

Parent Reps Meeting 19th October 2016

Present: Mrs Jones, Mrs Jukes, Mrs Maycock, Mrs Aves, Mrs Foot, Mrs Devereaux-Bridge, Mrs Noble, Mrs Henderson, Mrs Byrne, Mrs Wookey, Mrs Sloan, Mrs Rigby, Mrs Buss, Mrs Domzalski

Positives from Reps

- The weekly Reception newsletter has been well received. The children are all advising that they really like Mrs Holliday.
- Everyone has found it really positive that parents are able to drop the children at the steps to the Reception classroom, rather than in the playground as this seems to be working a lot better for them all.
- In general people felt it was good that Reception children get into a routine (with some adjustments, admittedly), fairly quickly. 'They were pleased that we, as parents, weren't in the classroom for ages, as they thought that can hinder the children settling in sometimes'.
- There is much appreciation for the variety of clubs on offer and the time staff give up to both run and prepare for them.
- 'High praise for all the 'end of year stuff' for last year's Year 6 from the pictures of the residential and being given copies, to the amazing Lion King and the emotional end of year Assembly to name a few - all really, really good and we never really had a chance to say thank you to all the year 6 team and all the staff who assisted'.
- The new science experiments have been a big hit! There have been so many enthusiastic comments from the children. They have really enjoyed how it has brought science alive.
- On behalf of Hazel class we were keen to feed back at the meeting how much the children are enjoying the new science scheme, Empiribox. They are all very much enjoying learning through carrying out actual experiments.
- There have been a lot of positive comments regarding the lovely new benches in the playground.
- Very happy children in terms of Mr Bailey as class teacher and the residential and other parent meetings have been most helpful and delivered very well.

Attendance- what works?

Parents felt the % for each class on the newsletters should continue. The school could consider an Attendance Ted being presented to the class with the best weekly attendance. An individual approach to parents when the school has attendance concerns would work better. Teachers should motivate the children about the importance of punctuality during registration time.

Parent volunteers

These are always welcome, but will not be placed in their own child's class for class support. For Forest school we will be more flexible.

Dinners

- 'There has been a change to school recently and some of the parents are frustrated that there is no longer a pasta option as its now in a bake format. Certain children are already so restricted being on a gluten free diet and now sometimes won't eat the pasta either as it is not plain. Was there a particular reason as to why this was changed? Since Independent Catering changed the pasta option on the menu - pasta bakes as opposed to pasta & sauce, a lot of children haven't chosen them anymore. Is there any way plain pasta with a tomato or cheese sauce could once again be an option?' – Mrs Owen explained that if children are

not adding anything to the plain pasta, and not taking veg/salad to eat with it then it is not a nutritionally balanced meal, which is one reason it changed. Parents asked that the school insist children have veg or salad on their plate at the same time as plain pasta, and also have separate custard option from the pudding, as some children only want custard and some only want the pudding without custard. Mrs Owen will discuss this with the kitchen, and check with the Midday Supervisors what children take from the separate salad bar.

- Portion sizes- some parents are concerned that the dinner portions have got smaller particularly the meat in the roast – Mrs Owen has clarified with the kitchen that the recommended portion sizes are being given e.g. half a jacket potato for Reception and Y1 children, and a whole one for Y2 upwards. This has been raised with Independent. Please email the office with concerns and they will forward to the kitchen manager to respond to.
- School meals and the quality/quantity have been raised by one class. ‘It appears children are opting for packed lunch due to the quantity not being enough and also simple safe items such as pasta being less plain i.e. sauces being more selective in terms of taste. I have had reports that pupils prefer plain pasta with optional additions. An overwhelming response on the quality, cost and quantity. This is a notable change from previous ‘satisfactory with the catering (on the whole)’ at Bishops Down’
- Reps say previously happy children complaining to parents about the taste, amount and quality of school meals.
- They stress that this is affecting non-fussy children as well as more particular children: complaints include; the food has gone downhill, is very small in quantity (if children ask for more they are refused/or feel they will be).
- ‘Some families are finding pack lunches are better value and better quality, so parents are resorting to that - despite the fact they'd prefer to have a hot meal available!’ Cost is not insignificant so Reps feel this needs a proper review and change as appropriate.
- Reps say some children are leaving school hungry.
- Suggestions from Reps: bring back parents sample school dinner events (we had these previously), mystery shopper where the quality is tested without catering company being aware, go back to system where we pre-select meals so that the caterers always have enough of the items most popular. Mrs Owen says School Council is going to do a school survey, and Parent lunches are being planned to give parents a chance to sample the meals. Details will follow in due course.
- Some children are saying the kitchen runs out of certain types of meals. This will only happen if children swap lunch bands as they go into lunch, or hide their lunch band as they have changed their mind about what they want to eat from when it was ordered that morning. The kitchen cooks the correct number of meals based on those ordered each morning at registration time.

Concerns raised by Reps

Chestnut

- A few people have raised concerns regarding the gate which is used to enter the playground. It has been opened quite late in the afternoon on occasion, which unfortunately results in everyone then squeezing through the gate at once which can be a bit dangerous. Mrs Owen will talk to the children about allowing parents through first, and will open the gate earlier.
- Also after school lots of parents wait just inside the gate which then makes it difficult to get past. Would it be possible to ask them to wait in the playground? Also it makes it more difficult when the year 5 children are pushing their way out as the parents are trying to come in. Please encourage parents not to wait just inside the gate, but either come into the playground if their children are younger, or wait by the pond/shelter for older children.

- Some of the parents have concerns regarding the youngest children in the school getting one of the 2 coldest terms for Forest School, when there are 4 other warmer terms that they could have been given. Many factors are considered in the Forest School timetable, for example Year 6 needing their sessions in September before the residential, and May has to be avoided for not only Year 6 but Year 2 as well. June has to be avoided for Year 1- all due to statutory tests. It is also worked around KS2 swimming and teachers planning and preparation time which is 10% of the working school week. Forest School is good for the personal development of the children.
- Someone has asked with regards to clicker 7 will our children be using it in Reception and if not will there be courses next year we can attend when they will be using it? Clicker 7 is for every child, there are already 2 information sessions booked for parents, and Amy Adams will run another training session after this.

Beech

- Are children still being allowed straight in the classroom in the morning as my son says they are not allowed and door is locked. Yes they are able to. Unfortunately the new door cannot be opened from the outside like the old one, so it is down to the staff to have it open and ready.
- Phonics is excellent and parents appreciate the regular sheets from a good teacher.
- When is the class going on a trip? These are based on the topics/curriculum at the time. There is a visitor coming in this Friday and a trip is being looked into for term 6.

Sycamore

- Is it possible to get the new school logo as a 'sew on' badge? – No, sorry.
- Would it be possible to get passwords and logins via email so you are not relying on a piece of paper for things? Some parents often "misplace" the pieces of paper! Someone suggested that it could be written in inside cover of homework book (or teacher sticks in). Good idea, it will be suggested to teachers. Teachers are using 'MyMaths' more, and checking it more often.
- Numerous requests for parent/teacher meetings to be moved towards the October half term, either before or just after? No, this will not happen as Teachers prefer it early to get to know parents. The next set will be in the spring.
- When will the inset days for next school year 2017/2018 be announced? I have discussed with the SLT but haven't consulted other schools yet, we try to have some of the same days to share training costs. We will always try to add them to holidays or half terms.
- Is it possible to produce a weekly timetable for what lessons are which day, so the children can begin to think more about their lessons and what needs preparing for when? Days of PE lessons, Forest school and Swimming are planned up front so children can be prepared. Other lessons are subject to change. As a general rule English and maths are in the morning unless the teacher has PPA or a PE slot.
- Can the children bring their own pencil cases into class this year? We had many distractions with Smiggle pencils and erasers last year, therefore children in Y4 or below are not allowed, but we will allow them for Y5/6. There was an email on July to advise this would only be possible for upper KS2 from September.

Pine

- Maths passport. Once again nothing seems to be happening and children aren't learning any tables. There has been a suggestion that we should be going back to the 'learning a table a week' for the whole class. [Mrs Owen will chase this. Miss Hardman is investigating.](#)
- Clicker 7. Is this for the whole school or the younger classes? [All children and parents have a log in so all can use it. It has many functions so please try it out. Amy Adams will run more training for parents.](#)

Larch

- Ability Sets. The request is for the school to consider ability sets in Maths and English particularly in Key Stage 2. With just one exception who favours the current system, all responses are very strongly in favour of ability sets. The sets last year were really popular with improvement across all sets being noted. As at the start of year 6 there is inevitably a bigger difference between abilities than at the end of year 5 as a result of 11+ coaching over the summer. The fact that the start of the year curriculum requires a re visit of place value seems to have exacerbated the frustration of the most able children in Maths with comments including "bored to tears" being fed back. There is a lot of frustration that the most able are not being stretched (apparently this is something Ofsted has observed about the school in the past although I have not had a chance to check this or whether it was the last report or the one from when parents were looking). [They are being stretched - 43% last year achieved the higher level.](#) Parents of children who were previously in the middle or lower set comment that their children really liked teaching at their level without children with a greater understanding shouting out answers or making it clear they were finding the subject easy. The suggestion that children who understand concepts quicker acquire a deeper understanding and benefit from explaining to their peers who then benefit is not agreed. The request is for ability sets even if we cannot have three classes like last year and for both Maths and English.

[No we are not setting again. It didn't work for us last year as the top set were rushed through the curriculum- there are many gaps particularly in Larch that have to be addressed, Application and Reasoning being the two key issues. Number computation is strong but they are not yet close to mastering the year 6 curriculum. No one in Larch has scored 100% in any assessment yet. From book scrutiny by SLT and our Maths lead, and external scrutiny by Altius, the teaching school \(who did 3 weeks when they were Y5, and will be doing 3 more weeks with them now they are in Y6\) and our school improvement advisor, it is clear that although our children are able and will do well in the SATs there are gaps in knowledge \(depth and mastery\) that have appeared. Our higher ability did very well last year 43% achieved 110+ so we won't let standards slip this year, we also want to improve the number of children achieving ARE, we only had 67% last year, so a third of our children didn't make the expected level, our target is 85% this year. We won't reach the 85% if we set. The gap only widens. The Maths curriculum is harder than last year. Mrs Owen is creating a 'Mastery' policy to aim at getting a solid underpinning of reasoning. Links to the Maths National Curriculum will be put on the school website.](#)

- Discrimination against parents who work Fridays! It all happens on a Friday and this has caused problems for parents who work this day. The parent consultation forms were put out without advance warning on a Friday so it was not possible to ask friends to sign up for this. Also the club forms come out on a Friday and it's first come first served so children

who are not collected at 3.15 miss out and if these are children who are at after school club regularly sometimes they are particularly keen to do a club first. Could children nominate first second and third choice so all get first choice etc. I have pointed out this would create a lot of extra admin but there are parents apparently willing to assist if forms could be taken home and processed over a weekend. Another suggestion is an online booking system for clubs which I gather exists and is used by a school so can find out more if this is an option. [We have nothing against Fridays! It seems to be coincidence. We have looked at online booking and the cost is prohibitive. We will be conscious of altering the days letters go out.](#)

- Year 6 specific – will the school agree to 2 plays this year. There are parents willing to assist to make this happen including if there is a cost fundraising now and helping the teachers with the production. If the thought is it's good to mix the classes up it's still preferred to have 2 shows and perhaps girls and boys or children choosing which performance to be in. [This will be discussed with year 6 staff and children nearer the time, no decisions will be made for a while.](#)
- The house system isn't fair! Apparently some houses have way more children in than others and the most popular colour (I think I was told blue but could be wrong) wins. Can school council organise a census and even up the numbers. It's also an issue that some children can move colours others are told no have to remain that colour throughout. [The colours are set by the office based on siblings and then, when we have a new admission, they take the leaving child's place to even up numbers. Children don't choose. KS1 Green 22, Red 20, Yellow 25, Blue 23. KS2- Green 60, Red 60, Yellow 60, Blue 59. It is checked every year and children can't swap. New teachers will be reminded.](#)
- Can we have taller toilet doors to provide privacy? [We can ask the PTA. Also, we are trying hard to organise separate changing area for Y5/6 girls.](#)
- We are expected to be punctual as parents, one parent had gate shut on them at 8.55 but clubs regularly finish late creating problems for parents who need to collect other children. [We will remind staff about punctuality](#)

Oak

- Is it ok for parents/children to send any homework done on computer direct to teachers via email. If not, what is the preferred way for sending it? [We are investigating setting up a different email address so it does not clog up the office email.](#)

Year 3

- Treatment of Year 3 - some concerns that although year 3 classes are in KS2 they are being included in KS1 activities. The classroom they have stayed for the fourth year is one example (we have been given the reasons for this) but also playtime numbers - [on the playground, we have managed a compromise at lunchtime going from 12.15 to 1.15pm](#). Choir and discos are other examples. Parents feel this makes it difficult to move on and to motivate them to be part of the upper school. [It is about numbers and that the school is top heavy and keeping the children safe. We have 240 in KS2, 90 R & KS1. With Year 3 joining KS1 for activities that equals 150 in KS1 and yr1 and years 4, 5 and 6 equals 180.](#)
- Is it possible to look at creative ways of increasing physical activity during the day, for example the mile run idea used in some schools? Some mums think their children would benefit from this and will help them concentrate in class. [Yes we have trialled the mile run in year 5 last year. It did have some benefits but it took about 1/2hr out of the school day once shoes have been changed. We couldn't find the right time of day to hold it. We do need to keep it on the agenda so thank you for raising it.](#)

Redwood

- Residential trip - there seem to be quite a few concerns regarding next year's trip mainly regarding the distance but also some concerns about the cost. [I haven't booked it yet- let's see how successful this trip is.](#)
- Why Year 5 are only doing half a term of swimming. [Because of the increase in KS2 numbers and the swimming slots we have at the pool.](#)

General

- The bike shelter is not big enough, can it be bigger or can we get another one? [We will talk to the PSA.](#)
- [Siblings are predicted to take half the Reception class spaces in September 2017](#)
- [It was appreciated that Mrs Ashley stood in while Mrs Akers was off in Year 2.](#)

Next meeting details to be confirmed.