

Parent Forum – Mon 1st July 2024

Present: Steve Snelson, Rachel Watts, Kristy Sawyer (via Teams), Caitlin Teague (Chair), Jo Schiernecker, Leanne Palmer, John Gregory, Dan Kilsby, Gemma Burgess, Eleanor Renshaw, Lucy White

Caitlin Teague welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1) School structure

A parent had fed back that the information about the class structure for 2024/25 had been “a shock” as many had expected to stay with the same teacher (in mixed year classes) for 2 years. Rachel and Steve explained the rationale for the changes which include budget constraints and issues with ‘under full’ classes and that the school is reducing intakes to 1 class entry from 2025 to help mitigate this.

Parents suggested that an opportunity to have a Q&A session with school at transition may help allay some concerns from parents – Rachel and Steve felt that the school was already very open to communication with parents – such as via this Forum or on the school gates – and so this may not need to be a ‘formal’ offering.

On how classes were decided, it was explained that teachers who know the children do have input into their new class but logistically, it was not possible to ask children to give names of 1 or 2 friends as was done a number of years ago.

2) Deadlines

There has been some disputes over deadlines for events recently and it was asked whether these deadlines need to continue to be enforced. It was agreed that although this can be difficult to manage and results in office staff and Friends volunteers often bearing the brunt of complaints, they were important to uphold.

Friends representatives present informed that they plan to be extremely transparent and consistent with deadlines and all present agreed that early communication of the expectations on parents over deadlines was crucial.

3) Parent Conduct – online and in person

There have been a number of complaints regarding parent conduct – regarding events as above and on parent WhatsApp groups. School will be reminding all parents of the code of conduct that is signed by all parents when their child starts and then reiterated at the start of each year.

Rachel and Steve also offered a session with the Chair of Governors for parents if required, for questions regarding general procedures and policies at the school.

4) Cost of trips

Rachel and Steve informed parents that trips involve what has to be presented as a ‘voluntary contribution’ for transport costs and this is often unpaid by a number of parents – a recent trip had nearly a quarter of contributions unpaid. This shortfall then has to be made up by the school or the trip cancelled.

Parents present suggested a calendar of expected trips with as much notice as possible and as before, setting an ‘expectation’ from day 1 that such activities cannot go ahead without parental contribution. One parent suggested including some information about ‘missing’ contributions in the school newsletter as many parents will be unaware just how much of an issue this is to the school.

5) Communicating the content of the Parent Forum

Rachel asked that the notes from the meetings be made available on the school website. Caitlin advised that this is usually done however due to this being a voluntary role, unfortunately this can sometimes prove difficult. All efforts will be made to upload the notes in a timely manner after meetings and parents made aware they are available.

6) Items raised by parents

- Hollie Hames-Mears in year 3 has offered to be involved in setting up a uniform 'swap shop' – a Friends Facebook page exists along these lines, Hollie to be directed to the Friends to discuss.
- A conversation was had regarding the recent sports day – parents felt that it was a shame there were not more 'traditional' races for the older children, along with a relay. The need for a megaphone and requests for some music were also mentioned, as many parents appeared to leave at the break as they couldn't hear the announcement that the children would be coming back out.
- House names were discussed – were they still relevant? Rachel and Steve informed they plan to have some sessions with the children about each House name and who the 'names' were.
- Parent Evening slots appeared to have all been booked before the report was available but on inspection, it was found that many were still free to book.
- A parent asked about lunches as many are not happy that the children eat packed lunches in their classroom. They reiterated the pressures of space in the hall and it was agreed that the children could be encouraged to move about and choose to sit with friends rather than stay in their 'lesson' seat and parents expressed concern with YouTube videos being shown as they eat, preferring the children to be encouraged to talk instead.
- Kristy informed attendees about the new uniform provider that plants trees in response to sales and all present agreed this was a positive offer