

Minutes of the Parents' Forum Meeting

Held on Friday 3 November 2017 at Emmbrook Junior School

Present: Samantha Dowse (Chair), Annabel Yoxall, Jasvir Dhaliwal, Lisa Standing, Joelle Beavis, Kerry Jones, Louise Holloway, Claire Freeman (Office Manager)

Apologies: Claire Worsfold, Jo Tucker, Mr Fenton

1. Welcome

Sam welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited all to introduce themselves.

It was confirmed that the online dinner money topic was completed and therefore closed.

Sam explained that "Wrap Around Care" is before and after school care for children. There is a high demand for this as was gleaned from a previous survey to parents. A working party has been set up between the Infant and Junior parents' forums, alongside both of the Head Teachers and representatives from both of the school governors. Sam is representing our forum. The combined team has met with Mark Ashworth, but the outcome has not yet been established. Feedback will be provided in due course.

Everyone agreed that they are happy to continue serving as part of the Parents' Forum this academic year.

The possibility of adding "funding" as a topic was discussed as this is an on-going issue. It was agreed that only one topic at a time would be dealt with.

2. Agree Terms of Reference

Sam ran through the Terms of Reference for the Parents' Forum. After a discussion, it was decided that nothing would change in this document as the contents are still valid.

3. Parent feedback – Photos

Four comments expressing concerns about the quality of photographs were received via the forum email system. Annabel brought in some photographs to show examples. It was agreed that in some instances, the positioning of the child in the photograph was not ideal, meaning that the school logo could not be seen in the photograph. All agreed that the logo evokes a sense of pride in one's school and therefore should be obvious in a photo. Other problems included messy hair, distorted appearances, and odd expressions.

It was mostly agreed that school photographs are rather an old-fashioned approach and that they are very expensive, leaving one feeling that they could take a better picture with their phone. All agreed that the class photographs are lovely and should not change. It was felt that a more relaxed approach with more natural looking expressions in photos might be preferable.

Claire expressed the school's position on the matter. School photographs day is very challenging as every child must be photographed and this must be fitted in with normal lessons and other school activities. This is highly disruptive to the school day. Some children arrive unprepared for photographs and it takes time to sort them out. The photos are taken at a quick pace as so many children must be photographed. In addition, the

complication of siblings from the Infant school coming across to have photographs taken is time consuming.

After some discussion, the following suggestions were made:

- School photographs will become a topic and a survey will be sent out to parents via Survey Monkey asking their opinion on school photos. This will be a request for positive and negative constructive feedback that can be delivered to the photographer. This will afford the photographer the opportunity to rectify issues or take a different approach.
- Parents in the forum have offered to help on school photograph days to reduce the pressure on the staff with organising and readying the children for photographs.
- A request was made for a text message to be sent out the day before to remind parents about school photographs.
- Perhaps the upper and lower years can have photographs taken on different days to reduce the pressure.

4. Promoting the School

Mr Fenton would like to promote the school within the community. Sam asked the forum to give their opinion on how the school is viewed by the community in general. The response was mixed. There is a view that Emmbrook Junior is inferior to other schools. It is believed that this is an old view that has lingered over time. All agreed that this is a sad state as we know that our children are happy at the school, that the staff is doing a wonderful job constantly working to improve in all areas and that Mr Fenton is well liked, respected, and admired as Headteacher. As a new parent, Jasvir chose Emmbrook Junior for her child because of good reports from local estate agents and web searches, and after her tour of the school.

It was agreed that the school does not sing its praises enough and this must be changed. There are many parts of the school that have been improved such as the pond and the playground – this should be communicated to the community. We should capitalise on events such as the Mayor attending our Sports Day with an aim to publicise. The school can be promoted via the school website and social media such as Facebook and Twitter. This would not only promote the school but bring it up-to-date. As this is a time-consuming role, there ideally needs to be a dedicated person who can carry this out. The existing website is tired and lacks the necessary updates and news that would encourage prospective parents to visit as well as existing parents to become more active and connected with the school.

Annabel showed her willingness to run a Facebook/Twitter account on behalf of the school. It would need moderation to prevent negative discussion regarding the school. She also suggested using the Wokingham local paper to publish articles about the happenings at Emmbrook Junior. This will go a long way to change negative opinions in the community. Annabel also suggested a celebration of the history of the school by holding a reunion with alumni to create publicity.

Kerry mentioned the ease with which a website can be built and maintained, with no cost.

Sam said that there is an app that other schools use to send school news to parents. This would be an internal method of promotion. Both external and internal promotion is required.

It was agreed that not much effort would be required to promote the wonderful events and improvements already happening at the school.

Joelle mentioned that the children could also produce items for the website. This could be carried out in ICT class.

A wonderful suggestion of "Bess's Blog" could be created. Bess, the golden Labrador, is so well known and loved at the school so this would be a good way of communicating the happenings at the school.

5. Ideas for recruitment

Currently, the forum has 3 reps for Year 4 Cedar because of the mixing of classes. There is no rep for Year 3 Ash (except Sam who is chair), and Jo Tucker is currently representing both Year 3 Larch and Year 5 Pine. A poster was sent out to parents detailing the function of the Parents' Forum but there was not a large response. As we require more representatives, we need to carry out a recruitment drive.

A suggestion was made for the Parents' Forum to have a table at the next Parents Evening to carry out recruitment.

There is also the option to approach the parents at the Year 2 open morning on 30 November at 9.15. There was a question of whether it would be too early to approach Year 2 parents, but Kerry said that as a parent, she would find that kind of approach quite appealing. Claire suggested that a cake sale could be used as a way of promoting the forum. Annabel asked if we could use the hall for a cake sale and this was confirmed.

Sam asked if a text message could be sent out to parents one week before a meeting and Claire said that if a reminder was sent to her, she would certainly organise this.

6. Closed meeting at 15.05