

Parent Voice
Wednesday 22nd February 2017
The Barn

1. Welcome and introductions

2. Minutes of the last meeting and action points

- **Injuries at school**

Club providers had been reminded/informed about the correct procedure of sharing information regarding pupil injuries.

- **Website calendar**

Mr McIntosh had checked and all relevant dates were currently uploaded to the school calendar.

3. Class structure policy

A detailed discussion was held about the recent communication and decision by both the Infant and Junior Schools about the change to class structure from September 2017. The following summarises the main points raised (grouped thematically where appropriate) and responses from Mr McIntosh on behalf of the school:

Question(s)	Response
Why was the decision made to change every year group every year and not, for example, just from Reception or at certain year group points between R-Y6?	When considering what we see as the benefits of the change as outweighing the disadvantages, the schools could not justify reserving restructuring for selected year groups only; if we believe it is a good idea in principle, for all the reasons outlined in the communication parents received, then it is something from which every year group should benefit.
Why not leave Year 5 as they are seeing as they only have one year left at the Juniors?	Despite having only one year left, the decision to include all year groups including Year 5 was made primarily for the reasons outlined above. There was also the additional consideration that they also have only one year left before encountering changes on a daily basis at secondary school in terms of class make up (different pupils in different tutor groups, streamed sets and mixed classes), class location across a campus, and numerous teachers. This will, we believe, stand them in good stead for such challenges. It was pointed out that Year 5 had received extra consideration in the planning stage of this new policy and that Mr McTaggart had written to all Year 5 parents to further explain the reasons for applying the change to Year 5 classes as well.
Could the decision be	Mr McIntosh would take the request made back to Mr

reversed?	McTaggart as he did not want to close down the discussion on this point, but made further reiteration about the reasons why the leadership team believed this was a good decision for all year groups, including Year 5.
Why was this not discussed at Parent Voice?	Changing class structure is a strategic matter that is for governors to decide upon, taking on board the recommendations of the school leadership team(s) and teaching staff, based on their collective wide knowledge and long experience of school management and education pedagogy. It is not a decision that could be made by popular vote. Parent Voice is poorly attended (often by the same very regular attendees, whose presence is appreciated!) and could be said to not be entirely representative of the parent body, though its views are very much appreciated and it has had a lot of influence in many areas of the school in the last three years. Mr McIntosh could therefore see why parents would view this as a suitable group in which to consider the idea.
<p>Why was the decision communicated so early? This has left some pupils who are anxious about the change with a lengthy time to worry about it.</p> <p>Could the school not have given parents some warning that this was being discussed and might happen?</p>	<p>Both schools' leadership teams felt that parents would appreciate as much time as possible to take on board the decision and the implications, particularly in playing their part in preparing their children for the changes to come. It was understood that this inevitably gave a long time for pupils anxious about the change to worry about it, but it was not possible to achieve both advance notice to parents and minimise any time to worry as the news, once communicated, could not be contained to just parents.</p> <p>The schools could have done this but it was felt that speculation, rumour and disinformation would be rife, which sometimes occurs over a variety of school-related matters on vehicles such as social media, and which are sometimes very unhelpful.</p>
Were all class teachers on board with the changes?	Mr McIntosh could only speak about the Junior School, but he had no reason to believe that there were individual teachers opposed or wary about the change, given the discussions and consultation that had taken place within the teaching staff team.
Was the timing of the announcement in any way connected to the county deadline for school applications?	There was no consideration made regarding this deadline. Even in retrospect, this would not have influenced the timing of the decision as we would not deliberately withhold important changes that might give parents a cause for reconsidering Barnes Farm as a school of choice

<p>Why was it done on a Friday afternoon once school had finished?</p>	<p>for their child. Again in retrospect, we feel it would be unlikely that this would feature as a prime motivating factor for choosing or not choosing the schools.</p> <p>The information was communicated on Friday afternoon instead of the usual Thursday afternoon for Juniors letters and notices because of a request from the Infant School, which we were content to comply with and support.</p>
<p>Do the class teachers know their children well enough regarding friendship groups to make decisions about who should go with whom in a new class?</p>	<p>We believe that the teachers know important information about each of their pupils well from an early stage in the year and certainly very well by the second and third terms. Teachers know best the internal class dynamics they encounter on a daily basis – who works well together, why certain pupils should sit in certain places, which pupils are helpful to others, etc. They also have a very good idea of friendship groups as children often speak about this back in class and through observation out on the playground. The school believes teachers will be well-placed to make such decisions when accompanied by pupil input, which they will have in the summer term.</p>
<p>How will the school address concerns about friendships? What will be done about SEN needs? Will parents have a say in who their child might be in a class with?</p>	<p>Every child will have the opportunity to have a say in their placement in a new class going forward. They will be asked to think carefully about who they work well with, who they should avoid being with, who their friends are, etc. The school will think carefully about how best to ask pupils to record this in order to have as much useful information to feed into the new class structure decisions. Parents will, of course, be encouraged to help their child to consider this and can play a role in this way.</p> <p>SEN needs will be very carefully considered by class teachers and the SENCO.</p>

Further questions and concerns can be discussed at later meetings of Parent Voice or by contacting Mr McTaggart via the school office.

4. Parking outside school

This was observed by parents as a continuing problem and asked if the school was in a position to do anything else about it. Mr McIntosh assured parents that we have pursued a variety of avenues to try to address the difficult circumstances at the beginning and end of the day, including discussions with the council, the police and traffic enforcement officers (wardens). Regular notices and guidance go in both our newsletter and the Infant School's newsletter. However, little improvement seems to result but we are committed to keep trying to make progress in this area. The idea of adding zig-zag lines to the turning circle was suggested, which Mr McIntosh will share in the next meeting/the next discussion the school has with the council.

5. Parents' Evenings/Open mornings/Sharing pupil information

The recent open maths mornings were, by and large, well-received and useful opportunities for parents to see what happens in maths lessons. It was suggested that the days varied for any future similar opportunities, of which there would be some literacy lessons after Easter.

Having the opportunity for children to attend the recent parents' evenings was seen as a good idea, on the whole, as they could receive the same information direct from the teacher as their parents. Some parents also felt this helped boost their confidence as well as knowing areas in which they needed to improve.

It was suggested that a print out of the charts seen on computer screens in the consultations would be useful for parents to have and Mr McIntosh confirmed that this would be sent out next week to all parents.

It was also suggested that in order to cut down on the amount of time wasted in teachers having to come and get parents and return them at the end of their 10-minute session, the school could trial next time having all the consultations in the hall, where multiple conversations could be held at desks around the room with books and waiting stations for parents in the middle. A parent suggested that it might also be helpful to have governors on hand during the evenings to raise their profile and to talk to parents. Mr McIntosh would take these suggestions back to the leadership team for consideration.

6. Uniform

A question was raised about the recent reminder sent to parents about ensuring uniform expectation were adhered to. It was noted that the possibility of wearing black tights and black or grey skirts was absent from the reminder. Also, a parent wished to know if small, discreet bows were permitted on hairbands. Mr McIntosh would go back and find out about the former and confirmed that the latter was acceptable so long as they were indeed small and discreet and in a suitable colour.

7. Outdoor play area

Mr McIntosh informed the group that an agreement had finally been reached with the company who had originally installed the outdoor play equipment several years ago to fix the current problems. They would be landscaping that part of the hill slope into an outdoor learning 'amphitheatre' as well as moving the equipment and ensuring it is safe for future use. This could be as soon as the Easter holidays.

8. Date and time of next meeting

Monday 20th March at 8pm (tea/coffee from 7.45pm) in the Barn.

Future meetings will be as follows:

- Tuesday 20th April at 2.15pm