

St Peter's Church of England (VA) Primary School
Parents' forum
Thursday 26th January 2012

MINUTES

Present: Malcolm Elliott (ME), David Perkins (DP), Judy Day (JD), Libby Townsend-Green (LTG), Fiona Burnell (FB), Rachael Evans (RE), Kate Harrison (KH), Lorraine Ralph (LR), Janet Lewis (JL), Sarah Gillingham (SG), Ellie Thomas (ET), James Eaton-Terry (JET), Julie Cotton (JC), Debbie Hewett (DH)

1. Apologies for absence.

Gill Moger-Taylor, Julie Fletcher, Amanda Larsson-Carter

2. Minutes of the meeting of 1st November 2011

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the previous meeting's proceedings.

3. Matters Arising

ME advised he had raised the matter of educational visits and costs with the governors and that this should be added to the agenda for the next meeting in March when ME will have a draft programme for contemplation.

ME

4. Parent's Carer's Questionnaire results

ME reported 42% of parents responded to the questionnaire which is an average and acceptable response according to Ofsted standards.

DP circulated a copy of the response to the questionnaire as previously issued with the newsletter. He also circulated a breakdown of the percentages, highlighting those below 85% which are the areas Ofsted would expect the school to probe for more information concerning the responses. DP explained that when looking at percentages of agreement or disagreement there were some areas which were very high compared to previous studies. The five areas for further investigation may not need addressing under Ofsted's parameters as they were close to the 85% required with the exception of the question of "I am kept well informed about how my child is doing at school" which received the highest percentage of disagreement.

DP commented that less than half of the parents completed questionnaires which may suggest parents do not feel their views are listened too. This area needs to be addressed. ME feels the school does a very good job of keeping parents informed through weekly newsletters and additional communications. Sometimes items are communicated later than desired due to the nature of how and when things arise. Ultimately this is only the case where children may miss opportunities due to the lateness of the school finding out about them.

A high proportion of the respondents had strong agreement that children like school and the school is managed effectively.

Where there were statements with strong disagreement this is being addressed. The point about children being bullied needs further investigation in light of the comment that the majority of children enjoy school. Views of parents and children need to be sought for this. There are minor incidents and squabbles and this may relate to how a child perceives bullying. Some children may not understand the distinction between "feeling bullied" and "being bullied". Some children may like school as they enjoy the classroom environment but still feel bullied at break times. ME / DP need to ascertain if, when, how and where bullying is happening. A pupil questionnaire will be issued soon to certain cohorts (e.g. years 1, 3 and 5) and DP will ask children to specify if bullying is happening when and where it is wording the question carefully and without the use of the actual term bullying. ME advised there is no existing data from the last children's questionnaires issued that can be used for analysis. JET asked if using computer based questionnaires for children would help in terms of collation time for analysis as he has access to programs which can be used. DP will liaise with JET on this.

DP / JET

Most of the statements where parents felt there was an issue concerning bullying were in respect of Y4 and Y5 which may be due to their age and perception of bullying. Also peer pressure starts as children progress through the school which can lead to perceived bullying. Some children may not feel they can talk to teachers or carers as they have been intimidated.

JET felt the question should not be “is my child being bullied?” but “if there has been an area of conflict with your child were you happy with how the school resolved it?”. This would gain a clearer view of how the school is handling situations they are aware of as not all bullying will be known about. LR felt there should be refresher lessons focussing on acceptable behaviour and SG suggested doing this for Y4 and Y5 children if this is where the problem seems to lie. This used to happen routinely under the Every Child Matters agenda but is not currently part of the curriculum.

DP advised the questionnaire pointed out many strengths and there were many comments expressing optimism for the future. Some parents stated they didn't know about the quality of teaching as they are not present in classes. There was a positive pattern with these type of comments. There were no generic negative comments about staff or the school.

ME asked if home-learning was perceived to be progressing in the right way with the policy being adopted. Some parents felt their children were getting the correct amount of homework and the correct level. Some parents felt more could be given and some felt the pitch was incorrect for their child's ability. ME advised the teachers differentiate homework in three ways – taking a task and taking it up a level and down a level - although this may not happen in Reception. ME and Senior Teachers reviewed the homework through random samples and have worked on uniformity of approach. It is not perfect yet but is vastly improved considering this is a new policy. Ultimately the policy is helping the level of attainment within the school. SG stated Education City was a great tool for enhancing home-learning.

ME asked where parents felt the school was not taking account of their concerns and suggestions. Parents feel that the presence of ME and DP on the playground in the mornings has been of huge benefit in giving parents a chance to engage with the school's management team. Some of the parents may have negative responses to this question as they do not feel their answer is of priority despite understanding how busy the staff are. Some parents may feel aggrieved through not having received the answer they wanted.

SG suggested putting copies of the newsletters or any salient points on the whiteboard to try and ensure everyone reads them.

5. Annual Report Format

Following on from the questionnaire DP has been looking at the format of reports as many parents felt they were not kept well informed of their child's progress at school. DP has asked parents and staff to state what information they want to see on the reports and a balanced view was taken of the information wanted weighed up against the teachers' workload and the need for transparency. Foundation stage reports will remain in their existing format due to regulations.

The new report format will be the same for every child bringing consistency. National Curriculum levels have been added to the report so that parents can see their child's level of achievement against the national average. Maths and English have five levels of attainment whilst Science only has three. This is in line with the National Curriculum which does not monitor subjects other than Maths and English to such a high level. Some parents would like to see more information if it is available including a National Curriculum level for other subjects. The national average expectations are what is recorded and not where you would expect a particular child to be.

Every age group has a national curriculum expected level e.g. at the end of Y2 level 2 is expected as an average score. 2A would be slightly above expected, 2B would be exactly average, level 3 (A, B and C) would be well above the expected level and level 1 (A, B or C) would be well below expected level. This needs explaining in a covering letter to parents so they can understand the codes. Another table of grades achieved and effort made will be given to parents in July so that parents can see what their child has attained against their attainment at the spring term report. This will give more transparency to parents and the ability to raise questions if they need to extend their children or have concerns.

The reports will have small dialogue boxes for Maths and English and targets for the rest of the year.

For other curriculum subjects there is no dialogue box but comments can be made on the back page where a teacher feels this is merited. This is due to the fact that in the past the dialogue boxes for other curriculum subjects were used to state what children had covered in these subjects which is shown on the timetable.

A sentence will be added to the report concerning attendance and requests for additional leave in

ME / DP

ME / DP

term time and the "rules" set by the government on this issue.

The clubs attended by children are shown on the report. Some parents wanted clarity as to where the money is banked from club subscriptions – it goes to the SPSA. Perhaps the letters being sent with clubs could be adapted to ensure parents who can not afford club fees can have the £4 subsidised or waived? This will be discussed at a future forum.

The behaviour and attitude box is important as it underpins the rest of the report and is the teacher's view on accumulated evidence. The targets are also set here and the class teacher comments will be for specifically educational points. If behaviour needs addressing the table is a visual way for the parent to see this.

ME sought views of parents evenings. Some parents feel the time is not long enough for them to raise their queries as the ten minutes is taken with the teacher explaining their stance of their child. The autumn term meeting has historically for target setting. The report will be issued in the spring followed by a parent / teacher meeting to discuss the report and any concerns.

DP asked how parents felt about having access to Pupil Tracker. Some thought this would be a great idea and others were sceptical as to the interpretation of the results due to the natural peaks and troughs throughout a child's education. ME advised that he is not 100% convinced of the accuracy of the assessments on Pupil Tracker but this is being worked on to ensure the tool is accurate and used correctly in the future. ME feels this is something that may be introduced in the 2012/13 academic year.

ME

6. Items from the Suggestion Box

a) Evaluation of Christmas Performances

Some parents felt the gymnastics performance at the Church raised some safety concerns and after so much effort and practice few could actually see the performance which was a great shame. A suggestion was made that it be videoed and shown at the church on a large screen so that more people could appreciate the performance. Many parents liked the diversity of the performances which showcased the achievements of the school.

7. Time and Date of Next Meeting

This was agreed for 5th March 2012 at 19.00.

8. Agenda items for next meeting

School visits and trips
Donations for after-school clubs

There being no further business the meeting was closed.

Signed

Chair

Dated