

Minutes of the Parent Forum Meeting – July 5th 2016

Present: Georgia Richards (Chair), Kirstie De-Machen, Teri Morley-Ocsko, Claire Wisdom, Tina Holditch

Apologies: Vicky Hobson

Welcome

GR welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the reasons behind the setting up of the Forum. The aim of the Forum is to further develop and improve communication between school and parents and vice versa, as the school strives to offer outstanding provision in all areas. The Forum is seen as a means of the Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body sharing ideas with the parent body in order to find out their views, and for parents to bring ideas or whole school issues to the attention of the SLT and GB. CW expressed the view that communication from the school was good, and that much was already being done to inform parents about what was happening in school.

CW expressed a concern (shared by the other members of the Forum) that they could get approached by other parents with specific concerns regarding their individual children. GR confirmed that we had considered that possibility and were keen to support Forum members with regard to this issue. Should parents approach Forum members with issues or concerns that relate to individual children or classes, they will need to be referred to the class teacher or the school's Complaints Procedure.

Should Forum members receive many of the same questions from parents, we could produce a list of Frequently Asked Questions to be published on the website. The idea of the Forum is to focus on communication regarding bigger issues, rather than minutiae.

Members accepted that it can be difficult to get parents to engage with the school. Many parents work and have a wide range of commitments which make it difficult for them to commit time to the school.

K D-M mentioned that as a parent it can be hard to distinguish between really important news from school and more day-to-day information, as there are a lot of letters and notices issued to parents. TH stated that at some schools parents receive a text from school directing them to an area on the website where important information can be found. This is something we could consider. *(TH has looked into this further since the meeting. Sending emails is included in our SchoolComms Subscription. We have to pay for text messages on top of this package, so the cost of notifying parents via text each time we update the website with a Bulletin or other information would be prohibitive. I'm afraid it simply wouldn't work for us, given the number of Bulletins and class newsletters etc. that we send out!).*

GR hoped that this could be brought to future meetings, and the members could talk to parents, to establish how information can better be targeted and brought to parents' attention.

School Website

TH explained that we have a new school website. Mrs Hardy has been working incredibly hard to get the new site up and running, and we were hoping for feedback from parents about it. The view of the Forum was extremely positive, with parents feeling that the new website is much clearer and easier to navigate. It is also easier to navigate when parents access it on their phones.

The question was raised regarding out of date information still being on the website, for example, posters advertising PTFA events. *(TH has since confirmed with Mrs Hardy that we are planning to keep communication from the full academic year on the website, in order to demonstrate the range of activities and events that happen in school. This is useful for parents and the school to refer to, in addition to being valuable evidence for OFSTED).*

K D-M asked whether the school had considered an app for parents to use, TH explained that the school had looked into this, but that the cost was prohibitive.

Ways of launching the new website to parents were discussed, with the view that a September launch would be best. TH will speak to staff and pupils regarding the children designing posters to advertise the new site, and we will use Schoolcomms to inform parents about it.

Communication Questionnaire

TH outlined some of the actions that the school had taken following the survey regarding communication that had taken place earlier in the year. Parents had requested more information about how their children were getting on, and ways in which they could support them. Since the questionnaire, we have introduced "Book Look" sessions which take place in the terms between parent consultations, as well as weekly newsletters home for all classes, which recap on the learning that has taken place over the course of the week. In addition, teachers now provide parents with a written record of the core subjects as part of the parent consultations. The report format has also changed significantly this year, with teachers now reporting on each individual subject in depth. GR commented that the written reports are very useful as it is very easy to forget things following parent consultations, as so much is said. T M-O felt that the Reception class reports are very useful and that it is lovely to have the photographic record of what the children are learning.

TH asked specifically about ways to engage with new parents to the school. It can be very daunting for new parents to join an established school to settle in, and we would like to find ways to overcome this. T M-O explained that she and her mother had attended the MacMillan Coffee Morning prior to her son starting and she found this to be a very welcoming introduction to the school. It was lovely to see the children and how well they behaved. The Reception class Mother's Day service was also well received.

CW talked about the Coffee mornings/ afternoons that TH had run in the past, and how poorly attended they had been! TH asked if parents thought staying behind for an informal chat and a coffee after class Acts of Worship might be something parents would be interested in. The view was that they might well be, as they were already in school. TH will introduce this next year.

We also discussed the New Intake Welcome evening. It was suggested that we could invite some existing parents to come along and meet the new parents, along with representatives of different groups, such as the Governing Body, PTFA, Parent Forum and Walking Bus. Currently we usually have Sue Forsey (Vice Chair of Governors and Chair of the PTFA) at the meeting. TH will invite others to join the meeting next year.

GR raised that there will be a Parent Questionnaire going out before the end of Term 2 next year, and that perhaps questions around communication could be included.

Proposal to join the Tenax Schools Trust

GR asked for any feedback from the Parent Consultation meeting that was held on June 27th. K D-M said that she had approached parents for feedback and one stated that they were happy with the proposal following the meeting, but had expressed unhappiness that the vote had already been taken. TH clarified that the Governing Body had *not* voted on joining the Tenax Schools Trust at this point, but had voted unanimously to *go to consultation* with parents and other stakeholders. The Governing Body will be the people who make the decision, but this will only be after the consultation process, and after they have taken account of all views and questions raised.

The question was asked "Why the Tenax Schools Trust?" TH explained the thought process behind the decision – the Leadership Team and Governing Body are constantly looking at the strategic direction of the school and feel that, given the changing role of the Local Authorities in education, and the growing need for schools to work together, the time was right to explore options regarding Academy Status. As a Voluntary Aided School it was important to us, and the Diocese, that we join an Academy Trust with values and aims in line with our own.

T M-O asked if there would be another Parent Consultation meeting, as there was a view that the parents had not received much notice of the meeting. TH confirmed that there would not be, but that parents and other stakeholders could raise and questions or make comments to the Governing Body via email. All such communication would be responded to and published on the Consultation part of the school website to ensure that all stakeholders received all of the information available.

Format of Parent Forum from September 2015

GR explained that she wished to serve as a representative of the Governing Body on the Forum, and as such, felt that it was inappropriate for her to remain as Chair, fearing possible confusion regarding the perception of her role. K D-M offered to stand as Chair, this was agreed unanimously.

GR explained that we had originally hoped for seven members, one from each class. This had not happened, so it was agreed to still aim for seven members from across the school. Members agreed to stand for an indefinite term, with vacancies being filled as they arose in the future.

GR has created email addresses for all Parent Forum members (nameparentforum@yahoo.com), which will also be published (along with the minutes of each meeting) on the Parent Forum section of the school website. All members of the forum will check their new e-mail accounts and let GR know if there are any issues.

It was agreed to set the Agenda for meetings in advance in order for representatives to seek the views of other parents prior to the meeting.

The Forum will meet three times a year, with the next meeting held on Wednesday 9th November at 7pm. K D-M and TH agreed to write to parents at the end of September to ask for new members.

It was agreed to send out the minutes from Parent Forum meetings separately from the Bulletin, as some information gets lost in amongst the high volume of information coming out from school.

GR will inform governors of the discussions taken place at this meeting at the Full Governing Body Meeting on the 18th July. She will canvas governor's thoughts prior to the next Parent Forum to bring any issues they would like put to the Forum.

GR asked TH to let school staff know that they are also very welcome to put forward suggestions for discussion at future meetings.

Any Other Business

Sports Day.

K D-M asked about the reasons why Sports Day is an all day event. TH explained that it is historic, and allows parents to enjoy the day, and especially lunchtime, with their children. The school have considered changing the format of the day to make it a half day event, but it would make it very difficult for those parents who perhaps work or have other commitments and can currently only attend for part of the day if we were to limit the event to either a morning or afternoon. Having the event over the course of the whole day means that more parents can hopefully attend, for either the whole, or part of, the day.

GR and CW both expressed the view that the shorter lunchbreak had worked well this year. The children are always very excited and tend to eat quite quickly, so a shorter break makes it easier for parents to eat and play with their children, without the time dragging and the children getting bored. TH agreed that from the school's point of view the shorter break had worked well, and we would look to keep to this format moving forward.

CW said parents had appreciated the improved communication regarding Sports Day this year, feeling that the email the day before, confirming that it would take place, allowed parents to plan.

GR raised the idea of refreshments being sold as part of the day, saying that some parents would really appreciate the opportunity to buy hot drinks during the day. This view was shared by all parents present. TH explained that the PTFA had sold hot drinks in the past, but that the parents, quite understandably, wished to spend the lunchtime with their own children. The possibility of either having facilities available for parents to make their own drinks, with an honesty box for donations, or for members of the local church or wider community to sell hot drinks to raise money for the school was raised. In addition, members of the Forum wondered whether the PTFA could run a raffle (possibly with a sporting theme) as part of the day.

PTFA

K D-M will speak to the new Chair of the PTFA about them joining the Forum in the future, and for potential ideas for and assistance with refreshments at Sports Day.

Other

K D-M expressed the view that it felt really good that the parents had a voice, and that it had been a very positive meeting. This view was shared by all present.