

Parent Voice
Wednesday 16th December 2015
The Barn Cedar Studio

1. Welcome and introductions

Mr McIntosh (Deputy Head Teacher) welcomed parents and, for those who had not attended a Parent Voice meeting before, outlined the purpose and procedure of the meeting.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and action points

- **After school football club**
 - The concerns had been discussed at the school's leadership meeting and Mrs Vickers investigated the matter with CUFC
 - CUFC are committed to the training aspect of the club and would ensure this was a key element of the club time.
 - They would limit the number attending to 24 next term so as to make the group size more manageable.

- **Calculation and Abacus workshop**
 - A date for this had been set – Thursday 25th February 2016 at 6pm.

Some further discussion regarding homework took place at this point, though as this was mostly concerning individual classes, Mr McIntosh advised the parents to speak with their child's class teacher.

3. AOB

● **Individual photographs**

Some parents were unhappy with the individual photographs and the providers:

- The background used is viewed as old-fashioned
- The colour of the background clashes with the green of the tops worn
- The lighting applied does not seem to have been consistent, with the effect that different photos have different shades of background and colours
- The photos are expensive
- The timings for sibling photos (of siblings not at either Barnes Farm school) was unhelpful being in the morning
- The letter from school mentioned tickets being given to indicate your turn, but this was not the case
- The photographers were felt to be not particularly interactive with the children

In addition to a request that the above points are rectified for next year, some other suggestions were made for the future:

- The company used by the infants a few years ago seemed to be much better

- Some parents remember being given a choice of different poses in previous years (the company with the white background offered this)

Mr McIntosh would bring this up as a matter of discussion for the next joint BFJS/BFIS leadership teams meeting in the new year as this was a decision that would need to be taken jointly by both schools.

- **In-flight homework display afternoon**

A parent made the point that when there are siblings in the school and parents want to get to both classes to view the homework displays, could teachers take this into consideration and allow for a little more flexibility with the time? The pressure to have everything viewed by 3.15pm has caused anxiety to some parents and their children and it was noted that at least one teacher had made it very clear last time that 3.15pm was a cut off time and parents should go by this time.

Mr McIntosh would discuss this with teachers in the new year.

- **Ofsted Monitoring visit report**

A question was raised concerning the recent visit report; it was recognised that the vast majority was positive, but parents wanted to know more about the two points identified for further action:

- Monitor the impact of your actions more closely by ensuring that you and other leaders regularly evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Identify good practice in teaching to share, as well as any training needs. Provide teachers with developmental feedback on the quality of their teaching.

Mr McIntosh explained that the visit had been very successful and the HMI who carried out the inspection was extremely thorough and exacting in her evidence gathering, questioning and challenge to school leaders. It was important to point out that where leaders/leadership was mentioned, this was not solely confined to Mr McTaggart but included him, Governors, Mr McIntosh, the SENCO (Mrs Cato), Mrs Vickers, the School Business Manager (Mrs Enever), and subject leaders, particularly the three with responsibility for Reading, Writing and Maths. It was also important to note that the two areas identified were not new targets for the school to adopt, but rather they needed to be done better or more regularly and the school recognised this. The journey from the initial Ofsted inspection in April had been a full and rapid one, with enormous amounts of work being done to address the issues raised, some that would be very evident to parents and some that would be unknown to them. The key point was that the monitoring visit – by an external body who judged ‘without fear or favour’ – had evaluated the school to be taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school (or better).

Parents asked some further questions:

- Was the school’s aim solely to get to the next category (i.e. ‘Good’)?
Mr McIntosh responded that this was not the case – we wanted the school to be the best it could be and there would be no ceiling or complacency

involved in achieving that ultimately, but he could not foresee what would be the outcome of a future inspection.

- What were the deadlines that had been missed (pg 3) and why?
Mr McIntosh explained that these were self-imposed deadlines; no deadlines for external bodies had been missed. Following the April inspection, the school had set an ambitious schedule of monitoring for itself in many areas which had clearly been unrealistic given the volume of normal and additional work that had to be completed. This would be streamlined and a greater emphasis placed upon improving the impact of the monitoring that would take place.
- Could parents receive more updates about the progress the school is making?
The lack of regular contact about action being taken is creating a vacuum within which parents are getting anxious and frustrated with the school. Some parents are considering changing schools because they are worried that the school is not proving itself to be improving.
Mr McIntosh recognised that communication could always be better and as a school, we keep taking steps to try and improve that, such as:
 - instituting a now-weekly newsletter and common day on which to issue information (Thursdays) so parents expect that communication on a weekly basis
 - adding evening meetings to the Parent Voice schedule to enable working parents to attend
 - texting parents of children who are awarded with Star of the Week
 - keeping the website and Twitter feed up to date
 - gathering current email contacts to enable us to move towards electronic contact, etc.

Within these methods of communication, several improvements and changes have been communicated but it is inappropriate for us to be the judge and jury of our own progress. While we are always involved in continual self-evaluation, to promote our own opinion of progress could always be viewed with scepticism and it is therefore important for parents to receive reports from bodies that are in a position to independently question and challenge the school. This already occurs in the form of the Governing body, the Primary Improvement Board (chaired half-termly by Stephen Mellors, an Essex Education Authority Standards and Excellence Commissioner) and the Local Education Authority who make regular visits (also Stephen Mellors). The LEA would actually be making an Ofsted-style inspection themselves in the summer term of 2016. Additionally, the Ofsted Monitoring Visit was probably the most important outside evaluation of the school to date. All of these should give reassurance to the parent body that the school is being externally reviewed and judged on a regular basis. Mr McIntosh accepted that information from these bodies could be better shared and he would ask them to do so where possible.

- Who are the school Governors? How can parents speak to Governors? Could they produce a regular newsletter? Parents remember getting something from them before the summer holidays, but nothing since then. Year 3 parents who are new to the school have not received anything. Parents

believed regular newsletters would be a good step towards reassuring them that the school was making good progress.

Mr McIntosh pointed parents towards the school website, where a list of the school governors was available under 'School Info'. They could be contacted via the school office or email address and this could also be done in confidence. Mr McIntosh affirmed that there was indeed a summer 2015 newsletter and he would pass on the request for more regular contact from Governors in the future.

- **Information for Year 3 parents**

As mentioned at a previous meeting, it was felt that there was still a lot of information lacking for parents new to the school (mainly Year 3). The term had brought up a number of procedures, policies and events for which some parents felt they were under-informed and would have appreciated more information. Some parents were very reliant on information being passed around by other parents on Facebook.

Mr McIntosh reminded parents that for current parents, the school produces newsletters each week to keep parents up to date, it sends out letters about particular events as soon as possible, the school website has a wealth of information on it and parents should also feel free to talk to the office or staff if they need a query resolved. He referred to an earlier meeting where this was brought up and made it clear that all comments for improvements in the way in which Year 3 parents are helped to make the transition from Year 2 to Year 3 will be taken into account when planning this year's transition meetings and information.

- **School dinners**

Recently, some children had reported to their parents that the school dinners were sometimes cold and inedible as some foods had gone hard as well. This was often the case with the later sittings. Chips and pizza appeared to be the worst affected. Mr McIntosh said that school dinners had been rising in popularity since Ashlyns took over the contract, but that occasional issues like this arose every so often – this is unfortunately the nature of dealing with food. However, he would pass these comments on to the caterers via our School business Manager and see if anything could be done to prevent future problems.

- **Head Teacher's holiday homework**

Parents asked if teachers know much about this homework – what the task is, where it is supposed to go and how the children are supposed to get the work to Mr McTaggart. Some children's teachers did not seem aware what should be done with it or would not give their pupils time to take the homework to the Head. Could Mr McTaggart have an 'in tray' outside his office so that pupils can leave their homework there? Parents commented that they find it difficult enough to motivate their children to complete homework but even more so when they face obstacles like this and where they feel the homework is not appreciated or given feedback. The last head teacher's holiday homework regarding playground games received no response and parents are feeling it is not worth the hassle of trying to get such tasks done in holiday time. Mr McIntosh explained that children should normally be able

to bring their holiday homework to Mr McTaggart at break or lunch times. He also explained that the October half term task, of writing about a favourite playground game, was going to be used in a manual for the playground when new organisation arrangements are implemented in the spring term, and that this had been communicated to the children in assembly. Mr McIntosh would discuss this with Mr McTaggart and the teachers in advance of February's task.

- **Coding club**

This is a very popular club and the children who attend really enjoy it but they feel that Mr Russell needs some assistance due to the large number of members and the challenging nature of the content meaning that many of them often require his help. Could someone else from school help with this? Mr McIntosh would make some enquiries with Mr Russell and if he agreed/wanted some help, what type of skills someone would need.

4. Date and time of next term's meetings:

- Thursday 21st January 9am (tea/coffee from 8.45am) in the Barn
- Monday 22nd February 8pm (tea/coffee from 7.45pm) in the Barn
- ~~Wednesday 23rd March 2.15pm (tea/coffee from 2.00pm) in the Barn~~

NB: Since this meeting, the March date as noted has needed to be changed and will now be on Thursday 24th March at 2.15pm (tea/coffee from 2.00pm) in the Barn