

# Virtual Parent Forum

## Wednesday 25th November 2020

### Staff Present

Deborah Howard- Headteacher (DH)

Ellie Linton- Communications & Marketing Manager (EL)

### Format

Before the forum, we asked parents to think of answers to the following questions:

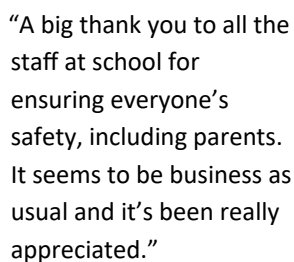
**What do you want to share?**

**What do you want to ask/raise?**

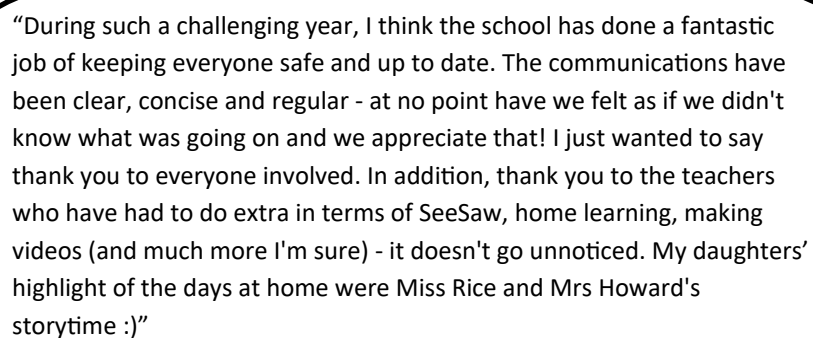
**What's going well/highlights?**

The answers that parents submitted were then used to structure the discussion at the forum. Some parents emailed their discussion points in afterwards as they were unable to attend the meeting. These were all discussed by DH & EL in their follow-up meeting after the forum

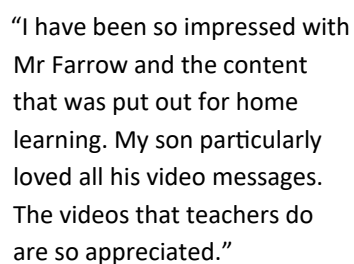
## What's going well/highlights



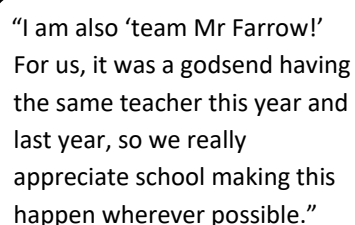
"A big thank you to all the staff at school for ensuring everyone's safety, including parents. It seems to be business as usual and it's been really appreciated."



"During such a challenging year, I think the school has done a fantastic job of keeping everyone safe and up to date. The communications have been clear, concise and regular - at no point have we felt as if we didn't know what was going on and we appreciate that! I just wanted to say thank you to everyone involved. In addition, thank you to the teachers who have had to do extra in terms of SeeSaw, home learning, making videos (and much more I'm sure) - it doesn't go unnoticed. My daughters' highlight of the days at home were Miss Rice and Mrs Howard's storytime :)"




"I have been so impressed with Mr Farrow and the content that was put out for home learning. My son particularly loved all his video messages. The videos that teachers do are so appreciated."



"I am also 'team Mr Farrow!' For us, it was a godsend having the same teacher this year and last year, so we really appreciate school making this happen wherever possible."



"Both my girls are doing really well at Oswald Road and we are really proud of the school. My eldest in particular bounds into school every morning and ADORES Miss Rice. My youngest loves the learning in nursery, Miss Webb has been really helpful in finding strategies to help her. The TAs in nursery have also been fantastic :) It is so nice to see Mrs Howard at the gate from time to time and finally - massive thanks to Ellie, I have no idea how you respond to emails from so many parents so efficiently, it's quite impressive!"



"Communication has been clear and concise."



"I would like to say thank you to Amanda Clifton (along with Mrs Greenway and Mrs Iqbal)- she has been brilliant with my daughter. She is responsive to emails and takes time to understand my child's health needs. It is reassuring to know that she has people around to support her when needed."

"I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to all of the staff at school for all they've done for my daughter in her first term. She's settled in brilliantly and we know we've made the right choice."

"We are really grateful for everything that the school has done for our boys. We have particularly appreciated how responsive Mr Farrow has been via email – that has been really helpful during these socially distant times. And Miss Rowe's creative and encouraging way of teaching has been a real hit for our eldest. So thank you to everyone! I can appreciate that it must have been a really stressful time for the school."

## You said

"My children are struggling with missing out on proper social time with their friends, seeing as we can't do play dates outside of school. When they can socialise in school they struggle with the regimented way things are run– the layout of the classrooms and the way lunchtimes are having to be run (with packed lunches eating in the classrooms). With playtime, my eldest in particular struggles to have quiet time to chat to her friends as it seems that they are always close to children playing football."

**"Is there a plan for pastoral support for children who are not necessarily 'on the radar' as seeming like they're struggling, but are finding things difficult at the moment?"**

## We did

DH confirmed that the two by two layout in the Year 2-6 classrooms, with all the children facing the front, would not be the preference of the school usually. We have sought advice on this from three different sources and all have confirmed that unfortunately we have to have this classroom layout for all classes under current guidance, apart from in Early Years and Year 1, where we have groups set up. However, children are allowed to get up from their seats and walk around the classroom, they don't have to stay seated the whole time.

Lunchtimes are difficult as we have to have the packed lunch children eating in the classrooms, to ensure we can keep enough distance in the dining hall. DH did a walk around of the classrooms at lunchtime to check on the social element in these areas and reported that the children were in more of a relaxed set-up to the usual classroom groupings of 2, with some distancing as per guidance, however keeping away from face-to-face placing.

With regards to playtime, we did a lot of work on zoning the playground a couple of years ago so that there were designated ball game areas and designated quieter areas. This has been changed now as we have had to zone-off the playground to prevent bubbles from mixing. However, as a result of this concern raised, we have worked out a way to have a 'no ball area' within each zone of the playground– this will start after Christmas.

**With regards to pastoral support, DH reiterated that anyone with any concerns at all about their child should contact Donna Wealleans (Deputy Head) in the first instance. We are adding a member of staff to our Pastoral Team to support children who need check-ins.**

# You said

"My son has been sent home to self-isolate three times since September. Are there planned ways to minimise disruption- ie. do you have any intel on whether or not the self-isolation period is going to be shortened? What will happen with the catch-up funding that school has been allocated and how will children be selected? Will it, for example, take into account children that have been off school more than others due to self-isolation?"

"With regards to the curriculum, has there been any understanding from the DfE that the curriculum needs to be reduced this year to make up for lost time during the school closure?"

# We did

DH confirmed that we have not received any new guidance to say that self-isolating periods are going to be shortened. We will always let parents know as soon as we get any new guidance through.

DH explained that it has been left completely up to schools to decide how they spend their catch-up fund. To make the decision, we looked across cohorts and areas to see where it was most needed. Our biggest focus for the Autumn term was on pastorally high-need children and ensuring they get support ASAP. This is done through play therapy and counselling, delivered by external professionals. We're also adding an internal member of staff to our Pastoral Team to work with the more middle-level pastoral concerns. This means we can offer pastoral support to more children in school than before, which we believe builds the right foundation for learning.

Other funding has gone into specific gap-plugging in Years 3-6, which is led by a teacher working from home. This is delivered by interventions that the teacher records and the children can access via iPads in class.

We've also invested in a tutor from Tutor Trust to come in and focus on maths in Years 5 & 6. We have a specialist teacher working on specific needs in Years 3 and 4 and from January we'll have additional support in Years 3-4 to address writing and spelling. We have recruited a new highly experienced TA to work in Year 1- in the mornings she'll support with maths, phonics etc and in the afternoon she will focus on speech and language needs.

We're also expecting a small amount of further funding later, which will go into catch-up work as well.

DH also confirmed that Pupil Progress meetings would pick up any gaps a child may be showing. We'd then look at ways to fill these gaps once they'd been identified, rather than trying to pre-empt them when we know a child has been off school self-isolating. This issue was also discussed at Senior Leadership meetings and any other provision available will be considered.

**DH said that schools have been told their curriculum is expected to be back to the full offer by the summer. Until then we have some leeway. We planned our response curriculum so that we're teaching at the level the children are at now (eg. Year 5 children are taught at Year 5 level), but that teachers have flexibility and time to plug gaps that arise in their specific class group. This means that classes have the freedom to adapt their teaching to how they think it would best fit the children in their class, meaning that you may get quite a difference in what is taught across the classes in the same year group.**

# You said

**"With regards to the curriculum, has there been any understanding from the DfE that the curriculum needs to be reduced this year to make up for lost time during the school closure?"**

"I have a concern around school dinners- my daughter is in Year 5, which is the last year group to go into the dinner hall. She says that this means they end up with fewer choices, and there is often only one choice left."

**"My daughter, in Year 5, says it seems like only football has been taught so far this year in outdoor PE."**

"How are the staff feeling at the moment with everything going on?"

# We did

**We are still offering the full range of subjects in the curriculum (some schools are just focussing on the core subjects)**

**We've (since the Forum) been told that the following tests will be non-statutory next year, so do not need to be administered by schools in 2021: Year 4 multiplication tables check; GPS papers in Year 6 SATs; Year 2 SATS (these will be teacher assessment only). KS1 phonics checks and the maths and reading papers for Year 6 SATS will still go ahead nationally. However, as a school we feel it is important not to drill for these tests and focus too much on them for the sake of the children (for example, we have booked the Year 6 residential to take place a couple of weeks before the SATs, as we see them getting this experience as a big priority).**

We have looked into this with the kitchen and this should not be the case- the School Cook has agreed to monitor this and report any issues to DH. Sometimes- dependent on how options are going in a day- the kitchen staff may encourage the uptake of something that has been chosen less, however this is done across all year groups and there is always another option, including a vegetarian option.

**DH checked the PE curriculum after the forum and we can confirm that in KS2 the children focus on one sport per half term. Autumn 1 had a team focus on invasion games, Autumn 2 was football. In Spring 2 it will be basketball.**

EL said that one of the biggest boosts for staff has been having the day cleaner in school all day. Staff have commented on how safe she makes us all feel as she works incredibly hard and makes sure all touch points are cleaned many times a day.

EL and DH said that staff have been really reassured by having the children back and the sense of normality that this brings. It is such a difference in feeling from when we were running skeleton school, which felt more like we were offering a childcare provision. We also have a really strong team and will always share positive feedback from parents with staff members, plus we have a weekly staff shout-outs email, where staff can post messages of appreciation to colleagues. It was noted that parental support has been fantastic throughout and that this makes such a difference to all the staff.

# You said

**"For the home learning as and when it happens again, I wondered if we might be able to collect pre-printed worksheets from school? We don't have a printer so I'd been writing out the worksheets by hand...though there's a limit to my drawing skills! I use my laptop for work so it would also be great if some of the activities could be less screen based? We will invest in an iPad at some point but while the kids are young we're very big on limiting screen time at home; they love hand drawing, writing and worksheets though."**

**"We celebrate Diwali and while it was lovely that the Monday after Diwali Miss Rice shared some of my daughter's photos, it would be great if they could start to learn about it in school in the week leading up to the festival as we do with Christmas. That way children can take their knowledge home with them, even light some candles on the day and generally become more culturally aware? Kids seem to love it and we have lots of Diwali books we can share too."**

**"Star of the week: Is it possible to review whether this is necessary going forward? A few of the parents feel it's more of a demoralising rather than a motivating factor - inevitably they are way less likely to get it than to not get it despite their best efforts in school every day. I wondered whether we'd foster more of a team ethic if it were possible to remove individual rewards such as this? My youngest also gets quite confused by the dojo system and gets upset when she does something 'good' that doesn't get recognised by a dojo...but I appreciate that at this stage it's useful for general classroom management"**

# We did

**Unfortunately we can't offer paper copies of home learning work unless families specifically told us that they have no access to the internet and/or a computer/tablet at home. The reason for this is that in most cases when we have a bubble closure, it is a case of getting all staff identified as contacts out of the building as soon as possible. This means there wouldn't be time to prepare, print and distribute worksheets to all children in line with what is being taught that week.**

DH confirmed that Diwali is covered in our RE curriculum, however it, along with all other religious festivals, is covered at different times of the year for different year groups. The curriculum is not planned so that any religious festivals (including Christmas) are taught at the time that they actually take place. However, we would usually invite parents in to talk to their child's class at the time of a particular festival that their family celebrates (unfortunately this year we cannot do so due to Covid-19). DH spoke to our PSHE Lead and RE Leads about planning for religious festival assemblies at appropriate points of the year, so assemblies would be in place around the time of a range of festivals.

**DH confirmed that our Behaviour Leads did pupil voice on the 'Star of the Week' award as part of their last review, and the feedback from the children was positive. This will again be looked at during the next Behaviour Policy review. Dojos are used by some teachers as part of general classroom management.**