

Emmbrook Junior School Parents Forum

Meeting Minutes

Friday 21 May 2021

09.15 to 10.30 Zoom Meeting

Attendees: Mr Usher (EJS Head), Christine Leddy (Yr 3), Martina Smith (Yr 3), Emma Mitchell (Yr 4), Mell Morris (Yr 4), Emma Wilkinson (Chair, Yr 5), Clare Doyle (Yr 5), Cathy O'Connor (Yr 6)

Apologies: Jo Tucker (Yr 6)

Abbreviations:

SLT Senior Leadership Team

EJS Emmbrook Junior School

EIS Emmbrook Infant School

PPE Personal Protective Equipment

DfE Department for Education

SENCO Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator

1. Welcome & Introductions

Emma W opened the meeting by welcoming and thanking everyone for attending the zoom meeting.

2. Previous minutes – 4th December 2020

Clare ran through the minutes from the last meeting. Most of the actions from the last meeting have been completed and closed out. The **outstanding actions** from the last meeting are listed below:

- a) **EJS to confirm that clubs will be rotated to a different day for each year group.** Mr Usher confirmed that this has been actioned
- b) **Communication with parents and between EIS and EJS.** Mr Usher was liaise with EIS to improve joint communication. **This will be discussed later in the Minutes**
- c) **Gardening & Community Day.** Mr Usher was to look into this and discuss with Mrs Hatherley. **This will be discussed later in the Minutes**

3. Parent Feedback

It was noted that not all subjects had received the required three comments.

- i) **Positive Feedback:** The Forum received positive feedback for EJS on the reintegration back into school, the new reading assessment scheme, the Daily Mile and the Conqueror Challenge.
- ii) **Covid Query:** a parent had asked if there was any decision made on when masks would not be compulsory for parents on site. Mr Usher advised that there was no decision on masks yet and it would be discussed with EIS. He noted that the wearing of masks is as much about alleviating peoples concerns as it is about virus transmission.
- iii) **Year 5s & 6s leaving school:** Concerns had been submitted regarding the manner in which Year 5s and 6s are leaving school. It was said that some children were pushing past smaller children, often on bikes or scooters, and not looking where they were going. Mr Usher said he was concerned to hear this as they released the Year 5s and 6s as a drip-feed to reduce a bottle-neck of older children. He also said that there was always a member of the SLT outside at the end of the day and the children all know not to ride their bikes or scooters. **Action: EJS to reinforce the message to Year 5s and 6s**

- iv) **School Trips:** A Year 4 parent had enquired whether school trips would return soon and expressed concern about payment of a trip in January that had been cancelled. Mr Usher and Forum members confirmed that the cancelled trip had been reimbursed. Mr Usher said that he is keen for school trips to take place, within the parameters of the Covid Risk Assessment, however, they do not want to pressure the teachers and the school acknowledge that there isn't a lot of time left to the end of term. EW noted that Year 5 had had a fantastic 'school trip' nature walk in the local area and that trips themselves didn't need to be a big event, just something different for the children to experience.
- v) **PE Kits:** It has been suggested through the Forum that children can continue to wear PE kits to school on their PE days, rather than having to remember to take their kit in and get changed. It was agreed that this would be a fantastic way to avoid lost PE time due to changing. **Action: Mr Usher to discuss this with staff. Post-meeting note: EJS have sent out an email detailing options for clothing on PE days.**
- vi) **Parents Evening:** A parent had asked that whilst the on-line parents evening was very easy to use, especially when booking multiple children, would it be possible to change the time the system goes live for bookings from 3pm? Forum members added that EIS open their booking system at midday. **Action: Mr Usher to ask the admin team to action this.**
- vii) **Clubs:** Clubs were discussed extensively during the meeting. Firstly, questions had come into the forum regarding the variety of clubs on offer. Mr Usher said that they were hoping to be able to offer a wide range of clubs as soon as they could but whilst the children were still in year group bubbles, the clubs had to be restricted.

Music Clubs were discussed. Mr Usher said that the school highly value music. Rocksteady are back in school and he has also authorised Berkshire Maestros to come back into school. It is not possible for the Choir to restart yet as the children are still in year group bubbles and under current restriction, singing has to take place outside. Mr Usher said that as soon as the risk assessment allowed, the school choir would restart.

Gardening Club was also discussed. Year 5s are doing gardening as their topic at the moment and loving it. The Forum and school had previously been working on a Community Gardening day but this had to be postponed because of Covid. Mrs Hatherley had been looking forward to taking the lead but unfortunately is unable to do this because of health reasons. Forum reiterated that they had spoken to community leaders such as the Biodiversity Officer and the Holt Copse Volunteers who were very happy to come and give their advice to the school. **Action: Mr Usher is to meet with Mrs Gillard (EIS) to work out how to take this forward and to identify a person to lead the project.**

- viii) **Communication:** The topic of communication was raised again. One parent suggested that not everything needed to be pdf'd and sent as an attachment; perhaps it would be easier to put the information into the body of the email. Another parent said that they found there were too many emails and suggested it could be consolidated into one daily/weekly email. Forum members discussed the issue at length. MM and CD both commented that actually they preferred the separate emails for separate topics as it was easier to filter out the important information. Mr Usher said that as a school, he would prefer to over-communicate than under-communicate and you were never going to find a balance that suited everybody. EM said that all the information is on the website so this is always a good place to look for information. **Action: Mr Usher to talk to the admin team about putting some information into the body of an email rather than sending it as a pdf attachment. Obviously this won't apply to everything, such as the newsletter.**
- ix) **Caterlink/School Meals:** The final topic discussed was school meals. A number of negative comments had been received about the school meals including the quality of the food, the portion sizes, running out of items and food on the menu not being available, for example changing the pudding option. Mr Usher said that the school were aware of the issues and were entering into a procurement process. He acknowledged the quality of food was not of a standard

that he would expect and not good value for money. The school have raised the issues with Caterlink who do enact changes, however, these changes are often not long-lasting. With regards to the portion sizes, this is a national standard and is set for Key Stage 2, i.e. Year 3 gets the same portion as Year 6. It was also noted that there is no room for substitution, so if a child does not eat the veg or the chips portion of the meal, they will go without rather than being able to substitute it for something else. EW noted that children can bring in a healthy snack to boost their food intake during the day. **Action: EJS and EIS entering into a procurement process to look at all school meal options, including other caterers as well as bringing it in house.**

4. Update from Infants Parents Forum

Christine briefly ran through the items raised at the recent EIS Parents Forum which were very similar to those discussed in the EJS forum. Topics included club offerings, choir, The Willows opening up their breakfast club, sports day, school trips, when the school times will revert back and the upcoming transition day. Mr Usher said that the two schools were working together and there would be lots of Transition activities, not just the one day.

5. Parents Forum from Sept 21

EW and CD will be stepping away from the EJS parents forum from September 2021. **Action: The Forum will advertise for a new members and a new Chair and secretary/vice-chair.**

6. AOB

Mr Usher fed back that it was actually much easier for the admin staff to produce hard-copy reports than email reports so these will stay as a hard copy for now.

EW enquired as to whether any Governors would be interested in sitting in on the Forum meetings. CL said that the EIS forum has a governor representative at their meeting.

7. Next Meeting TBC