



Holmes Chapel Primary School

Minutes of Parents' Forum meeting: 24th October 2016

Present: H Scott, H Parkinson-Sykes, F Fernando, A Smith, R Moffa, T Stringfellow, L Grimshaw, E Lal, J Madden, N Thompson, S Taylor, V Henderson, P Lavin, A Chapman, A Gladwin, K Peers, M Melson, J McClue, L Couch, T Shone, M Rowley, R Middleweek, J Beattie

1. Ownership of Year group Facebook pages

Reception parents recently set up a year group Facebook page and asked school to make all parents in the year aware of it. School requested not to get involved in the management or administration of the group, but offered for a member of staff to join the group. Reception parents subsequently decided to keep it as a closed group. The idea of a school Facebook page was raised. Mrs Scott explained that this had been explored by the school governors who concluded that this would not be the right avenue for issues to be discussed and noted that not all families use Facebook. Some of the year groups have introductory text at the top of the page reminding parents about the purpose of the group. It was suggested that the administrators of other year groups consider adding similar text and reminding parents to be respectful to others when posting comments. Mrs Scott will also reiterate the need for issues to be discussed directly with school in her next newsletter.

2. Number of pupils per class – impact on learning

The number of pupils at the school has increased considerably in the last 18 months and most classes are now at maximum capacity (30 children per class in KS1; 32 children per class in KS2). The local authority encourages schools to go beyond these limits, but HCPS has decided not to. We already have a higher ratio of staff to children than we need to, and than many schools choose to have, so we can split the classes down into smaller groups where appropriate. The question was raised as to the impact on class sizes of the new houses being built in Homes Chapel. As we are an academy, we can say no to the local authority if asked to take on more children. Currently, lots of children at the school are from outside of Holmes Chapel, but as the demand for places increases, children within Holmes Chapel will be given priority. It was noted that the school has not yet applied Cheshire East Council's fair access protocol (this is put in place to ensure that the most vulnerable children secure a school place as quickly as possible and that all schools admit their fair share of children who may need additional support because of their vulnerability/challenges).

3. Whiteboard pen stains

Some parents asked about the whiteboard pens used in school, as they are leaving marks on their children's polo shirts. Washable pens are used, but Mrs Scott will look to source different pens. A recommended stain remover was Dr Beckmann's Stain Slayer (available from Home Bargains).

4. School polo shirts

Other parents noted that the named school polo shirts are scratchy beneath where the logo is embroidered. The general consensus was that the shirts are a little scratchy when new, but that they soften after a few washes. Mrs Scott has discussed this with Sam Dales and they are looking for possible alternative supplier. However, parents do not need to buy the named polo shirts, but can buy plain white or royal blue shirts from other outlets. Mrs Scott will reissue the uniform policy further to a discussion about the colour of polo shirts and style of footwear allowed in school.

5. Future of the PTA film night

Over the last 3-4 years the PTA has held a film night in the school hall. Children come along in their pyjamas and bring cushions or bean bags and watch a recently-released DVD (they pay for snacks and drinks in return). The film nights proved very popular and were also very profitable, but school no longer feel able to continue with these events. Due to the growing numbers of children attending the film night, the hall was becoming very crowded and warm, and some children were struggling to sit still and watch

the film. In addition, the responsibility for managing the large numbers of children was falling to the PTA and the teachers, all of whom had volunteered their time, but often found themselves in a difficult situation. Even if we restricted the event to one key stage only, the same issues would arise. A suggested solution was to host a family film night so that parents would be around to supervise their own children. We would potentially have to hold multiple viewings of the same film to allow everybody to fit into the hall, and this would require more volunteers to help, but it is something for the PTA to consider.

6. Photographs on school trips

The idea of taking a class photograph when the children are dressed up for school trips or when they go on school residential was discussed. However, on residential, the teachers are busy supervising the children and would have little time for taking photos (the same also applies to blogs or twitter feeds as a means of updating parents). Also, some parents do not give permission for photographs of their children to be distributed outside school. It was suggested that a class photo could be displayed in school for parents to view, but not distributed any further. Alternatively, the PTA could sell prints of the photo to negate issues with digital storage. While school think that this is a good idea, for the reasons discussed above, it might not be that straightforward to do.

7. Supervision in the woods

A question was raised about how closely supervised the children are when playing in the woods. Each break time there are three members of staff on duty: one at the far end of the upper playground near the woods, one on the upper playground closer to the school and one on the lower playground. At lunch time there are extra staff members and midday assistants in all areas. All staff carry first aid kits with them, and if children do hurt themselves they go into school with a friend, so that the staffing number outside is maintained. In cases where a staff member has to take a child inside to receive first aid, then another member of staff goes outside to replace them. The woods are also checked daily for litter.

8. INSET days – could they be grouped into a 1-week extra holiday?

Rather than having inset days spread throughout the school year, parents asked if they could be grouped together to give an extra weeks' holiday. However, the inset days are an opportunity for staff development and training (i.e. in September, the inset day is used for forward planning for the academic year, with later inset days used to readdress the plans and determine what still needs to be done), so this wouldn't be feasible if all of the days were grouped together as a solid week later in the school year. In addition, we try to mirror the holidays followed by Holmes Chapel Comprehensive School, as this works most effectively for families with children at both schools. It is therefore unlikely that we would ever change to having a 2-week break in May, with a 1-week shorter summer holiday, and is also the reason for having a later than usual October half-term holiday.

9. Healthy school meals – dessert options

The question of whether there are enough healthy desserts on the school lunch menu was discussed. Cheshire East Council set the menu and school have very little input, although the cook can make minor adjustments. Fruit and yoghurts are always available, and all children in KS1 are offered fruit in the morning and afternoon. The cooks have become much better at balancing the amount of food they prepare, with little going to waste. There are also fewer cases of children not getting the food they ordered; sometimes children order a meal in the morning but then change their mind when they see the food at lunch time, which can have a knock-on effect. However, this rarely occurs and children are encouraged to stick with their original choice. The new school menu will be issued to all parents shortly.

10. Any other business

Change to school residentials

While the overall feedback from the parent survey on residential was very positive, some parents were apprehensive about letting their children go away in Year 3. It is quite unusual for children to do four

residential in primary school, and school were increasingly being asked to provide financial support to families for these trips. Furthermore, the Year 4 residential was very weather-dependent and children didn't always enjoy it if the weather was bad. Teachers were also reluctant to book day trips for children knowing that parents had to pay for the residential. Taking all this into consideration, future residential will only take place in Years 4, 5 and 6. The current Year 3 children will not go on a residential this year, but school are looking at moving the residential in Year 4 to the Autumn term so that they can go away earlier in the year. The current Year 4 children, who already went on a residential in Year 3, will not go away again in Year 4. Mrs Scott felt that, on reflection, this could have been better communicated to children in school before it was explained to parents in her recent newsletter. School could have emphasised that instead of the residential, other exciting day trips would take place to tie in with the curriculum.

Traffic light system

The idea of including images alongside the red and green circles on the traffic light behaviour system was suggested, especially for younger children. However, it was felt that showing negative (red) images in a classroom was not a good idea, but that school preferred to focus on positive reinforcement with phrases such as 'we listen' and 'we work hard' positioned near the golden circle. Children who lose golden time are only given the opportunity to earn it back once they've lost all 30 minutes. A physical assault on another child or member of staff results in instant loss of golden time. After the weekend all pegs are moved back to the green circle and children start afresh. Children can also earn awards for good behaviour or for pastoral or academic reasons. Certificates are given out in the celebration assembly each Friday, which emphasise why the teacher is particularly proud of that child. Teachers try to ensure that all children receive an award, but those who continually misbehave do not get them. The effectiveness of the traffic light system in general was questioned by one parent. Mrs Scott stressed that, although school believe the current system to be effective, she was open to suggestions for new ideas which could be considered when the school review their behaviour policies annually.

Guided reading at lunch time

The use of lunch time for guided reading in KS1 was queried. Mrs Scott explained that children in KS1 have 20-minutes longer for lunch than those in KS2, and once a week this 20-minute period is used for guided reading. This creates a good opportunity for the teacher to work with a small group of children and focus on the individual support that each child needs. After the guided reading session, the small group of children are taken straight into lunch together, to the front of the queue, to finish lunch time with their year group. On the other days of the week, the children have 20 minutes longer for lunch.

School Crossing Patrol

The position of school crossing patrol was filled by Cheshire East Council in June, but they are still waiting for occupational health checks to be completed. In addition, 20mph flashing lights were supposed to be put in place over the summer holidays. School are actively chasing up on these points. As the council has confirmed the school meets the criteria for a permanent crossing, we need to keep drumming up support for this by sending personal emails to the council.

Dealing with bullying in school

Mrs Scott was asked to explain the school policy on bullying. Children are encouraged to tell a teacher if they are unhappy - senior leaders pass on any information they receive - and it is then acted on very quickly. The anti-bullying day in November is used as an opportunity to remind children how to behave towards each other and what to do if they are being bullied. Any allegations of bullying or arguing between parents outside of school cannot be managed by school.