

Parent forum minutes and written questions

Friday March 11th 2015, 9.15am

Attendees: Claudia, Alice, Liz S, Lynne R, Andy, Matt B, Pete S, Richenda, Natalia R, Carol B, Clare B, Katie, Jenny C, Felicity I, Rachel G, Amit S, Jo C , Jo G

Apologies: Sarah Briggs

1. Parent Forum administration

A brief review of process to ensure we publish minutes more swiftly. Thanks, once again, to Lynne for keeping minutes.

The appropriateness of displaying minutes on the School website (where they can be accessed by members of the public) was discussed but it was agreed that the Forum's proceedings, like those of the Governors, should be open, with only the most sensitive information redacted before publication on the website.

In reviewing the minutes of the last meeting, the issue of security was revisited. There are no exact Ofsted requirements, although inspectors would be likely to remark on parents lingering in the playground - an accepted part of the West Oxford School culture. We await the Governors' direction on out-of-hours security.

2. Facilities

Lockers are going to be put in for the whole school but with costs at £26 per locker this may mean that the budget for this will need to stretch over a few years. The priority will be downstairs where coats currently hanging in the corridor present a fire hazard. Placement of lockers will need to balance access to classrooms, and where corridors are often used as additional teaching areas for one-to-one support. It is expected that lockers will begin to be fitted over the summer.

Toilet facilities need to be improved and the Ms Bladen is working with Governors and Matt Bird on future plans within school budget. Any new toilets will take some time to install, so, in the meantime, staff will be working with children to get them to think about their school environment and leaving toilets as they would wish to find them. Mr Smith has a group of year 6 children involved in designing posters to help pupils appreciate how they can help.

Thanks were expressed to Matt for the installation of the new scooter parking and also to the Friends for paying for the new scooter racks in the bike parking area. Children are being encouraged to use the new facilities.

Thanks were also expressed to the Friends for the new playground equipment that the children are enjoying.

It is also great to see the new fire door installed, (with a full house for *Spring Chicken* eagerly anticipated at the coming Easter assembly). Matt added that it had been hoped that we would be able to make do with a temporary ramp for disabled access but we will need a permanent one. Matt will be arranging for this to be installed.

3. Staff Update

It was noted that it was very sad to see Miss Christie leave: we wish her well at her new school and are very pleased she will still be part of school life as a parent.

On the subject of general recruitment, Oxford schools do have additional difficulty in recruiting teachers as it is an expensive area to live and changes in the profession are also making recruitment tricky.

Ms Bladen acknowledges high staff turnover and both personally and professionally finds this difficult. It was noted that for the staff to hear comments about good teachers leaving can be upsetting for existing staff. We should also remember that any teacher leaving also gives the school an opportunity to employ other great teachers.

The school is investing in developing teachers and sends staff on relevant training to help them develop, however this can mean that they want to explore opportunities elsewhere. There is also peer review work done to evaluate teaching standards and ensure we maintain good standards of teaching.

The school participates in the Investors in People programme.

The Governors have taken over the role of staff exit interviews to augment the standard Oxford County Council procedure.

Notice of teachers leaving can only be given once a formal resignation has been given and accepted. School needs to have a succession plan in place before announcing any changes in staff in order for parents and children to be reassured that a new teacher has been recruited. It was recognised that the communication of Miss Christie's departure could have been improved and that staff change announcements should go out to the whole school and via ParentPay, after the class has been informed.

When a teacher applies to another school a teacher needs to have told their head teacher as they are given release time to go and see the school and attend interview.

As notice is given half termly it can lead to needing to make fast recruitment decisions to get good new staff in place for the next term.

Thanks to Mrs Licata who has been a great asset during the transition of reception staff. Everyone is very pleased that Mrs Meeks will be staying. She will be joined by Mrs Cook in September whom we looking forward to welcoming back.

4. Curriculum

The new Curriculum changes which involve assessment without levels are challenging.

Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) teaching was raised specifically, and, aside from language learning itself, attention is given to cultural aspects, which will be the focus in the summer term. There is no requirement for MFL teaching before Key Stage 2, and West Oxford is ahead of many schools offering language learning as early as reception, an example being the reaching of Spanish songs. Mr Smith and Ms Bladen will be reviewing the curriculum and staff leads in each subject area and the current skills of all staff.

5. Extramural

As a successful school things are constantly moving forward and so opportunities are reviewed each year to ensure that the school trips and additional activities enhance the curriculum and the learning needs of the current pupils.

Staff have ideas for extracurricular activities but it is a balance to fit everything in and we are always looking for ideas to enhance the curriculum. It is fantastic that we can welcome in parents to talk to the children and have upcoming talks from parents that work in science and for sports relief.

Sometimes it can be a struggle to get parent volunteers to help with activities, and, in turn, parents request more notice so they can make commitments to school. It was acknowledged that in some areas notice has improved. Often school staff get very little external notice from outside providers of things like sporting tournaments but will always try to give parents as much notice as possible.

6. AOB

Mock SATS – These happen in order to enable children to become used to the tests in order to alleviate worries about the real SATS. They can also be useful to highlight any gaps in learning. The aim is always to prepare the children without putting undue pressure on them. Feedback from parents of children who took SATS last year was that the Mock SATS really helped the children. Current Year 6 children

have really enjoyed the SATS breakfasts and all felt that they went really well. Thanks to Mr Smith and all the team that have made this such a positive experience for the children.

Some of the governors and Senior Leadership team have had a strategy away day to think about which areas the school needs to focus on. This will be fed back to governors, staff, pupils, parents and the community for their thoughts.

The suggestion of having a school clock placed on an external wall will be considered.

Parent forum meetings for the rest of the year were set as Friday 6th May and Friday 24th June, both meetings to begin at 9.15am.

Other questions/points and answers

1. Attendance measure

The Attendance Letter issued has been reviewed and improved. Thanks to Heather Beresford for her involvement in this.

2. Communication

Parents were really pleased to have the weekly newsletter back and to have notice of WOW learners.

3. Access to Fresh Water

Parental concern over water bottle hygiene and access to water fountains was raised. This is not a legal requirement: other schools that have had them have often taken out water fountains – they pose their own hygiene issue. School are happy with current provision through water bottles and encourage parents to wash them regularly