

Parents' Forum meeting

9am Wednesday 19th July

Present: Malcolm Goddard (HT), Sarah Beckett (DH) and five parents

Agenda:

What we have improved this year and what the school priorities are for next year.

2016-17 Priorities were based on the outcomes from our most recent Ofsted:

1) Develop the leadership role for SEN, to ensure that every child receives work which meets their needs and ability.

Our new SENCO from September 2016, Miss Hindley, has provided considerable support this year for pupils and staff, to ensure that appropriate support and work is given to children with SEN. This has improved and will be a continued focus.

We have also been working on ensuring that we can show that all children are making progress, despite some having significant barriers to learning. This again, will continue in our priorities for 2017-8.

2) Implement an electronic assessment system to manage and interpret assessment data.

This system is now up and running and actively used by staff to inform their planning, as they are held accountable for the progress of children in their classes.

Expected standards have gone up this year.

It was raised by a parent whether the bands Emerging, Expected and Exceeding could be hard for children to understand (opposed to the previous system where there were linear bands) and whether this could be broken down into more detail. Mr Goddard explained that the staff do break it down into more detail for their own planning and interventions, however, we share the end of year expectations for parents at parents' evening so they can, at least, see what the aim for the whole school year is. Individual targets are then discussed with parents at parents' consultations.

It was asked if there could be a report at a different time of year, rather than at the end. Mr Goddard explained that it is statutory for the school to produce a report at the end of the year, and when asked if there could be a further parents' evening, he replied that teachers are contracted to do only two – although we do offer the opportunity to any parent to make an appointment to discuss the report, after reports have been sent home.

3) Develop greater challenge for all groups of pupils within lessons

This has been a key focus for all staff training and for all monitoring of teaching and learning taking place within school this year. Staff have been trained and supported to experiment with different methods of introducing challenge and to introduce it to the right children at the right time within a lesson. A lot of progress in this area has been developed through a coaching method which we now use, whereby a member of the Senior Leadership Team works alongside a teacher to develop their teaching practice – this involves conversations prior to and during a lesson, team teaching or modelling best practice. Staff have been positive about this method of monitoring and development, opposed to simply being observed, and they report that they prefer the dialogue and development which coaching provides. Senior and Middle Leaders also regularly drop into lessons and have evidenced an improvement in challenge being effectively introduced to all groups of learners.

In the Summer term, we received external verification of this good practice from a Headteacher and his Senior Leadership Team within our Partnership of local schools.

One parent asked how less motivated children are challenged. We discussed how the focus within all lessons is ensuring that all teachers are actively ensuring all groups of learners are making at least adequate progress and to adapt their lessons if it becomes apparent to them that a child is not making required or appropriate progress. This includes motivating all children and is something which is a strength of our staff in tapping into what will motivate more reluctant learners.

Testing was also discussed. Formal assessments are used as a guide, alongside teacher assessment of what children are able to do in class. Children sit formal assessments three times each year and this also ensures that we can teach them the skills required to sit assessments. Assessments also allow teachers to ensure that they then provide appropriate and relevant additional interventions for those children requiring reinforcement or further development.

Times tables were also discussed – a question was raised as to whether these could take place little and often, rather than just once a week as, for some children, this can prove demoralising. The times table approach we currently use will be reviewed by our maths leader in September. As with all systems, it needs to incorporate practice which benefits all children.

Homework was raised. The difference between KS1, who have choice over the term, against KS2 who progress into being set weekly homework tasks was shared. Generally, the parents present felt that there was a balance across subjects, however, it was raised whether KS1 could be set less topic and more maths and English tasks (one parent preferred worksheet type homework) and there was also a request that parents are informed what KS1 are covering each week (this is shared in EYFS and KS2). These comments will be passed onto our KS1 Phase Leader.

4) Improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils so that gaps with their peers close. (Also within this priority: Further develop parental engagement in their children's learning focussing on PP families and develop pupil engagement in wider opportunities among PP children to enrich their learning experience.)

We have ensured that there are tailored programmes to meet the needs of all disadvantaged pupils and they have made the fastest progress of all groups in school. All teachers have a second afternoon out of class each week to deliver interventions. We have worked hard to engage with our harder to reach families to ensure that they all attend parents' evening and to encourage them to take part in family learning activities. We are aware that we are often having to break down the barriers if parents themselves had negative experiences at school in their own childhood and so, aim to give them some positive experiences coming in to share fun and engaging learning with their own children.

Attendance across the school still needs focus. We will continue to liaise with families to emphasise the importance of regular and punctual attendance in school. We have seen a raised incidence of more families taking time for holidays during term time. Governors have agreed that there will need to be more rigorous processes in place to address attendance next year.

Parents present agreed that it is the parents who need to be educated e.g about the impact of time off, but also, advice about when to send children back to school after illness, as well as hygiene when illness has been present within the family. It was suggested that there should be reminders in the weekly newsletters if there is a high incidence of absence or a particular illness.

5) Provide greater opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their spellings.

It was shared that the lead English consultant for Kent came to review our practice in teaching and practising spellings and she agreed that the provision in place is one of the most thorough she has seen. That said, she also acknowledged that this is likely to take time to impact on spelling outcomes in statutory tests.

It was discussed that we do not formally do weekly spelling tests as this has been shown to be effective for some, however, a large group of children either learn spellings for the test but do not use them in their writing or find this type of testing demoralising. This is different from times tables where there are a finite number to learn. We focus on encouraging the children to find and use methods which suit them, in order to retain and use correct spellings. Some children do learn by rote and we offer an optional spelling bee in some year groups. Our spelling outcomes have improved this year, but our practice needs further time to embed to improve outcomes further.

It was raised by one parent that the 'Look, Say, Write, Cover, Check' method may not work for all children and they ask whether this could be made clear. This will be passed onto our English Leader to communicate more clearly, particularly in homework tasks.

It was asked if children could have spelling journals. All children have vocabulary books and, in some classes, the children have spelling journals or 'have-a-go' sheets in addition. However, we do not allow the children to take these home, as many would not bring them back into school every day and the children do actively use them in class. In the older classes, in particular, children are more responsible for finding and practising their own mis-spelled words. However, Ms Beckett said parents could encourage their child to keep one at home if that suited their child.

We also discussed the success in getting children to engage in reading through the RED TED scheme and how we now have a band of regular parent and volunteer readers to ensure that all children are getting the chance to read to and share books with someone regularly. It was asked whether there was a way that children could get their RED TED cards stamped if they attended a club. This will also be passed onto to our English leader to address.

New Priorities for 2017-18

Mr Goddard introduced the key priorities for 2017-18:

Leadership and Management:

- Re-establishing the vision and values of the school to ensure that a clear strategic direction is known and understood.
- Ensuring the governors are informed with everything they need to know to make the best strategic decisions for the school alongside senior leaders.
- Developing all Middle Leaders fully – this includes Phase Leaders and the SENCO and Pupil Premium Champion.
- Ensuring all Subject Leaders have clear action plans to raise standards within their subject.
- Further develop a coaching and mentoring culture within the school to drive improvement in leadership, teaching and learning and in supporting the children.

Teaching and Learning:

- Writing: building stamina, encouraging reluctant writers and balancing the skills of extended writing and editing.
- Developing the children's comprehension skills, including providing guidance for parents.
- Further develop approaches to teaching pupils with SEN and ensuring every child makes good or better progress relative to their starting points.

Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare:

- Developing a whole school approach to well-being for pupils and staff – this will include building resilience and developing mindfulness skills.
- Ensuring safe guarding practices are checked, updated and enhanced, including raising awareness of bullying and how this is addressed across all sections of the school community.
- Raising attendance.

Outcomes for Pupils:

- Continuing to develop the EYFS environment and the aspirations of children, staff and parents.
- Embedding improvements in the teaching of spelling and SPAG.
- Provision for Pupil Premium children.

- Ensuring assessment systems provide timely and accurate information to enable effective and responsive interventions.

In addition, one parent raised whether there were any additional songs which could be sung at the Mothers' Day assembly as they felt that the content of the one which the children sing each year may be a little outdated and stereotypical. Whilst the Mothers' Day event and activities are gratefully appreciated, this was agreed by others present. This comment will be passed onto our Music Leader to consider.

It was asked, in the light of Mr Goddard's resignation coming into effect next Summer, whether there were plans to address this. Whilst Mr Goddard could not comment on this directly, as he will not be involved, it was explained that there would be a recruitment process put in place by the Governors.

The proposed expansion was questioned, as to whether there was any more progress on this matter. Mr Goddard said that this had gone quiet and has not moved in the past six months. This potentially, he felt, was down to reduced KCC budgets. In September, it will be on the agenda for Governors to explore what is happening. Our maximum number of pupils would be 280 and currently we are full in some year groups and turning children away.

Many thanks to all the parents who attended and gave their time to provide a fruitful and positive discussion!

Sarah Beckett

Deputy Headteacher

July 2017