

SJS PARENT FORUM - MINUTES

Wednesday 23rd October 7pm

Attendees:

Jo Tearle (Deputy Head)
Rob (Chartwells Food Ambassador)
Nikki Howarth (PTFA Co- Chair)
Rachel Holloway (Parent Forum Coordinator, Yr3 Praying Mantis)
Zoe Konn and Cath Dixon (Yr3 Damselflies)
Cheryl Small (Yr3 Crickets)
Jen Cook (Yr4 Pelicans)
Tansy Bailey (Yr4 Kingfishers)
Poonam Pathak (Yr4 Nuthatches)
Mariam Hassan (Yr 4)
Sarah Crookhall (Yr5 Orcas)
Ekta Gupta (Yr6 Lemurs)
Jo Craig (Yr6 Elephants)
Lou Fox (Yr6 Buffalos)
Apologies: Sonia Malhotra (Yr5 Beluga whales), Carly Sykes (Yr5 Seals)

Agenda

1. Chartwells – with Rob from Chartwells

Grab and Go:

- Concerns that parents of year 6 have about quality and cost of new "grab and go" food options for kids.
- The year 6 students are enjoying the extra grab and go option but are concerned about the single use pots/tubs. They would like the catering company to look at reusable pots as an alternative.
- No chicken in the chicken options i.e chicken tikka Marsala or chicken pizza.

2. Parent concerns:

- **Communication**
- **Toilets being locked**
- **Praise/rewards**
- **Pen licences**

3. AOB

Chartwells

Meeting notes:

- *Rob is a Food Ambassador for Chartwells. He's keen to engage with parents/carers and get feedback from the school, so will be visiting more regularly – if you see him in the playground, feel free to have a chat to him.*
- *He was previously with Public Health England and his role covers engagement with schools/ parents/carers, public health and nutrition, sustainability, audits.*
- *Chartwells are also running workshops for school children – cooking, nutrition, mental health (general rather than specifically in relation to food – they've teamed up with Young Minds)*
- **Grab and Go** (for Yr 6 only):
 - *these are meant to be a takeaway alternative to the choice on offer, rather than a completely different menu choice.*

- *The issue at the start of term was the lack of info about it for parents, but Yr6 are generally enjoying them.*
- *Main issue now is the use of single use plastics – yr6 pupils would prefer washable pots. **Jo T** noted that from a school point of view, this is unlikely to be an issue in terms of washing them. **Action for Rob** to look into reusable pots.*
- **Food running low** – *issue with lack of meat in dishes or dishes running out – the school is looking into the ordering system, and **Rob** will also ensure a few more spares are put on orders.*
- **Menus hard to read** – **Rob** to take this onboard.
- **Infant/Junior menu differences** – *there are slight differences in the two menus due to infants opting to change a few of the options (due to feedback from parents/carers).*
- **Pictures of food/mobile app:**
 - *Reps noted that it would be better to have a picture of the food choices up on the classroom board, like infants, so children are clear what they are ordering.*
 - *Also, raised that a mobile app would also be useful – could even choose option before school. Other schools use this successfully. **Jo T** noted that the school have previously discussed this with Chartwells.*
 - **Rob** noted that this would be expensive for Chartwells to invest in, but that he would look into it.
 - *It was suggested that a digital version of the menu could be put on the website – **Rob** to look into providing this.*
- **Dietary requirements** – *it was noted that if your child has dietary requirements, a special diet request form can be obtained from the office (there's an allergy menu available).*
- **Tasting evening** – *Chartwells and the school will organise this in the near future.*

Communications/ Marvellous Me

Comments received:

- Does the school recognise that there is an issue in this area.
- Not so much relation to the platform being used but rather the quality, timeliness and accuracy of what they send out.
- I find communications not always very clear and maybe that's because those writing it are not looking at it objectively. May I suggest a small "group test" of parents before the letter is sent out to identify any gaps or issues?
There NEVER seems to be an acknowledgement or apology for incorrect information or even an attempt to clear matters up e.g. bushcraft trip or when they published 2 different dates for the curriculum evening.
- Requesting the school to take responsibility and ownership would be good.
- It would be helpful to have dates for the whole year as early as possible – e.g. for events such as sports day, Christmas performances, trips, so that people can make arrangements/ plan to attend.
- Not so marvellous. Starting to feel like junk mail
- Suggestion to move onto Edulink- the app used by USH - it's fantastic and maybe they could get a Trust/Academy licence extension?
- Lots of messages received are not from the teacher and not relevant – is there anyway of distinguishing between general messages (like about school dinners or reminders) and ones that are from teachers. i.e. from 'office' and from 'teacher'.
- Starting to feel like junk mail
- Doesn't seem to get used for sports / after school clubs / orchestra - so you can easily miss information if the paperwork goes missing - or your child missed the day it was given out.
- Lots of parents either don't like it or don't use it.
- Very hard to find where a message has gone once read.

Meeting notes:

- **Jo T** acknowledged that there have been issues with communications and apologises for this. *The school is working hard to improve communications and listening to parent/career concerns.*

- The **website** has been greatly improved and is being kept up to date - everyone agreed that it is much better and useful that all letters and known dates are on there.
- **Email comms** - Based on feedback, a decision has been taken to trial a return to email/website communication from the office, after half term (exact timescales to be confirmed).
- **Marvellous Me** will be used for teacher comms re learning and awards. All agreed that it would be useful to hear what the children have been learning that week.
- **Email/website** to be used for more formal communications.
- Comment made to ensure that the website includes all letters, including those received from teachers (rather than just the office).
- **Dates** – Generally dates for trips etc are not know more than half a term in advance. Where they are, the school will keep the website calendar up to date and communicate them.
- Y3 is the only Christmas performance
- Trips generally get booked a half term ahead as teachers begin to plan the next topic.
- **Jo T** noted that the curriculum overviews on the website include what the topic outcome is, so gives a heads up on if this will be a celebration event/ performance etc.

Permissions

Comments received:

- Can't rely on parents printing off permission slips as not everyone has a printer.
- If email approval is enough then can they please state this on the letter as an option and confirm what email address to send it to.
- I know the school is trying to reduce printing but is there a way where permission slips could be sent home in bags, (could print 3 or more on one A4 sheet to reduce paper), and the letter on line for viewing. I am concerned that I am missing stuff as it isn't always on marvellous me. Can siblings be put on the same permission slip?
- I'd really welcome a system that allows us to send in forms electronically, maybe with a signature system.

Meeting notes:

- The leadership team is discussing the option of using online permission forms.

Toilets

Comments received:

- Why have the toilets been locked at the end of the day?
- Is this going to be the case all through the year?
- What are children who are on site for after school clubs supposed to do? Let alone everyone who needs to go before they leave?
- What provision is there for children on the field in after school clubs to go to the toilet if they are locked before the end of the day.
- My child has reported silliness in the inside boys toilets, people looking under stall doors etc.(I think they are on the year 6 corridor) – are these monitored for appropriate behaviour. It's before 9am and possibly in the afternoon. Boy regularly complains about how dirty the boys toilets are, and for him to complain they must be pretty awful!! I think it's an ongoing issue at school by the sounds and has been raised by a number of the boys, but it would be good to have some clarification around what's happening. Note to add - this isn't meant as a criticism of the cleaners, they can't be on site all day cleaning up after everyone.
- I wonder if the boys and girls' toilets could be swapped around so the boys were the inside ones? Would that make the boys behave better? They had toilet monitors at the end of last term but not sure they've been re-instated? Assuming the damage is being done at break times - could whoever monitors the kids at break/lunch stand in the area where the toilets can be seen?

Meeting notes:

- **Outside toilets** - the cleaning schedule has now been changed and these will now be open after school.
- **Inside toilets** – toilet monitor jobs have been advertised for pupils – this worked well last year and the toilet monitors enjoy the responsibility.
- **Toilet locations** - Long term plan to make them unisex. Both have indoor and outdoor, and girls outdoor is around a corner so would be worse at breaktimes to locate the boys here instead.
- **Year 3:** The Yr3 team have now changed how they handle toilets.
 - **Jo T** reiterated that pupils should not be worried about asking to go to the toilet – they are encouraged to go at break times, but please reassure them that they can ask to go at other times. **Jo T** will raise this again with the Yr 3 team to ensure children are not getting anxious about this.

Praise/rewards

Comments received:

- Effort stars have already become very very competitive. I know they are used to spur children on, but Child has become deflated that despite child's high standard of behaviour and effort with consistent work child had not received many effort stars. One child had x5 for doing the library challenge which maybe seen inconsistent as child regularly devours books.
- I think the children who are already achieving and behaving well may need clearer expectations of how to achieve effort stars explained to them.
- This is not aimed at any one teacher, I have heard of lots of variation in effort star awarding. One child had x10 in the first week, child currently has x4. Unfortunately child is deflated by this and is unsure of how child can improve despite me encouraging child not to compare to others and reassuring her child is working hard.
- All children should have clear recognition and goals for achievement, not just the children who need encouragement for tasks such as reading or to achieve a minimum standard.
- Could you ask the teachers to comment on how the effort stars are used for children who are already achieving well and how they manage the natural competition which leaves some deflated despite high achievement.
- Been hearing about the class marbles today and apparently damselflies are 'the losers' and won't get as much playtime?
- Parents would like to know more about the 'reward/incentive' approaches.

Meeting notes:

- *The last thing the school wants is for children to feel deflated and anxious.*
- *This is supposed to be a fair way of acknowledging effort, but can suffer from human error and human variation – some teachers are better than others at remembering/tracking.*
- *The school is going to ask teachers to have a chart up on their wall so they can see how many each child has, so they can better monitor this.*
- *Note that the stars are for 'effort' rather than how well a child does.*
- *Please encourage children to let teacher know if they think they have made excellent effort - that is always helpful – the school encourages them to have an opinion on their own work*

Pen licence

Comments received:

- Child now has one which is great. However, very worried about the effect of obtaining it on child's mental health – was horrendous. To us as adults it seems such a small thing but to so many kids across the school it's huge. I would also like it made clear that I'm not the only parent with very real concerns on the impact this has on our children's well-being
- I would like to know the following:

- What is the theory behind it?
- Where can the children see a copy of the acceptable standard of writing for their age.
- Why is it taken away at the start of each year (why can't they continue using seeing as they have supposedly met their age requirements)
- Who is assessing the teachers on their understanding of the requirements - at a recent work showing in the hall it was quite clear that the standards of writing in pen were very different from class to class.
- And finally, are the children given feedback and praise on their writing to help encourage them or do they just eventually get a pen.

Meeting notes:

- *The aim of the pen licence was to encourage children and create excitement around being able to use a pen. It has improved handwriting standards but the school does not want it to be causing upset for children.*
- *The school has reviewed this and acknowledge that this is not working in all cases, and therefore the system will be changed after receiving a lot of feedback from parents/carers.*
- *The proposed changes were discussed and agreed amongst the forum attendees.*
- **Year 3:** *will continue to work towards gaining their pen licence.*
- **Years 4-6:** *children will be given a pen to use for all writing from Y4 onwards – with the expectation that they continue to focus on handwriting and may be asked to practise in pencil for a couple of weeks if their standard drops.*
- *This will be implemented in January at the start of term.*

SJS parent forum - responses to other concerns raised

Year 5 Comments

Home learning:

- Suggestion for some optional (not assessed by the school) home learning - based on term topics, e.g. could just be a question/ idea raised in the class to write/think about. This would help parents to get involved more in their learning & see how they are getting on before parent evenings. I've heard homework has been an issue in previous years and decisions were made not to have any - however it would be great if it's an option at least for Years 5 & 6 for parents/children who wish to.

Meeting notes:

- *This was discussed amongst the forum attendees and it was agreed that extra home learning was not felt necessary, and that even if it is optional, parents/carers may feel pressure to ask their child to complete it.*
- **Jo T** *noted that there will be more guidance provided to year groups on Marvellous Me comms – so comms should become more focussed on what the children have been learning that week.*
- **TT Rockstars** – *positive feedback on this and having times table Olympics – creates good competition.*

Training:

- What training are teachers/parents getting to understand mental health and neuro-diversity issues in children? A child whose needs aren't being met will disrupt the class, and may struggle with relationships with other children, as well the impacts on their own mental health and academic progress

School response:

- *We have been working with the trust on children's mental health, and have done research with the Hospital School in order to develop training for teachers – which will be implemented this year. We are also having a focus on Attachment this year.*

School dinners:

- By the time the children get to lunch the option they picked in the morning has run out and they are left with a jacket potato.

Meeting notes:

- *Parents to let office know as soon as possible if this happens.*
- *There are some issues with the ordering system that the school are looking into.*

Year 4 Comments

Maths app:

- Child has been issued with a Math Doodle account and we are finding it quite limiting. We understand that it is to help them have more opportunity to practice maths, but unless we pay £5.99/month, the child is limited to the number of exercises they can do, and I as a parent am limited to the information available to me to monitor their performance

Meeting notes:

- *There are limited Maths Doodle accounts available – the school has been trialling this with children that would benefit from additional maths support.*
- *There has been positive feedback on the app so far and the school is looking into the possibility of increasing the number of licences available.*

Communication:

- Lack of comms (blackout) at the last Year 4 Stubbington trip. When the current year 6 went to stubby we had pics and bits, less than for France but then it was just down the road - think the parents really appreciated being updated a bit.

School response:

- *This has been passed on.*

Year 3 Comments

Transition:

- Children were asked to give a list of three names with the expectation they'd be with at least once person on that list but were then not placed with any of them.
- It was also recalled that at the parents info evening it was stated that the classes would not be mixed up much but then they were.
- Either is fine as long as it's communicated so expectations can be managed. Parents were providing assurance to children based on the information given that turned out not to be true. Not helpful at a time of change.
- Transition day when you found out their class and were invited up to their classroom - teacher wasn't there - be nice if the teacher and TA were there to meet.

Meeting notes:

- *Jo T apologised if the class splits have caused any children to be unhappy. The infant school arranges the classes as they know the children better, and do their best to accommodate requests. The comments have been passed on to Yr2/3.*
- *At the transition evening for parents, in response to a question about whether classes would be mixed, it was explained that this doesn't happen automatically, it depends on the cohort, and the degree of mixing is decided by the Infant teachers, using their knowledge of the children.*
- *Jo T acknowledged that it would be good if the teachers could be there on transition day, but this is not always possible. TAs are paid by the hour and their working day ends at 3:20 so if they do stay on it is unpaid and we would not ask them to do this.*

Jumpers/ lost property:

- Is there a better system that can be used than them all going in one big box – can they put them in their bag?

School response:

- *Unfortunately this is not possible - children would be in and out of the classroom constantly which would be worse. They do get used to the system pretty quickly.*

End of day reminders

- Could the children be reminded at the end of the day to bring their planners home? Many are still forgetting? Thank you.
- Can the teachers remind them to pick up their own jumper at the end of the day (and check their name's on it).

School response:

- *These requests have been passed on to Yr3.*

Reading levels:

- Confusing system between colours and numbers and not knowing what level their child is on - can their level be written in their planner please

School response:

- *Please ask the teachers directly and they will be able to explain the system.*
- *Request to write levels in planners passed on to Yr3.*

FAQS:

- There were lots of queries on Facebook group at beginning of term - be useful if these could be made into FAQS and be provided in welcome pack?

School response:

- *Great idea, Rachel and Jo T will get that done.*

How/who can children raise issues with (in confidence)

- Is there someone that the kids can talk to in confidence? A couple of the kids are playing a bit "rough" with xxx at play time. I would like to think there was someone they could talk to about it without getting the other children into trouble - they don't want to be seen as telling tales.

School response:

- *We do talk with children about having a "safe adult" in school, who they feel comfortable talking to – but the best person to talk to about playtime issues is their class teacher. If the child asks for help with strategies, and explains they don't want the other children to be spoken to, the teacher will understand.*
- *But we also have a "whistle blowing" approach where we expect children to tell us about issues, and we don't phrase it as "getting into trouble", we want to help them.*

School facebook page:

- What is the purpose of the year 3 school facebook page – only recently aware. Is this a closed group?

School response:

- *The School one is for year leaders to share information about events and topics. It can be followed but not joined, as it is not for parents to upload anything to. The Parents' one is run by parents so is not owned by the school.*

Toilets:

- Damselifies have been told they are not allowed to go to the toilet in lessons.
- Can the position on toileting be explained please? – we understand the need for minimal disruption in class but some genuinely forget to go at playtimes.
- They have also said if they asked to go to toilet when in class, they have to put their names down
- I can understand if it just after/before break lunch but in the middle of the day?

School response:

- *We are discussing this with Yr3 teachers – seems to be a particular issue with this current cohort.*

Water bottles:

- Children line up in alphabetical order to come into class after lunch and have been told that they may take a drink from their bottles but only once in their seats.
- Bottles are collected from a box and they have to finish before their teacher calls afternoon register. Because there is a crowd at the bottle box it is difficult for the children in the second half of the alphabet to get their drinks and have a drink in time.
- Could this be looked at please? The alphabetical line also has an impact on getting out of school. Could it be varied a bit?

School response:

- *This has been passed on to Yr3.*
- *If parents/carers have specific concerns these can always be raised with the teachers on the playground.*

AOB

Golden Mile:

- Comment raised on what the purpose of this is and if it is being done at the best time of the day

Meeting notes:

- *Noted that this is a national programme to get children more active.*
- *There is a significant pressure on time and therefore this is 'squeezed in'.*
- *Jo T would look into whether this could be done after lunch, but noted the pressures on the timetable.*

Positive Feedback

- **Community room** - thank you for opening up the community room every Monday am for parent/carers support.
- **Website** - love the new school website – really clear and easy to find things
- **Hooks** (specifically mentioned year 3 and 6) – thanks for the hook days absolutely doing their hob. Good feedback from the children.
- **France** – lots of great feedback - very impressed with the teachers taking on this French trip - big thank you to them all. Great opportunity for the children. Will it happen again? There are some very excited kids in lower years. The earlier people know, the earlier they can start saving.

- **Trip payments** – lots of notice given for payment on trips (specifically mentioned Stubbington and France), payments could be made in instalments - that's much appreciated.
- **School dinners** – Child (year 4) is loving the salad bar where they can help themselves.
- **Communications** – (from year 3) think they have informed us well and given feedback/expectations of home learning clearly. Very helpful response to early queries about homework and expectations.

Meeting notes:

- *Curriculum evening – lots of positive feedback and noted how much effort had gone into these.*
- *The school reacted quickly to year 3 questions at the beginning of the year which was appreciated – such as the note on homework expectations.*