

Parent Reps minutes of 22nd January 2015

Present

Dan Turvey, Charlie Moore, Kavi Robinson, Naomi Wood-Lynch, Michelle Rule, Vanessa Ahmed, Laura Jorden, Amy Rogers, Kirstie Aves, Rebecca Neeves, Paula Nicolaou, Fiona Higgott, Heather Gane, Nicola Whittington, Jane Parish

Dan welcomed all the reps and as it has been a while since the last meeting everyone introduced themselves again.

Assessments without Levels

Dan said a letter would be going out to all parents this week with more details. However, he explained that in September the Government introduced the new curriculum and changed the assessment system which had been in place since the 1990's to remove levels (except for Y6 and Y2 for this year only). Bishops Down has been looking locally and nationally for ways of assessing children, and has opted for 'Target Tracker' which other schools in Tunbridge Wells are using, including schools in the collaborative trust to which Bishops Down belongs. By using the same system it makes it clear for moderation purposes when staff compare work with other schools. Levels did not tell parents anything specific and useful and many parents did not understand how they worked. What was more important was the feedback from teachers to children. The school has decided to have second consultations for parents in February, and then a full written report will be produced at the end of the school year. The new terminology used by the government includes 'secondary ready' instead of reaching a level 4B in Year 6, and 'school ready' at the end of Reception. The vocabulary will use 'age related expectations' so a child may be described as being for example 'above age related expectations'. SATs will be done this year for Year 6 and Year 2.

Communication with parents

A letter was sent out last week with the newsletter about communication with parents. This letter will be sent again as some parents did not read it as an attachment to the newsletter. It was sent because staff, parents, and Governors wanted clarification. Dan drew attention to paragraph one asking parents to avoid sending emails to teachers about concerns as they can be misunderstood without the context of vocal tone and/or facial expression. Sometimes these emails also arrive late at night and some parents expect answers the following morning. Dan said this is not appropriate as he does not expect teachers to be checking their emails all through the evening at home. The school requests that if there are issues you need to discuss, please talk to the teacher face to face or on the telephone if possible. You can do this by leaving a message at the office which will be passed onto the teacher and they will call back at the end of the school day. Dan reiterated that the first point of contact is with the class teacher.

Feedback – what went/is working well?

- The Carol Concert and the Christmas productions were very much enjoyed; the hard work put in by the staff was appreciated. Could they be filmed in some way and sold to raise money for the school? The new HT will consider this although the issue with this, as we found out when we recorded the production of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, is the amount of time it takes to produce the copies and get them out to parents.
- Forest School in Year 2 is a great addition to the curriculum and the children seem to be enjoying it.
- The large number of after school activities for children is great and parents recognise that teachers and other members of staff give up a lot to run the clubs. Book Club which is run by Kelly Kyte is especially noted and parents commented also on how approachable Kelly was, flexible with Wrap Around Care issues, hardworking and produces some great themes for Wrap Around Care.
- Parents liked the positive rewards systems in various classes, especially Year 2.

What is not working so well?

- Not all parents understood the lunchtime voucher system. Dan explained vouchers are given out by the staff during the lunchtime period as rewards for activities such as wiping a table clean, encouraging another child to eat their food etc. When these events happen the adult completes a voucher and gives it to the child to

put in the box in the hall. On Friday during celebration assembly, 3 vouchers are pulled out of the box and these children get to choose an immediate prize from another box. On Fridays the voucher box is emptied and all vouchers awarded for that week are returned to the classes for the children to keep. This is because if they accumulate 10 vouchers, they will also be able to present these and claim a prize from Dan.

- Lunches – there have been some negative comments about how unhealthy options have been available too often in the same week. Dan explained the kitchen do comply with strict guidelines about how often items are included, but there was a particular reason for the occurrence last week.
- Lunchtime organisation – Nursery, then Reception, followed by KS1 children all follow into the dinner hall from 11.50am. KS2 children are rotated each week so that a different class from this Key Stage goes in first and last each week so that the same class never goes in last. Football time for each class in the playground during lunch is also rotated.
- Sickness and Diarrhoea – the rule for absence from school for either of these is 48 hours from the last time the child has an episode, and that they are eating normally before coming back to school.
- Cars are driving too fast along Rydal Drive and parking badly again. **Dan will send a reminder** out to parents. Parents felt that the cones which are put in the turning circle are sometimes ignored, and the pavement at the bottom of the school drive is uneven. **Dan will arrange for the local council to be called.**
- The hedge on the left side of the drive as parents are walking out stops the gate fully opening and so parents have to point pushchairs at the road to get around. A solution would be to either re-hang the gate the other way, or indent the hedge so there is more room. **Dan will discuss with Adrian.**
- Y4 homework project – parents felt there was too much parental involvement expected for this and children get disengaged. Dan explained every school has the same general issue with homework. The Governors conducted an informal questionnaire at the consultations in October and having had feedback they have looked at the Homework Policy but feel no change is required. The issue is how the teachers implement the policy consistently. The home learning policy is available on the website. Research has shown that homework has no impact on Primary learning and little on Secondary Learning but Ofsted will still look for it and so the school will set it. Parent involvement is a personal issue but Dan said he will try to ensure there is a mix of types of homework given. The school will clarify the position after discussion with the teachers.
- Year 5 ask please can there be no homework set for the holidays as the children are too tired and it is too stressful trying to get it done.
- Year 3 Maple page on the school website is out of date. **Please can it be updated?**
- Reading stages – in Year 2 parents understood where their child was with these, but when they get into Y3, children are left more to their own devices which is causing confusion. Dan is aware of this and is dealing with it.
- Marking – if this is done in class, parents have nothing to base support on at home. Dan explained he had done training with staff on this issue, and pointed out that feedback is most important to children. Teachers should indicate how the homework has been looked at even if it is marked as a class..
- Maths passport – Dan explained this is a big push from the school to reinforce basic principles and skills like times tables.
- Q Can teachers do monthly reviews on each child for parents – No.
- Children in Need – parents felt that not enough notice was given to parents regarding dressing as a superhero for this day as it went out in the newsletter the week before.
- New children starting school – please can reps be told of new children starting and then reps details can be passed onto the new parents for them to make contact if they wish.
- New staff – parents would like pictures of new staff on the website so that they can see what they look like – **Dan will ask.**
- Y6 Library sessions – are these still happening? Yes, each week. There is also a suggestion currently being considered that there could be a 45 minutes slot at the end of a day to change books.
- Headlice – please can there be a request that children with long hair have it tied back at school to help prevent the spread of headlice. **Dan will put this in the newsletter**

- Consultations – can these be held in classrooms instead of the hall? No, they will stay in the hall.
- Bullying – can school talk to the children about bullying, how to recognise it and what to do. Teachers do talk in assemblies about this. In class teachers do circle time to support those who are upset including role play. Behaviour slips do go home for both physical and verbal abuse. Ofsted said last time that children were clear about the difference between ‘falling out with a friend’ and actual bullying.
- Buddying system/talk partners – these are not the only means that teachers use, they are just one tool, and were introduced to increase verbal discussion, confidence etc. It has been found that if children can talk about something well, then they can write it well. It encourages ideas and improves the quality of writing. Teachers choose when to use mixed ability groupings.

The next meeting is on Friday 27th March which will be Dan’s last meeting, but he will ask if the new Head Teacher, Mrs Owen, can also attend.