

# SJS PARENT FORUM

Forum date           **Wednesday 24 March 2021**  
Time                   **13.00 – 14.00**  
Zoom details         <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/6815812145?pwd=aU1sUDIDOEI5QjliSlZjMXhOMzViZz09>  
Meeting ID: 681 581 2145  
Passcode: AVL8MH

Prepared by         **Rachel Holloway, Jo Tearle**

## **Attendees -**

Jo Tearle – Deputy Headteacher

Jen Bleeck – PTFA Co-Chair

Sarah Crookall – Secretary

Amanda Webb - Treasurer

Rachel Holloway – Parent Forum Coordinator

Year 3: Jen Pillinger (Bumblebees), Vanessa Lee (Fireflies), Sarah Scott, (Honeybees)

Year 4: Zoe Konn and Cath Dixon (Robins), Laura Scott (Nightingales), Rachel Holloway (Wagtails)

Year 5: Poonam Pathak, Jen Cook (Huskies)

Year 6: Paula English (Rhinos), Liz Harrison (Leopards)

**Apologies** - Nicola Howarth (PTFA Co-Chair), Michelle Elcombe (Arctic Wolves), Laure Drothier (Bumblebees), Catherine Howard, Sonia Malhotra (Hippos), Vix Lowrey (Wagtails), Nicola Husk (Honey Bees), Elissa Collins (Nightingales), Louise Fox, Elspeth Fenton (Narwhals).

## **Agenda**

1. Intro and welcome
2. Mental health teaching at school
3. AOB – next forum date

## **Meeting Summary**

### **Introduction**

- There's an increasing focusing on children's mental health (MH) in schools.
- MH needs to be included in the safeguarding role at school.
- There's a national change in how PSHE is taught – much wider curriculum.
- SJS are taking this opportunity to overhaul their approach to MH.
- There will be a whole school vision.
- Launching next year.
- Focussing on topics such as:
  - Self regulation.
  - Connecting with others.
  - Understanding our emotions.
  - What contributes to good MH.
  - Who can you talk to.
- Progression in teaching through the year groups (including infants).
- Updating behaviour policy – build trust between child and teacher – focus on putting things right, rather than consequences.

### **Comments from forum**

#### **Key issues for children:**

- Social media and children getting phones earlier (due to lockdown).
- Basics around communication online – the way you write/read something and how someone else interprets may be different.
- Behaviours – understand them and the reason for them – develop toolkit to help them understand and manage emotions.
- Understanding that we are all different and manage emotions differently.
- Understanding feelings and how children can help each other.

- Dealing with new and different emotions.
- Knowing that it's ok to not be ok and tipping point when support is required.
- Know where to go at school to get help and who to talk to.

#### Workshops for parents – what would be useful:

- Matthew Corkhill can run workshops.
- Back to basics and setting and keeping to boundaries.
- Managing children with overwhelming emotions.
- Managing emotions generally.
- Lorraine Lee courses are excellent – Jo T had previously been in contact with LL regarding parent courses.
- Supporting children with anxiety and aligning with what the school is teaching.
- Knowing what the school are doing - the words that are used, the techniques that are used, so that can use the same language and techniques at home – in terms of managing behaviour and encouragement.
- Using a common language about how we feel and how we express that – so that interchangeable between teachers, children, parents etc.
- Be really transparent with what happening at school so can use at home – introduction session for parents to attend would be really helpful.

#### Things that affect children out of school:

- Technology.
- Lack of socialising.
- Covid related – being able to socialise with friends and let off steam.
- Talking to friends online.
- Balancing screen time.
- Parents suffering at home (e.g. from MH issues).
- Children that are too scared to raise issues due to things going on at home – keeping an eye out for pupils – teachers are first port of call for this as they know children.
- Family breakups (divorce etc).
- Young carers.

#### General:

- SJS is part of local MH support team – SJS will have a counsellor come into the school to help support children.
- There will be a questionnaire termly for the children to ask about their MH.
- Worry boxes have been installed in the classroom – only for teacher to access – **Action Jo T** to check if these can be locked.
- Comment made that child has used Reading Plus to talk to her teacher, which was really useful – **Action Jo T** to check that messaging has been turned back on.
- Also, parent mentioned that Google classroom is a good tool to enable children to communicate with their teacher if they have a problem.

#### **Other comments**

- Request from forum parents for no homework over Easter.
- Can children read and write reflections on their own books, rather than using Reading Planet – Jo T advised to email the teacher (on office@ email) to ask on a case by case basis.
- When should parents sign planners (when read own book, Reading Planets? Reading plus? – **Action Jo T** to clarify on newsletter.
- Note that teachers will start checking planners soon – to date they have been focussing on assessing children's progress. **Action Jo T** to pass on as reminder.

## Question asked by SJS on mental health (prior to Forum)

We are going to be changing the way we teach PSHE, to include much more on children's mental health MH and emotional wellbeing, such as self-awareness, self regulation, relating to others etc. We would like your views on the following:

- What does the school already do well in terms of supporting children's MH and emotional wellbeing?
- What do you think is important to include as part of the MH/EW strand (both in terms of the immediate Covid-response and longer term)?
- Outside of school, what do you think are the biggest factors that affect children's MH and EW?
- Do you know of any tools, resources etc that might be helpful for us to use?

## Responses received from parents/carers on mental health (prior to Forum)

- **(from Matthew Corkers)** I have a stack of books I have used with children through work that I can recommend for all sorts of wellbeing, feelings, bereavement etc. I can make a list to share. A few years ago another Dad and I ran a 2 session workshop for parents to help children with anxiety. We have said to the school on a number of occasions that we would happily run some more workshops. We can do things like anxiety, anger, low moods, challenging behaviours etc etc. Please put forward for agenda...point of discussion. Parent of professional skills offering assistance.
- I think there is much to be gained from just sharing experiences and knowing you are not alone.
- It seems a really positive step that SJS are wanting to focus more on children's mental health and emotional wellbeing - wonderful! I thought that the letter on the school website on Friday linked to some good website resources and apps too.
  - **What does school already do well to support children's MH and EW?** -The questionnaire sent home after lockdown one was a useful way of communicating to school about children's experiences during lockdown -My daughter has talked about doing some mindfulness at school - good technique -Talking about a growth mindset-Frequent physical activity
  - **What do you think is important to include as part of this strand?** -Some (age appropriate) psycho education about how our brains work - emotional brain/thinking brain-Understanding our mental health - Easy strategies that children can use to manage bigger feelings -Supporting a friend (what to do if you are worried about a friend/who to talk too) how we can listen well -Bereavement - I believe that this is a really important area that can often get overlooked. Talking with the children about death/loss/grief and helping them to talk about this - I know that Simon Says local charity offer training and lessons for primary children around loss and bereavement
  - **Where children can get support: \*Trauma training for teaching staff \*** -This work could focus around the '5 steps to wellbeing' <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/> which can offer a positive way of talking about MW and EW and gives opportunity to give and try a new skill?
  - **Outside of school - biggest factors that affect children's MH and EW?** -Trauma -Transitions - Social media-Phones and tablets -Family pressures (divorce/separation/financial challenges - any adverse childhood experiences)
  - **Tools and resources?** -Simon Says - <https://www.simonsays.org.uk/information-for-schools-may-20/> Young Minds - <https://youngminds.org.uk/-Mentally> heathy schools - <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/>. Adding something on school website for parents about mental health, what to look for, how to support, signposting for further support. There are so many great resources, lesson plans and apps available.
- Caring for the school grounds kills two birds with one stone.
- Physical exercise has a huge impact on mental well being. The school have done a fab job of this so far this academic year so would love that to continue.
- Physical exercise so important and being outside – may be ensuring the kids understand all the benefits of exercise – physical and mental health benefits
- Also just bring outside has an impact. So perhaps using outdoor space more.
- Outdoor lessons where possible would be really great.
- Understanding bigger emotions, and how the brain actually works – so what happens inside our brains when we get angry for example, and coping mechanisms. Definitely anything that helps with self-awareness and how to understand and regulate feelings

- I wonder if equipping us as parents has merit here. Our roles have become quite blurred in the last year. As parents/ teachers. So outside of school at this age we are probably the biggest factor and currently our resources are low. The school may have some great ideas.
- Social media/phones issue. Of course it's something that school can't control at all times. But, it would be good to know what restrictions are in place at school particularly for yr5/6 and if there's any specific learning/support around social media use. Not just stranger awareness but the effect children can have on the mental health of their own peers through their behaviour on social media – how to act responsibly on social media.
- Awareness raising on social media – learning about how beneficial it can be, but also issues that children need to be aware of, and how they should act responsibly when using it. And responsible use of mobiles etc.
- There was a dangerous apps letter sent out by Hamwic last week which was really informative. One of children is now year 7 and there have def been issues on social media with some of these apps in her year group. Some guidance on how to use social media responsibly, how to be a good friend on social media etc would be helpful. Lots of the children have probably got phones a lot earlier than planned due to lockdown which has been great at giving them a way of communicating, but that's not always positive. Things like not saying something online that you wouldn't say to someone's face, expecting instant replies as they can see someone is online. How to have a healthy social media life I guess.
- I am really concerned about the talk of catching up academically constantly in the news. It's so damaging for the kids to hear talk about them having their summer holidays cut short or school days lengthened so that they can cover content that they have missed. I am convinced that what children need more than anything is to play and socialise with their friends. The only catch up that needs to happen is allowing them to be together again, be active and relearn those social skills which they haven't used at all over the last few months. Anything that school can do to support this would be really appreciated. Better emotional health will lead to better academic achievement.

## Other comments received

SJS responses in **green**

### Reading Reflections

- **Year 4** - Just got a MM regarding reading reflections - "two written based on their reading planets assigned book" can they no longer do reflections on books they read for pleasure? Also is it really now only 2 as it used to be 4? There was also talk at a previous forum meeting about being clear about X reading plus + Y reading planets is equal to 4 reading reflections. Might be worth revisiting this.

**This changed last year. Here's the paragraph from Mrs Davie's reading letter from November 2020:**

#### Home Learning going forwards

From next week our home learning expectations will change to incorporate Reading Plus and Reading Planets. We would like our children to complete the following each week:

- Read at least 2 times a week:
  - 2 sessions of reading for pleasure across a wide range of texts, using Reading Planet books if they have been given a band, (4 sessions of reading for pleasure for Y3)
  - 2 sessions of Reading Plus for Y4, 5 and 6
- Complete at least two reading reflections in their planners, based on their reading for pleasure books.

Some children may be asked to complete extra Reading Plus sessions during school hours to further support with their reading development.

**The expectation was changed to two reflections to acknowledge the fact that Reading plus takes longer to complete. Please email the teacher via office@... if you would like to discuss alternatives with them.**

**Yes, we will re-visit the discussion about whether the four reading sessions could be achieved in a range of ways.**

### **Drop-off/ Collection**

- Parent has mentioned maybe doing pick ups in house groups which would mean working with both side of schools as there is too many waiting around at pick ups, other schools have successfully done this and reduced the amount of people about which then gives space to socially distance properly.
- As parent said Foundary Lane doing it...and it makes sense. Do house groups have captains. ..per year...could they lead each house out for school end of day

**Different schools do what works for them. We are happy with the collection arrangements and are not planning on changing them. Parents have the space on the playground to socially distance to the extent that they feel comfortable.**

- I also wanted to mention the staggered exit times. I understand the need for them but could it be fed back that it would be really helpful if yr 6 teachers could try and get the kids out on time, after waiting from 2:45 to 3:10 anyway, to then wait another 8-15 minutes after this time which is what it's been across the week for yr to come out really gets a bit frustrating.
- Could it please be mentioned about the school gates opening on time. It has made me late for work on numerous occasions. Also every day this week the classes are late out at the end of the school day and there is little social distancing in the playground as a result.

**Passed on to teachers.**

### **Football at break time**

- **Year 3** - our daughter has been really enjoying playing football at break times when in class bubbles and had even encouraged other girls to play but sadly this week she has mentioned that she won't be playing from now on as it has got a little rougher and no one is passing her the ball and has felt excluded. I think this is a real shame and feel it's important to bring up as it should be made to feel more inclusive. Could there be a girl only sessions for example? Or changes to how it is supervised to make it more inclusive. Thanks

**Please email the class teacher via office@... to make them aware, so they can help her tackle this situation (no pun intended). We do have girls football in normal times but it's not possible at the moment due to year group bubbles.**

### **Music**

- Can we ask if the year 6 orchestra might be able to go ahead in the summer term. Thank you.
- Is there any chance of music lessons for year 3 after Easter too?

**We don't have the space to introduce socially distanced Peri music lessons for Year 3 at the moment, unfortunately – they will be offered lessons next year in Y4.**

### **Positives**

- Thank the school for making the return to school a breeze for us and the children. My two are so happy to be back and I know there's no doubt a lot of extra faff for the teachers.
- Generally a lot of positive feedback on:
  - Return to school and how well this has gone and children settling in
  - How brilliant the school were during lockdown – keeping it open for key worker children and providing great online provision

**Thank you, we are delighted with how lockdown learning went in general.**

- Children absolutely loving the play equipment and thank you for letting the kids use this with little restriction.
- PE and team spirit – my year 5 is absolutely loving the variety of stuff they are doing and the amount of exercise he is doing at school seems to have increased and I can see the positive impact this has on him.

**Thank you for the feedback**