

Parent Forum- Wednesday 14th June

Staff Present

Deborah Howard- Headteacher

Ellie Linton- Communications & Marketing Manager

Follow up actions have been marked in red.

Minutes

1. Deborah Howard introduced the meeting, saying that it came about from looking over the responses from the recent Parent Survey, which suggested that we are not doing enough to cater for our working parents. Issue is that teachers have contracted hours, so it is difficult to organise open events in the evening as class-based staff are unable to be as flexible with their working hours. The purpose of the meeting is therefore to get ideas from working parents as to how we can overcome this issue.
2. Shared calendar was said to be a very positive thing for working parents, as it allows them to book days off work for the year ahead. It is frustrating when dates get changed at the last minute, however parents understand that sometimes this cannot be avoided.
The school calendar for next year is currently being finalised, and will be sent out to parents as soon as it is completed.
3. DH suggested the idea of having an open classroom event once a term to give parents the chance to look at books. One parent said that what is most important for her is having a chance to see the rapport that her child has with their teacher, and that she would be willing to book time off work if she were given this opportunity.
Three times a year we will be holding an open classroom event at 8:50am. These will be named the Autumn, Spring and Summer Celebrations.
4. Parents fed back that two weeks' notice is not enough for events such as Sports Day, where half a day is needed to be booked off work.
We are going to speak to Longford Park stadium this week to try and book in a date for next year's Sports Day. We will then be able to inform parents of the details much earlier.
5. Positive feedback on the Weekly Update email.
6. General feeling from parents is that the relationship that parents have with teachers has slipped. This is due to a combination of not being able to come into classrooms in the morning and not being allowed to email teachers directly.
From September, teachers are going to be asked to stay in the playground from 8:45am-8:50am in the morning, giving parents time to pass on any quick bits of information relating to their child that day (eg. my son has a headache today, my daughter is upset because of the death of a relative). This is not an opportunity to speak to parents about concerns or complaints- these are still to be sent to inbox@oswaldroad email address.
7. One parent pointed out that for working parents that drop their child off at Early Birds in the morning and pick up from Owl Club in the evening, there is no contact at all with the teacher.
We are going to place a messages box in Early Birds entrance for any messages that need passing onto the teacher. These will be checked by the office and passed onto the

teacher by the end of morning break that day (unless it is a complaint or concern, which will be passed onto Senior Leadership Team).

8. DH explained the introduction of the inbox@oswaldroad.manchester.sch.uk email address, which was set up for parents to send concerns or complaints to. This is checked every morning by Sarah Nicholls (School Business Manager) and all emails are forwarded onto the Headteacher to be actioned. Parents can expect a response within two working days.
9. Parents felt that there needed to be a better mechanism for getting quick messages to the teacher (eg. my child is feeling upset today because...)

From next term we will be launching a queries@ email address, which will be picked up by the office at 8:15am every day and passed onto the teacher by the end of morning break. This is again for quick messages to get to the teacher, and not for concerns or complaints.

10. One parent said that she'd had a bad experience in the past with trying to get a minor query to the teacher. She had submitted it via the online contact form on the school website, and had not received a reply or seen it actioned after two weeks, so ended up having to put in a complaint to inbox@, which she felt shouldn't have needed to happen. One parent suggested there be a 'call back' system so that parents can be made aware of when their message has been read and actioned. Teachers could maybe have a fixed time every fortnight to make phone calls to parents.
11. General feeling that parents lack confidence in the system of getting messages into school.
12. There needs to be an office protocol for replying to quick queries that need to go to the teacher that day. Ellie Linton (EL) suggested maybe a messages box that could be left at Early Birds so that all parents have the opportunity to give a message to the teacher. Someone from the office would then run the messages around school to ensure they got to the teacher that morning.

We are going to place a messages box in Early Birds entrance for any messages that need passing onto the teacher. These will be checked by the office and passed onto the teacher by the end of morning break that day (unless it is a complaint or concern, which will be passed onto management).

13. Could also have a queries@ email address so that something like this does not get lost amongst admin@ email inbox.
14. Parents said they weren't sure if they were allowed to approach teachers in the playground at drop off to pass on quick messages. Clear message needs to be communicated with all parents to say what is and what is now allowed at this time.

Parents are allowed to approach teacher in the morning if it is to pass on a message about their child that needs to be conveyed that day (eg. my child is upset because...)

15. Would be good if teachers were out for 5 minutes longer in the morning so that parents have time to speak to them if needed (to pass on short messages, not to make a complaint).

From September, teachers will be asked to stay out in the playground for 5 mins before taking their class inside.

16. Parents felt they had no sense in the volume of emails received by school from parents, as they only want school to make promises on inward communication if they are going to be realistic to stick to.

Roughly 10 emails a day to admin@ (which is picked up by Helen Wright, Office Manager), and 2 emails a day to inbox@ (which is picked up by Sarah Nicholls, School Business Manager, and passed onto Headteacher)

17. One parent said how frustrating it is if teachers aren't out in the playground at 8:45am to collect their class, as it means that parents feel they have to wait (especially if their child is in younger year groups and it is near the start of the academic year when they are not feeling confident in the big playground), and are therefore late for work.

Deborah to remind teachers of the importance of being out on time in the morning, and she will also do regular check-ups to see that this is being maintained.

18. Parents need clarity on whose responsibility the children are once they have been dropped off in the playground.

From 8:45am when the children are lined up in the playground, they are the school's responsibility.

19. General feeling is that parents welcome any opportunity to come and spend time in the classroom. First thing in the morning is best for parents who work 9-5, as it means they only have to book first hour of the day off work as opposed to leaving early in the afternoon to be here for last hour of the school day.

Next year's transition event that parents are invited to will take place first thing in the morning as opposed to at the end of the day. That way working parents can leave as early as necessary.

20. Noted that teachers need to be tighter on getting children out at 3:30pm, as this sometimes slips and means that they aren't coming out into the playground until 3:45pm.

Deborah to remind teachers of the importance of being out on time at the end of the day, and she will also do regular check-ups to see that this is being maintained.

21. DH asked what parents' views were on The Hoot, as we are thinking of introducing it to KS2 as well as KS1 and Early Years. Parents who receive The Hoot said that they find it really useful, and those that don't said they would like to have it for their yeargroup.

Deborah has spoken to staff representatives and this will now be in place across school from mid-September.

22. Reception parents said they love the postcards that are used to give positive notes to and from the teacher. However, they are not frequent enough. It is nice to have feedback from teacher about your child. Same feeling for outstanding choices slips. Parents would really welcome getting texts during the day if their child has made an outstanding choice, or done a really good piece of work.

EL to speak to teachers to ask them to let her know if a text should be sent home in recognition of particularly good work/outstanding choices made by their child.

23. Feedback on highlight assemblies was that there are too many classes in each assembly, and too many certificates, so not enjoyable for parents unless, on the off chance, their child receives a certificate that week. DH fed back that parents will not be invited to highlight assemblies as of next year, as it is not seen to be a good use of parents' time in school.

We will not be inviting parents into highlight assemblies next year, but they will be invited in to Child of The Term assemblies if their child is to receive an award.

24. One parent brought up the idea of having a holiday club in school during the summer holidays. DH said the school is doing work at the moment to gauge levels of interest from other parents to see if it would be financially viable to hold a summer club.

EL has spoken to Owl Club to gauge whether this is a possibility. At this stage it is not something they would be able to do.

25. One parent suggested that it would be better to ask for an annual contribution to Nursery/Reception fund (used to buy craft items or ingredients for baking), rather than 50p/£1 a week, as sometimes parents forget.

This idea is on the agenda for governors to discuss at their next Resources Committee Meeting. In the meantime, EL to look into putting a button on school website allowing people to donate money to school funds.

26. Similarly, a parent suggested asking parents to pay a lump sum for the whole year that will cover the cost of their child's trips.

Due to varying transport costs it would not be possible to accurately work out a cost for the trips for the whole year. However, teachers have been informed that for next year there will be a £40 limit on the cost required for all the trips that year per child.

27. Another parent suggested that the trip payment be changed to say that the cost is a minimum contribution, as some parents are willing to pay more if it means the trip can definitely go ahead.

As of next year this will be included in trip letters so that parents have the option to pay more if they would like to.

28. There needs to be better planning across year on what needs to be paid for (eg. trips, costumes for Christmas production etc) so that lower income families are able to plan payments.

Teachers have been asked to get together in their yeargroups to plan trips better to avoid big costs within short space of time. They have also been set a maximum of £40 per child for all the trips in a year combined.

29. Would be good if there was the ability to choose sandwich option when paying for and consenting for a trip on SIMS Agora, as it saves giving in a slip just for the purpose of choosing a sandwich filling. Could possibly set up a trips email address, which would have a link in SIMS Agora so that when parents pay for a trip they can request a sandwich by email.

Although it is not possible to select a sandwich option for trips on SIMS Agora, a hyperlink will be included on the payment page which means that parents can email their sandwich choice to the member of staff responsible for trips (Kerry Tevlin, Finance Officer). This means no need to give in reply slip to the office.

30. Parents would also like the opportunity to pay by card using a chip and pin machine at the front desk.

We are currently looking into the cost of purchasing a chip and pin machine for the front desk to see if this would be financially viable.

31. Parents enquired as to how many parents pay online as opposed to by cash or cheque.

Having spoken to the Finance Officer, the figure is roughly 70% for online payments.

32. The payments box is sometimes too full to put envelopes in. Parents also not comfortable putting large amounts of money in there (eg. for afterschool clubs for whole term). Parents would like to be able to pay for afterschool clubs online.

This information has been passed onto the Finance Officer so that she knows to empty the payments box more regularly, particularly at times when lots of trip payments are due in.

33. Parents would like to have proof of payment for cash/cheque payments, as some have had payments go missing in the past.

Parents can request receipts from the office when making a payment. Our Finance Officer also keeps all payment envelopes for a month, as well as recording the information in a spread sheet as proof of payments (child's name, payment amount, what for, date received).

34. Parents would like to have spellings sent to them for each week, and suggested asking teachers to send full list for the year to EL to pass onto parents.

Deborah to get full years' worth of spelling lists off teachers so that they can be sent out to parents.

We also asked parents to write their answers to the following questions on pieces of paper at the forum:

What's Working Well?

- Rewards through house points and certificates
- Topic webs
- Amount of homework
- Reading records- tool to communicate child's reading ability with the teacher
- Communication much improved
- Exciting whole school days

What's Not Working Well?

- Direct communication with parents who work full-time.
- Too many trips outside school/costs incurred.

Highlights of the Year?

- Year 1 trip to The Lowry
- Year 1 Victorian Toy Workshop
- Year 1 Lego Workshop
- Class assemblies (could consider filming with secure access for parents)
- Staff commitment, which is obvious every day
- Christmas performances
- Spy Day Friday
- Coming to school for World Day for Cultural Diversity

Questions?

- How will the budget cuts affect school?
- More info/accessible information about the (ever changing) standards- this could be self-serve?
- As an alternative to 'Tweet to You' or similar in other year groups, could school send texts? (particularly if the paper slips have run out)