

**Greenway Primary and  
Nursery School  
Parent Forum**

**20.00 – 21.45  
Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2017  
Oak classroom**

**Minutes**

**Present:**

School: Katharine Ellwood – Head Teacher, Nigel Wiggins – Governor (Chair), Caroline Crozier – Deputy Head.

Parent Forum Members: Louise Jenkins (Green Ash), Isabel Hall (Red Ash), Natasha Goss (Elm), Laura Whittingham-Jones (Rowan), Gemma Chatt (Pine), Karin Huber (Beech), Stephanie Gresham (Chestnut), Helen Hanbidge (Silver Birch), Caroline Green (Willow), Liz Hopwood (Spruce), Charlotte Thrower (Cedar), Sophie Kennedy, (Oak)

1. **Welcome & apologies** for absence from Kate Moody (Cedar), Beverley Brookes (Sycamore), Tracy Lerpiniere (Willow).

2. **Matters arising**

Actions from the last meeting have all been done

3. KE updated members on **aspects of the school environment:**

- Newly refurbished stock cupboard
- Office to be reconfigured during Easter break
- Gazebo side panels replaced
- Picnic benches roof replaced
- Shoe scrapers installed on edge of field
- Table tennis tables concreted in place outside
- Old windows in courtyard between hall and staffroom have been renovated

4. **P4C curriculum evening.**

These have always been evenings (rather than afternoons) because of working parents. Plenty of notice was given and a reminder was sent the day before the session was due. KE explained how P4C has impacted positively on children's learning and quoted from a governor visit form which commented on the expertise of the teachers and the depth of reflection from pupils. P4C is about life skills and school values these as highly as Maths and English. The evening will be rescheduled and school would appreciate PF supporting by encouraging parents to attend. NW suggested another letter with more of a 'sell', using the quotes above.

LJ said Nursery parents might appreciate more information about P4C as they weren't sure it applied to them.

The reply slip presents a problem for some parents and many don't realise it isn't just so that the right number of chairs can be put out. School needs to know numbers because

of resources needing to be prepared. Only around 30 slips were returned and school hopes for an audience of at least 60-80 for it to be worth the preparation that goes into these evenings. SG wondered if there might be a digital way for parents to let school know about their intentions.

*Action: School will look into digital ways of responding to this kind of invitation.*

## **5. Twitter**

CC shared her ideas about Twitter and the disappointing number of followers on e-safety day. She is interested to know whether there is an appetite for a Twitter account as an additional channel for communications between school and parents – lots of other schools have one. It would also help parents to find out more about what the children do on a daily basis. One PF member said she loves Twitter but most said they don't use it. There was also some concern about whether it would create more work for teachers.

Greenway Parents already have a Facebook account which is well used and PF wondered if this could be extended to include school. School feels it would be better to have its own account if it was to go down the social media route.

*Action: CC grateful for feedback and will continue to investigate options for improving/modernising communications.*

## **6. Christmas cards**

Again, school is keen to find out parents' views before going ahead to find another supplier of these. PF responses were mixed: some parents like to buy the cards while others find them expensive and say the quality of the design is not always good. There was some discussion about letting children do something more individual rather than a whole class design. School will pass this on to teachers if the cards project goes ahead again this year. The GSA has some ideas for other Christmas fundraising ideas and it might be that parents would rather spend money on these.

*Action: school will wait for the GSA committee to meet about their ideas and then take a decision.*

## **7. Spellings**

KE/CC clarified the following:

Spelling rules are reinforced through teaching sessions and incidental opportunities throughout the two week period, so whether children do their spelling homework at the beginning or end of that period, they will be getting regular reminders of what they need to learn at school.

Children are 'tested' through dictations at the end of the two week period. The words chosen for the dictation should not be the same as the ones sent home for homework, but others that follow the same pattern or rule. Learning the pattern/rule and being able to apply it to a range of different words in different contexts helps the children progress. The two week period and date of dictation should be the same throughout school, although this is not always practical and teachers occasionally need to be flexible with their timetable because of other demands. Under the old system, children could score 10/10 every week but not reproduce the words correctly in independent writing.

The rules and patterns are chosen from appendices to the National Curriculum Programme of Study and words are either examples given in these appendices or words chosen by teachers that also illustrate these patterns/rules. Some of the words may appear old-fashioned and oddly chosen but this is not school's choice – they are words that appear in the appendix. It is worth pointing out that in KS2 children are expected to be able to write in a variety of styles and registers so the spelling words chosen are not always words that appear to be useful or words they would use in everyday speech.

*Action: school to write letter thanking parents for their feedback and clarifying these points and the expectations/ ways parents can support their children.*

*KE/CC will check whether there is consistency across the school in the way the spelling programme and homework is delivered and in timings of dictations.*

## 8. General issues

Several issues that have been previously discussed were raised again. Previous minutes of PF will show the responses to these. New issues discussed were:

### - **Nursery**

Parents can come to Greenway through St Thomas More main entrance, Greenway side entrance or Greenway main entrance. Greenway parents should not use the St Thomas More side entrance and walk across their playground (particularly at lunchtime when children might be out as this would present a safeguarding issue).

### - **Reception**

Most of the information requested was given out at the 'Welcome to your new class evening' and the PPT is on the school website for parents who did not attend. The information for new parents on the school website, produced by PF, is also useful. IH has responded to many information queries and parents are encouraged to ask Mrs Murphy for clarification if anything is unclear.

Benches - school will look into the placement of new benches (see below) and discuss the possibility of a 'friendship bench' with Early Years staff.

### - **Year 1**

KH has got costings for new benches from a local company and will pass these to KE.

The 'Waitrose' bench did not replace the buddy bench. It has been in the small playground for over 10 years and was donated by Waitrose. It is not there as an advertisement.

Mr Rapson has litter picking sticks and small groups of children get involved in litter picking. Mr Rapson checks the bins and empties them regularly and litter has not been an issue previously. Sometimes there is litter on the site because of people who come at the weekend.

Breakfast club bell – KE will look into this.

Feedback about the music event at Berkhamsted School was very positive and Mrs O'Brien's input to all things musical is appreciated.

*Action: KE to investigate breakfast club bell.*

### - **Year 2**

**World Book Day** – school listens to parents' feedback and has introduced alternatives to dressing up as a result of this. We recognise we cannot please everyone every year and this is why we offer a range of activities. The general response to the sandwich boards idea was very positive and the children certainly appeared to enjoy showing them off at school on the day.

**Year 3** – no issues raised.

### - **Year 4**

**Mothers and daughters talk** has not been booked yet and this comment has prompted KE to think about how to deal with this this year as the school nursing service has been stripped right back.

*Action: KE will contact school nursing team and let parents know asap.*

(There was some discussion around the Year 6 talk and the content of it. Due to reduction of service from school nursing, this will be delivered by teachers this year.)

**Road safety for Year 4** – this will be arranged for in the summer term, with a view to the children walking to school unsupervised from Year 5. Previously children in Year 4 started walking in the summer term because this was a transition point for middle school.

**Mobile phones** – there was some discussion about safety when walking to and from school as a PF member had seen a near miss involving a Greenway child crossing the road while on his phone.

**Changing for football** – girls from WACCY are walking through the hall while boys are changing. Year 4 children do change for PE in the classroom as a mixed group and this has never been an issue.

*Action: CG will find out more about this from the parent who raised it.*

**Ties in Upper KS2** – school considered these at the time of the reorganisation but decided against.

**Year 5** – school recognises that Year 3 were not involved in the Christmas Carol Service this year due to numbers. KH pointed out that Year 5 had a sharing assembly that week too so it may have been better if Year 3 had had their sharing assembly.

*Action: School will bear this in mind when planning for next year.*

Typing – there are no plans to incorporate this into the curriculum.

**Year 6 - Buddies** – this is a numbers issue as there are a lot of buddies so they can only be rota-ed in once a week. They have been encouraged to have lunch quickly on their day so they get more time in Reception. They do see their buddies during Golden Time too, again on a rota-ed basis.

**Information** – school sends out a lot of emails and texts, but for some events information is given to the children to pass on. Year 7 children's feedback was that we need to do more to help Year 6s become more independent and responsible for communications. At secondary school parents will find they get a lot less information and it is the children's responsibility to pass things on.

**Homework being handed in early** - some children are saying they are told they can't hand it in early.

*Action: KE/CC will check as this should not be happening.*

**World Book Day** – the focus was very clearly on promoting a love of reading and the sandwich boards were part of this. The evidence in assembly on the day was that they worked. For those who spent money on the boards, we offered school resources and teacher time in the January newsletter, in recognition of the fact that some children might struggle to make them. Several children did make their boards in school.

**Homework** - parents are split between 'too much' and 'need more to get them ready for secondary school'. School believes the homework burden is just about right. Detentions have been introduced to Yr 6 as a sanction for no homework in response to the Y7s feedback and to help children get into the habit of doing tasks on time.

Homework will always be marked but if children hand it in late the teacher may not have time to mark that week's piece before the next one is handed out. In this case the unmarked piece should be marked the following week.

There was some discussion on **planners** – these are used at Bridgewater in Y6. Middle schools used to have them but Greenway decided not to use these in upper KS2 when we became a primary. It is something we might look at again in the future.