

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019; 2:30pm – 3:15pm

In attendance: Andy Kitchen (AK), Allison Hammond (AH) and Beenal Rajyaguru (BR). AH had opened the meeting to five parents in attendance and thanked them for their attendance. Parents were represented from EYFS, year one, year two, year four and year six. AH stated that this was the first time that topics for discussion have been sent to parents to obtain feedback through this platform, and invited parents to highlight any other issues or concerns they wished to provide feedback during this session.

### Introduction

AK had provided feedback from the last parent forum from May 2019. The year group information afternoons had been put into place this academic year as a direct result of parent feedback as parents felt that they wanted more guidance on how to support their children throughout the academic year.

### Year group parent information afternoons

Generally, parents felt satisfied with the content of the information afternoons but some felt that the timings of the sessions could be improved. Suggestions were made to move the year one parent information afternoon to the end of EYFS to coincide with children meeting their new teachers.

Feedback from year one parents suggested this would be useful to manage the changes in school routines for example children lining up at the start of each school day and parents leaving their children in their class lines. Parents were also kindly reminded to not walk through the class lines in the playground which can cause disruption. AK stated that himself and Miss Bignell are present each morning in the school playground. Parents of children transitioning from EYFS to year one could be informed of these changes beforehand and could help to improve organisation and reduce chaos at the start of the school year. **AK agreed that changing the year one parent information afternoon to the end of EYFS could be an option for the next academic year.**

It was also noted that the year six parent information afternoon was held later in the year after half term due to the year six residential trip. AK felt that parent availability would be an issue as not all year six children were going on their residential trip so holding these meetings simultaneously would be problematic. **AK agreed that future year six parent information afternoon could be held earlier in the academic year.** There is also the year six SATs meeting that is held in addition to the parent information afternoon.

Suggestions for holding the sessions in a different location were made as parent attendance for some year groups (year one and year three) exceeded expectations. Parents felt that the classrooms were not the best location as the capacity was too small.

AK stated that year one and year three sessions were well attended this year due to the different part of the school buildings the children would be studying in. The open areas within the school may not be appropriate as it becomes difficult to hear all of the information provided. In recent years there have been about 20 or so parents attend the information afternoons and so classrooms have previously been sufficient. AK also stated that for this academic year these parent information afternoons were held as additional activities but for the next academic year these can be pre-planned and the main hall booked well in advance to avoid clashing with other local groups and clubs who regularly book the main hall.

### Timings of parent open afternoon visits into school

Some parents felt concerned and frustrated that school open activities including reading afternoons, parent information afternoons, Sports Day...etc may not be very well attended by parents working full time, especially for EYFS and year six children as it would be parents' respective first and last visits into school.

AK stated that morning sessions tend to be very difficult to fit into a school day due to morning assemblies and in particular for some EYFS children it was challenging and upsetting having a "second goodbye" to their parents for morning school visits. Afternoons tend to work better for children and the aim is to have one parent open visit per term. AK stated that it would be quite difficult to hold events outside of the school day timings but if parents were unable to attend any activities other members of a child's extended family e.g. grandparents could attend in their place.

### Maths homework changes

Feedback has been very positive for this change with the Times Tables Rock Stars app. It has engaged children and they have managed to cope well with this new way of learning their times tables. A year four parent provided "excellent" feedback for this app (via email) and said it was a very enjoyable way of learning times tables.

Some concerns provided were that homework assigned on the Mathletics programme does not always appear as an assigned activity, even though the homework work provides details of which activity is to be completed for that week.

AK stated that maths overall as a subject area has been extremely positive for the school and is an area where the school is consistently showing progress year after year. The school has invested heavily in the Mathletics online platform but a new area for school progress and assessment has been times tables which was the driver for encouraging children to engage in learning their times tables. It encouraged the approach of "no child being left behind" where all the children can learn all areas within maths as a subject. AK also commented on how Stafford Leys school has one of the best success rates in maths as a subject area within Leicestershire, and external organisations have visited the school to observe how maths is taught here at Stafford Leys.

### New Reading Initiatives

AK explained that Stafford Ley's attainment record in maths is exceptionally high and the reading is above average and so this has been the driver to help the school further improve its focus on reading to achieve the same standards in reading as is in maths. New initiatives this term include a focus on the extreme reading for children to develop a love of reading, and so improvements to the reading diaries so that parents can support their children regularly reading at home. Children at the school are good technical readers but the initiatives such as VIPERS help support the children understand and comprehend the texts they are reading as well as their reading fluency. Story time phonics have also been introduced this year to help children develop a love for reading as well as being able to technically decode texts. Whole class reading has also been introduced too so that all children study the same book and children have found this very enjoyable. The PFA have also donated some money to purchase new texts for each classroom to support this. Reading bands (Oxford Reading Tree) have

also been successful across Key Stage One, and this year it has been rolled out for use within Key Stage Two in years five and six too.

Parent feedback has been positive overall and that the reading diary comments are useful. Parents found it very apparent of the new changes made this year and the shift of focus towards improving reading. Parents expressed some concern as it is difficult to know what “good progress” looks like from a parent perspective, and parents find it hard to track progress of reading comprehension. AK explained that the reading book bands is an example to parents of where the book band colour can match a child’s expected level of reading for their age and these are displayed around the school for further information, as well as being on the school website. AK explained that there are many elements in determining a child’s progress with reading i.e. not just speed of reading but also understanding new vocabulary and prediction of what will happen next within a book.

Parents asked the question whether there is an English app similar to the Mathletics app as it is easy to track progress with the Mathletics app and parents thought it could be useful. AK explained that it is difficult for children to share and read a piece of text electronically but the school will look into options of new technology for English support should a suitable English app be available for school use.

#### Homework quantities

A year one parent stated that homework quantities seem excessive as there is a plethora of homework required i.e. reading at least three times weekly/spellings/phonics/handwriting/Mathletics. A year four parent stated this appeared excessive for year one in comparison to homework received at year four. Another year six parent had fed back (via email) that more homework should be provided from school to enable their child to be “secondary school ready”.

AK stated that in the first instance discussions should always be made to the class teachers and open conversations about how long homework is taking children to complete should be discussed. Teachers would not discipline children for not doing their homework so parents were encouraged to liaise with their class teachers to discuss what homework activities would be realistically manageable at home.

#### Feedback initiatives

Parents stated that they would like to see the school improve on parent engagement initiatives and provide feedback to parents more regularly. Parents also expressed that they see little feedback on feedback i.e. they would like to see how their suggestions are being actioned by the school and how the school can use parent engagement as an opportunity for improvement. Parents stated that they would like to see progress reports earlier the year rather than meetings with teachers during parents evenings at the end of the school year. Regular feedback would help parents feel more involved where they can be provided with more opportunities to support their child’s learning throughout the year, particularly if there is a learning need for a child that is struggling with a specific target. Parents feel that they could provide this extra support if regular communication with parents is achieved throughout the year e.g. through homework diaries and would find regular feedback useful.

AK stated that parents would be informed if a child has not met their expected targets set and where children have met their targets set then there would be less of a concern to contact parents. Lesson plans throughout the year are aimed at working towards a target and this approach has helped

children achieve their targets set. AK stated that as an example of where over 50% of the children at Stafford Leys in year six achieved “greater depth” in mathematics with the national average being 25%. Another statistic was that 95% of children in year six had passed the maths assessment in year six compared to the national average of 75%. AK stated that these statistics provide the confidence that the school is also focusing on the children who are performing well, as well as ensuring that parents of those children that need further support with their maths as they are not meeting their targets are spoken to.

#### Wearable digital technology

AK stated that more and more pupils are coming into school wearing high value Fitbit and Apple Watches which have been banned from the school. He explained the variety of the versions available stating that there are cheaper versions available, and there have been some instances of watches ringing during the school day as they are linked to mobile phones. AK encouraged the use of watches being worn, in particular analogue watches to enable children to tell the time advising that these should be removed during PE lessons.

Parents provided feedback that the responsibility of allowing a child to wear an expensive watch should lie with parents themselves, and accept that if a high value wearable device is lost or misplaced then it is not the school’s responsibility. AK agreed with this and stated that children will be allowed to have wearable digital technology as long as it is removed for PE lessons and parents accept full responsibility in the event of loss or damage at school. AK stated that devices linked to mobile phones e.g. Apple watches will remain banned from being brought into school.

#### School dinner menu availability for children

A year four parent had asked whether school children are able to view the lunch menu as there have been some discrepancies highlighted between what children say they have eaten at school compared to the meal options parents were expecting to be available.

AK stated that the school menu is always available for viewing at the back of the main hall e.g. during assemblies as well as lunchtimes but agreed it can get busy once children have washed their hands ready for lunch and are queuing up ready to be served their food. Parents had suggested labelling of foods on the counters next to their serving trays so make it easier for children to decide what they would like to eat. **AK to look into this possibility with the catering staff to see if this an option.**

#### Handwashing

An EYFS parent commented how positive the EYFS environment is and children’s enjoyment of school so far. Concerns from several EYFS parents have been that the handwashing facilities within the school do not have appropriate levels of foam handwash in their dispensers making it difficult for children to learn about the importance of hygiene and wash their hands thoroughly.

AK replied that the handwashing facilities within the school are fairly new with pressure dispensers installed so that a child has to press firmly for the foam to be released, rather than “press down” type dispensers which smaller children find difficult to operate. The foam is refilled by internally school cleaning/caretaking staff rather than external companies coming into school periodically which has

helped minimise the occurrence of soap dispensers being empty for long periods. AK suggested that as the dispensers are new some of them may be stiff or may have malfunctioned.

The choice to use foam instead of liquid soap has been a conscious decision by the school to ensure adequate age appropriate handwashing facilities aimed at primary school children taking into consideration allergy and sensitivity risk together with child operability of the dispensers themselves. A suggestion from parents were to use automated sensor dispensers but AK replied this would be expensive to replace throughout the whole school; any decisions to replace dispensers would be for EYFS only. **The Governors on the Health and Safety Committee would review this in January 2020 during their Learning Walk and meeting.**

The Governors and Mr Kitchen concluded the meeting and thanked all of the parents for attending and asked if parents could disseminate the information discussed at today's forum with other parents.

Our Spring meeting will discuss;

- School dinners and how we can increase hot dinner uptake
- The use of our emailing system and feedback from parents
- The school's new SRE policy. This will be sent out prior to the meeting so please read it before the meeting

If you have other issues that you would like to raise, please email [parentsforum@staffordleys.com](mailto:parentsforum@staffordleys.com)