

## **Parents' Forum Meeting**

Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2017 9am

### **Agenda:**

Open agenda – parents were invited to share constructive ideas and views.

4 parents attended with Ms Beckett (Deputy Headteacher)

### **Key areas discussed were:**

#### **Budget**

School budgets are currently in the news and parents present asked if there was anything parents could do to help or support the school. (For example, contributing financially or helping give needed items.)

We have an active PTA who brilliantly support the school. The remit for the PTA is that, in theory, they are able to support with any items or events which are in addition to the required curriculum. Therefore, necessities must be bought directly from the school budget. However, the PTA is incredibly generous in supporting the children by helping to fund a proportion of trips, visitors or resources. Supporting PTA events will, of course, benefit the children's learning and experiences.

Budget setting is currently taking place and, like most schools, is very tight. We are having to balance the costs of consumable and non-consumable resources, staffing, buildings maintenance, continuing subscriptions and costs etc. It was discussed how the school is keen to maintain the number of classes we currently have, as we want to be able to expand as needed and welcome new children into the school. Every year, staff who are responsible for leading subjects within school, bid for money from the curriculum budget, in order to lead initiatives or particular drives within their subject. This is likely to be reduced this year and once again, may be something the PTA could support with.

As a school, we actively seek to take part in any initiatives offered to us or to access grants or funding which is made available for particular projects. If you ever become aware of any such projects, please let us know!

In the past, we have asked for parents to make voluntary contributions to a 'School Fund', however, in recent years, this has been superseded by the request for parents to lend their support through contributing to trips or visitors, as this is a vital part of the curriculum enrichment which is so important to how we teach here at Marden School. The 'School Fund' is now minimal and exists primarily for rare donations. We may, however, explore the possibility with the PTA of setting up a method of donation for parents who are keen to support the school, but potentially are unable to attend or take part in PTA fundraisers.

As has been explained in recent newsletters, we are reliant on the goodwill of parents in contributing to the cost of trips and sadly, if these contributions become less forthcoming, we may be unable to book particular experiences for the children. The cost of transport, in particular, has risen drastically, which is having an impact on these opportunities.

If we require any particular resources or skills, which we think parents may have, we often put notices in newsletters. This kind of support is always appreciated.

## **Subject Knowledge for Parents**

One parent present asked about how the school has coped, for example, with the current subject knowledge required for teaching coding as part of the Computing curriculum.

As a school, we commissioned additional training for staff in this area last year and, in doing so, we also offered some training to parents.

It was also mentioned that parents sometimes feel that they want to support their child, for example in maths methods, but do not want to confuse them by using methods which are different from those taught in school.

At the end of Term 4 we ran some parental workshops when we had children from each year group available with Mrs Bowles, our maths leader, to teach particular methods of calculation. We put helpful information on our website in the Children's section (where there are further links: How to Help Us with Our Learning; Supporting Your Child; Family Learning and the pages for each phase) , but if you have any questions, please always ask your child's teacher – we are always happy to help!

## **Homework**

One parents asked how homework is set differently from Year 2 into Year 3.

Homework is set on a weekly basis in KS2, rather than termly. This is sent home with instructions in books with one week to complete tasks (maths, English or another subject) – sometimes a longer period is given for completion. Additional tasks of practising spellings, times tables and reading are also included.

If you want to have a look at homework from different year groups, take a look on our website. Look in the Children's section and each phase has their own section with useful information, including the homework for that week.

*Many thanks to all the supportive and constructive parents who attended the meeting. We really value your feedback.*

*S. Beckett*

*April 2017*