



12 February 2016

Dear Parents

Report Feedback Analysis from July 2015

Every year the school undertakes an analysis of the comments that you provide when responding to your child/ren's annual report towards the end of the Summer term. The findings are then used in-house, to explore what went well and what could be improved upon in the future. This year, for several reasons, I would like to share some of the key findings with you.

Report format

Last year, you will recall that the report formats changed significantly. Many of you fed into Parent Forum to support that process and so should share in the overwhelmingly positive endorsement that the new format received. In terms of content, you continued to offer much praise and gratitude to staff and once again noted 'well observed personal profiles'. Teaching staff at Greenway pride themselves on how well they get to know your children and so this is always pleasing to hear. You also commented on 'child focussed' report content, liking that your child's specific abilities, aptitudes, progress and challenges in a subject took priority over reporting what had been covered during the year. Very many of you also specifically praised the addition of an 'Attitude to Learning' grade for each subject, as well as indicators for Key Learning Behaviours such as 'Co-operated in group/partner work and 'Completed class work'.

Life without Levels

Last year also saw the introduction of a new National Curriculum for Years 1, 3, 4 and 5 (that now applies across the board to Years 1-6) which no longer uses a system of numbered and lettered (SATS) 'levels' to describe children's attainment in English, Maths and Science. I spoke about this at my 'Welcome to Your New Class' address and then wrote to you about it in February of 2015. The Department for Education's (DfE) thinking on this was also covered in a letter which accompanied the reports. You may therefore recall that instead of levels, we now refer to your child's attainment in terms of 'Age Related Expectations' (ARE) which they are either 'Working towards', 'Working Within, or 'Working Above'. Since last year this has now been refined by Herts for Learning and this will be communicated to you later this with child's report.

Very many of you commented on how well you felt your child's attainment, effort and progress had been covered in the report, and agreed that, when taken together with other aspects, including the ARE phrases, they provided you with a comprehensive and comprehensible appraisal. It is, however, inevitable that some of you found 'life without levels' less certain, and so it is worth reminding you of some of the thinking behind this new approach.

A key objective for the DfE's new National Curriculum was to encourage schools to think harder about enriching pupils' learning by developing a greater *breadth* of skills and knowledge. Levels were felt to risk presenting children with an 'artificial ceiling' for their

attainment. Instead, what we all accept children need is to develop a 'growth mindset' where each one believes that it is possible to improve without constraints at anything, given sufficient practice, effort and persistence. The new National Curriculum therefore places breadth of coverage over a 'race to the top' in a bid to help our children to be more confident and flexible about applying what they know to lots of different areas of the curriculum.

As well as building flexibility and resilience in our children, another aim of the new National Curriculum was to drive up standards. As a result, the expected level of attainment for each year group (the ARE) was stepped up. So, a child who had previously been working above the expected level of attainment according to the old number and letter levels may well now find themselves reported as 'Working Within ARE' and not above it. As I said to you in July, this does not mean that the child has failed to make progress, but simply that the expectations have changed.

Pupil progress

Given the changes outlined above, it is worth reminding you about the work we do at Greenway to track the progress that your child is making. I have half termly pupil progress meetings with your child's class teacher, along with Mrs Crozier and Ms Roe.

We have high expectations for your child/ren and this is the point at which we discuss any strategies, support or interventions that may need to be put in place. This is a continuous and highly effective process; one that we trust provides reassurance that even without number and letter levels by which to report it, your child's progress is always known to us and remains our priority.

Moving reports forward

Once again last year you thanked teachers for outlining clear next steps/targets for your children and for outlining ways that you could best support them with their learning at home. Some of you also left feedback that was clearly intended for your child's next teacher and a couple of you raised queries for which there is no evidence that a response was given. I apologise for the latter which we will work hard to improve upon.

Some of you wondered whether your child's report is read by their new teacher at the start of the following school year. Please be assured that the annual report forms a small part of the transition process that takes place during the summer term. This involves detailed conversations and a handover of paperwork, and ensures that all relevant information is passed from one teacher to the next.

We are grateful for your feedback. If you have any further queries arising from these findings, please let me know.

Regards

Katharine Ellwood

