regarding hygiene at lunch times. It has been noted that children have been seen spitting into the water jugs?!

Outstanding payments from parents this academic year 2017 2018 [updated as at 23.3.18.](#)

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|-------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Y4 Henna | 9 x £5.09 | = £45.81 |
| Y6Larch swim | 1 x £56.00 | = £56.00 |
| | 1 x £28.00 | = £28.00 |
| Y6 Oak swim | 1 x £56.00 | = £56.00 |
| Y6 Safety in Action day | 36 x £11 | =£396.00 |
| Y5 Residential for Y6 | 8 x £80.76 | = £646.08 |
| | 16 x £38.57 | = £617.12 |

(These figures have changed since these minutes were taken.)