

Minutes - Parent Forum Meeting 25.10.24

Introduction and welcome

How the forum works

- share what we are doing at school
- raise issues - for example, parents were confused that school fleeces were on sale in the uniform shop but they weren't allowed to be worn in school (but can be worn as a coat). They have now been removed from the school shop. Homework is now set on a Wednesday as a result of feedback from parents who queried it being set on a Friday as that didn't leave enough time.

New Build update

- Parents were shown the video of the drone footage of the school site.
<https://youtu.be/npwMg3stlLE?si=oxLqR9klilAmnCl6>
- There has been a delay to the moving date. It has now been pushed back from after Christmas to Easter, hopefully. The delay is mostly due to issues with the tunnels and the pipework for the various utilities under Burlington Road. Parents asked if news of the delay could be passed on to children in school.
- There are new things that we can use now, including play equipment, a new trim trail and the MUGA which is proving a huge success with the astroturf being far more suitable for sports.
- Concerns were raised about the current Year 6 children missing out on being in the new building. Last year's Year 6 children got to sign the flooring etc. Mr West assured them that current Year 6 were using the new equipment.
- The spaces in the new build were discussed. The sports hall will not be used for lunches meaning that PE lessons etc can start immediately after lunch. There are more breakout rooms and classrooms are much better appointed, with each class having their own cloakroom within the classroom.
- Building will use air flow heating and cooling instead of air conditioning and we are assured that, despite the large windows, it will not be hot in the summer. All classrooms are on the shady side of the building.
- There is a roof garden on the first floor which can be used for a variety of things including an outdoor classroom.
- Parents asked about outdoor lessons. Although a nice idea, we find that children are more easily distracted outside and there isn't really a suitable shady space currently.
- We are still being given a piece of the Hopkirk House land.

Netball

- Parents are very keen for netball to be a priority sport at Burlington. It is the main sport at Coombe Girls' and parents felt that their daughters were at a disadvantage as Coombe hold their netball trials in the first two weeks of Year 7 and they feel our girls are unprepared..
- We did have netball hoops in the old arena but they were very rarely used. School sports tend to go in waves of popularity and although netball is gaining more interest we are still unsure how much of a take up there would be. We have found that football is the only sport to consistently hold interest.

- It was accepted that the school could do more to promote it. We have three staff members who play netball outside of school and we will see what can be done to promote it.
- A netball club was suggested by parents but we need to balance facilities and staff availability and it isn't possible to provide all clubs.

Toilets

- Toilets are cleaned by the cleaners every evening and regularly checked during the day by the Site Manager. If there are issues outside of these times the office should be informed.
- We are in a difficult situation with the refurbishment of a single toilet costing in the region of £20,000 which is money we do not have or want to spend given that we will be moving into the new building shortly.
- The Site Manager is focussing solely on the toilets in the half term to give them a good clean.
- Toilet spaces in the new build will be traditional with no urinals and no big open spaces. Although we currently have sufficient toilets for the number of children, we will have more in the new build.
- We do talk to children about their behaviour in toilets and encouraging good habits but it is simply not possible for us to check the toilets every hour.
- One parent suggested toilet monitors but it is a job that no one wants!

Year 4 Residential

- It was not an easy decision to drop the Year 4 residential to Sayers Croft. We have taken school groups for many years. However, it had become less popular over the years, lots of parents didn't want to send their children and costs had increased hugely. We looked at many different options both at Sayers Croft and other places but could not find a suitable alternative. Coach costs are in the region of £800 each way and this would have to be factored in no matter how long the trip is.
- We also looked at taking Year 6 to SC instead but it is more suitable for younger groups and taking older children presented a different set of issues.
- There are also issues with staffing as we are asking people to leave their own families to accompany children on residential. It is not possible to take DBS checked parent volunteers.
- We can do some of the activities at Sayers Croft on the school site, such as orienteering etc. SC is also open to families for activity days and holidays.

Smart phone free childhood

- This was a huge topic! A letter was recently sent regarding Years 5 and 6 and their use of smart phones.
- There are age restrictions for the most popular apps but it was acknowledged that we all make individual decisions for our children.
- We stress the importance of keeping lines of communication open with the children so that they feel confident in telling adults when they see something inappropriate without fear of being penalised.

- We encourage parents not to let their children use phones in the playground before school and not to give their own phones to their children. We also discourage parents from greeting their children whilst on their own phones.
- Parents felt that targeting Year 5 and 6 children was too late as lots of children have phones earlier. They felt that school should do more to share information. However, it was pointed out that workshops regarding children and technology were very poorly attended by parents.
- There is the Smartphone Free Childhood information page and 'pact' that some parents recommended.
<https://parentpactresults.smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/londonsouthwest>
There was however, a difference of opinion as to whether parents should refrain from giving their children access to phones at primary age, or whether there should be more emphasis on teaching children how to use them responsibly.
- It was agreed that this topic should be revisited at a later date as there was so much more to be said. School will look at scheduling another meeting.

Any other business

- Meetings at the end of the school day are not always convenient for parents. Please could they also be offered first thing in the morning. We do try to offer a choice of meeting times if they are with senior leaders but teachers find a morning meeting very difficult as they are preparing for the day/getting ready for their class to arrive.

The next meeting will be in the Spring Term.