

Emmbrook Junior School Parents Forum – Meeting Minutes

Friday 14th July 2023

09.00 to 10.00 Emmbrook Junior School

Attendees: Jim Usher (EJS Head - JU), Nina Edwards (EJS Nurturing Lead- NE)
Sara Bradley (Chair, Y4 – SB), Sabreena Peedoly-Brennan (Minutes, Y4 - SPB),
Martina Smith (Y5 - MS), Christine Leddy (Y3 & Y5 - CL), Mel Morris (Y6 - MM),
Emma Mitchell (Y6).

Apologies: Vicky Gonçalves (Y5 - VG), Helen Venfield (Y4 – HV)

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

The meeting today included NE. who will be joining meetings when available going forward.

2. Previous minutes – 10th February 2023

The Forum ran through the minutes from the last meeting. There were some follow on actions from the last meeting detailed as follows:

- a) M&S Uniform – JU confirmed that EJS would not be purchasing the sew on badges as it would not be financially viable. *Item closed.*
- b) Parents/Carers contribution to school trips – JU will continue to monitor situation of balancing costs of trips in the current financial climate. While it is very kind for parents/careers to want to contribute to school trips for families that are struggling, it was felt by JU that this is not sustainable long-term. It was noted that money raised by PTA was also used to help fund school trips where there was a shortfall. *Item closed.*
- c) School caretaker – JU advised a new caretaker has been employed and has commenced work at the school. *Item closed.*

3. Parent Feedback

- a) Dolce catering company:
Concern has been raised about the quality of the food as well as the quantity that some children get (i.e. portion size of a year 3 pupil verses portion size of a Year 6). It had been commented by some of the children that there was dirty cutlery.
In addition, it had been brought to parents attention that Dolce were now charging for meals if ordered on the portal and children were instead taking packed lunches.

EJS response: JU along with the lunchtime controllers have been monitoring the quality of the food, and where the EJS team have concerns over the quality of food, they have raised directly with Dolce.

If a child wishes to have more food, then there is a salad bar available for children. Children can request more food (i.e. an extra fish finger).

JU explained that EJS Cook is passionate about the food provided to the children and the delivery has been generally very good. The only exception seems to be when on occasion (for unavoidable reasons), the Cook has been unable to come into work and Dolce has had to use contractors. EJS team will continue to monitor the situation.

JU is in agreement with Dolce on charging for food where parents/careers have changed their mind on having packed lunch rather than a hot meal, as unfortunately, there is a lot of food wastage. SPB (who has complained to Dolce on this matter), said that while there was no issue of charging for food ordered on the SchoolGrid portal and then not taken – it was for Dolce to ensure they give parents/careers reasonable notice and communicate to parents/careers on a change to its position for payment of meals. The literature received at the start of Dolce's operation stated clearly that payment would only be taken for meals that were had on the day.

JU encouraged that any opinion of Dolce should be shared with Dolce directly. JU will look to remind parents/careers to contact Dolce for feedback and policy for ordering/cancelling meals.

b) School Communication:

Commented on hard copies of letters being sent home, and completing hard copy forms. Questioned whether this would be easier to be done online.

EJS response: NE commented that hard copies of forms were required for day trips and the information must be current in case of emergency. Forms cannot be kept on a device, as if no mobile phone signal - staff may not be able to access files. NE further commented that it had been tried and tested to complete online forms – but appeared to have been over complicated.

JU will review situation and as now EJS is part of the Circle Trust – will look at policy of having blanket Authorisation to help reduce repeated requests.

JU commented that all letters and are available on the website.

c) PTA Communications:

Feedback had been received that some of the mediums being used by the PTA to highlight requests felt overwhelming such as on WhatsApp group. The messages were repetitive.

EJS response: JU is very appreciative of the work done by the PTA and the PTA is a valuable support to the school and supports activities such as funding for school trips. JU cannot comment further on this other than to say that parents/careers should contact PTA with their feedback. NE pointed out that every parent/career who has a child at EJS and EIS is automatically a member of the PTA, and it is in all our interests to participate and support in fundraising.

Anonymous comments were forwarded onto PTA to feedback on. The PTA will respond separately and look to do a survey to understand appropriate means for engaging parents/careers. The PTA did however give an example of why the communication was repetitive – "...on 26 May we had 59% of volunteers' slots filled. So with two weeks to go, we were still short of 75 volunteers. Perhaps if people signed up earlier then the PTA wouldn't have to send emails out..."

d) Clubs:

Requested to have Little Brickies at EJS, as at EIS.

EJS response: On 12th July, an email was sent out to parents to give an idea of what clubs will be offered from September. There is the hope that there will be more clubs available in September, but plans are being finalized for those before communicating with parents.

4. Update from Infants Parents Forum

No items were raised for discussion.

5. AOB

a) Sports Day – Thursday 13th July

SPB thanks JU and EJS staffing team for an enjoyable afternoon and their efforts to put together Sports Day. The only comment was for next year's (2024) Sports Day if parents/Careers could have an itinerary of the events and timings, as some parents/careers have two year groups to follow, and this would hopefully be able to help them plan their day. JU said he would look at this for future events.

6. Next Meetings

9:00am – TBC – JU to provide dates he can do and reach agreement with Parent Forum rep.