

**Parent Voice**  
**Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November 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**

- **Book fair**

- Teachers who were taking their classes to browse the book fair on the next day after this Parent Voice meeting were asked to remind their children that parents may not buy anything at the fair
- Other booksellers have been contacted to see if they could provide a cheaper alternative to Scholastic and we are waiting to hear back if any do this and if they are a viable choice.
- The Library Book Bus service has been publicised in the newsletter in advance of each subsequent visit this term and will continue to be advertised as such.

- **Playground games**

Mr McTaggart has met with Mrs Hogan to discuss improvements to lunchtime play. The suggestions made at the last meeting have been considered and where possible, added into a provisional plan. This will be refined further with a view to starting in the new term.

- **Homework**

Mr McIntosh had taken all the concerns and suggestions back to the school's senior leadership team. Several lengthy discussions had taken place and there were responses to most of the points raised in the last meeting, as follows:

<b>Point raised (included in last month's minutes)</b>	<b>Response</b>
There is too much homework, taking too long to complete and proving difficult for parents to make balance with other after-school commitments	This has now been simplified and reduced – there is now no longer an obligation to do a written learning journal entry each week, although this <b>can</b> be done if desired and it will be counted towards one of the tasks required from the In Flight menu homework ( <i>see new plan, attached as Appendices to these minutes</i> )
The weekly journal is difficult to complete as the information provided in the weekly summary is too vague and children do not always know how to set their own work; this lack of guidance leads to the need of a high level of support from parents	Weekly learning journal entries no longer compulsory (see above)

Parents, who might struggle academically themselves, find the task of supporting their children in completing further work in their Learning Journal very difficult	Weekly learning journal entries no longer compulsory
Children are apparently being told off, kept behind in class and/or sent to homework club if work has not been completed	Weekly learning journal entries no longer compulsory
Basics such as reading, spelling and times tables are not being allowed enough time at home because of the time required for the weekly journal as well as the In Flight tasks	This now forms the core tasks for homework, now known as 'pre-flight checks' to continue our flight theme
There could be a parents resources area created on e-schools where all the worksheets could be accessed with relevant links provided each week or hard copies available for parents who request them	There are lots of good websites already available that provide this e.g. top marks, primary resources, the school run, etc.
Parents felt that children were being penalised in school if homework was either not done or it was felt to be of a limited quantity and homework club was being seen as a punishment	This has been brought up with teachers – there has never been the intention for it to be seen as a punishment but rather an opportunity to get work completed that obviously could not be done at home for some reason. However, teachers have been requested to send pupils who also want to go.
More guidance is needed if the learning journal approach is to be continued, such as showing examples of work from each level, particularly for maths	Weekly learning journal entries no longer compulsory
Parents feel that children are spending a lot of time doing tasks or activities that aren't benefitting them or their academic needs	Basic skills now form the core tasks for regular homework, while retaining the opportunity for children to explore other areas of learning. In addition, In Flight menu choices have always included a literacy section and will now also include a maths section as choices.
House points are only given if substantial work is completed – there should be more rewards for work done	Teachers have been asked to moderate with each other what constitutes a certain number of points being awarded so there is consistency
There should be more flexibility to take account for families' different weekly pressures	More flexibility has been included by moving the submission date for In Flight menu homework to the first week of each half term, allowing the half term/end of term break to be used to complete tasks.
The whole system is too complicated with Abacus, spellings (in some classes), times tables, reading, weekly learning journal work, half termly In Flight menu, headteacher's holiday homework – it is baffling and difficult to keep up with	Hopefully parents will agree that the system has been simplified.

The maths provision from Abacus is good and interesting but parents do not want their children sitting in front of a computer all the time to complete homework	A system of times tables revision and testing has also now been put in place.
Some parents feel that it would be a shame to lose the creative element of the current homework approach i.e. the In Flight menu – this has proven popular with many children and allows them to flourish in many different ways	This has been retained, with an additional Numeracy section (as well as Literacy having always been there).
Having the half term break to work on the In Flight menu tasks this time round has really helped in terms of time and reducing pressure on completing work before the end of a busy half term of school	This is now the routine in place for each half term.
Is it necessary to have as many as five tasks to complete from the In Flight menu?	Yes – and we believe the flexibility built in and the non-compulsory nature of the weekly Learning Journal entries means this is both realistic and achievable over a half term, most of which are 6 or 7 weeks long, plus the week/2-week break.
Could there be a project set over half term holiday or even over the whole half term?	This is already set as Head Teacher's holiday homework every Christmas, Easter and Summer holidays.
Could children have a scrapbook to record their weekend activities?	They can do this in their Learning Journals if the activities are relevant to their topics in school.

- **Lost property box**

Mrs Raven was scheduled to organise the Lost Property box on 10.11.15. This had been advertised in the preceding newsletter to give parents a chance to retrieve anything that was unnamed.

- **Years 5 & 6 Christmas production**

The decision had been taken for Years 5 & 6 not to put on a Christmas production this year. The reasons were outlined as follows:

- to avoid time being taken out of lessons for rehearsals
- as part of a strategic plan for year group production responsibility being shared throughout the year, with Years 3 & 4 at Christmas, Year 5 at Easter and Year 6 in the summer after SATs
- due to the difficulty in being able to share parts/give prominence to more than a handful of individual children out of a total of 180 pupils and based on feedback from parents who felt that there was inevitably a lot of passivity because of the amount of sitting it entailed for the majority

- as a response to feedback from parents (at Parent Voice, at the post-Ofsted meeting, through individual discussions, etc) who would like less time spent on non-core curriculum events

### **3. Parent voice email agenda item: After school football club**

A request for discussion regarding the after school football club run by Colchester United FC came from the Parent Voice email. The parent noted that she had watched several club sessions and was very concerned about the ability of one instructor to keep what she observed as 30+ children safe on his own. On one occasion, three matches were being played, which would seem to be impossible for any one person to supervise, let alone coach for improvement; indeed, the boys appeared to be refereeing their own matches and behaviour was poor. The parent was worried about what would happen if a player or players were seriously hurt as one person would not be able to handle such a situation.

Mr McIntosh was disappointed to hear that this had been experienced as Colchester United's provision had improved during the course of last year and had received positive comments from parents. He assured parents that supervision of this number of Key Stage 2 children doing physical activity by one person is acceptable, though not necessarily desirable. Any injury or accident would be quickly responded to as there are telephones in the Barn and in the Year 6 demountables that can be used to alert the school office.

Mr McIntosh would pass on these concerns to Mrs Vickers, who is responsible for co-ordinating our extra-curricular provision. He would report back at the next Parent Voice meeting.

### **4. AOB**

A parent asked if a calculation workshop could be offered to help parents assist their children with maths homework. Mr McIntosh would pass this on to Mrs Cole, our Maths Subject Leader, to consider. A parent also asked if this workshop could include how to complete Abacus homework. This would be unlikely to occur before the end of this term due to an already full diary of commitments for teachers, but could be organised for the Spring term.

### **5. Date and time of next meeting**

Wednesday 16th December at 8pm (tea/coffee from 7.45pm) in the Barn.

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15 December 2015

Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you to all the pupils and parents who contributed today to our open Home Learning afternoon. The school was full to the brim of examples of creativity, collaboration and dedication!

Now that we have completed three half termly cycles of our new Home Learning approach, we would like to thank you for your feedback and support throughout this process, particularly through 'Parent Voice'.

As a result of the feedback received from parents, staff and pupils themselves, we are adapting and improving our approach further.

## In-Flight Menu



The half termly in-flight menu tasks will be continuing as we believe they have been extremely successful and now have an added maths column for extra breadth of choice. The end date for these tasks will now always be in the first week back after a holiday break to allow more time for completion.



## Learning Journals


Our original aim for these journals was for the children to have an opportunity to further develop an aspect of their learning **independently**. Our evaluations show that, in some cases, this proved difficult for pupils and confusing for some parents, resulting in a disproportionately high amount of time being spent; this was never our aim. As a result we have made the following changes.

Every week, the pupils (like airline pilots) will be expected to complete their 'pre-flight checks' before being cleared for 'take-off'. These 'pre-flight checks' consist of **basic skills practice** in English and Maths which can be completed **independently**. There will be guides and prompts in the Learning journals to support this independence. Once 'cleared for take-off', the pupils can then decide to build further on the week's learning or complete an in-flight menu task. Pupils will continue to receive a copy of the content taught that week in the form of their 'Learning Destinations'.

We will continue to monitor and evaluate the impact of our home learning approach but firmly believe that it is becoming a key strength of our school provision. With your continued support and feedback, we wish to aim even higher and fly still further!

Yours sincerely

Mrs Vickers (Curriculum Provision and Extension Lead) and the Leadership Team at BFJS



## Weekly Flight Checks for Literacy and Maths

### Literacy

- Spelling, punctuation and grammar (see list of ideas for practising spelling)
- Daily reading - record this in your Learning Passport
- Big Talk - Fortnightly

### Maths

- Times Tables Practice (see list of ideas for learning times tables)
- Abacus online homework

**Have you completed your weekly flight checks for literacy and maths?**

**YOU ARE READY FOR TAKE OFF**

If you want to fly even higher, work on your In Flight Menu or show what you have learnt this week (see weekly destination sheet.) Use the list at the front of this book for ideas of how to present it.

**REMEMBER** - Each half term, you need to complete at least 5 pieces from the In Flight Menu each half term.

# YEAR\_\_ TAKE OFF MENU

Name:

House:

Topic:

Date Set:

Class:

Teacher:

Date due in:

Instructions: Choose one from each section, plus at least one more task.



Parent/carers comments:

Signed

(Pupils 'star' where you think you are, Teachers please tick)



Pupils 'star' where you think you are

Work presented well  
ICT used. More care with  
illustrations or hand-writing needed

Very creative ways to present work. Extra sheets and ICT.  
Illustrations and hand-writing is outstanding

**Even better if...**  
**(pupil comment)**

**Date:**

WEEKLY LEARNING DESTINATIONS		
LITERACY	MATHS	OTHER