



**Shirley Junior
School PTFA**
Parents, Teachers & Friends
Association
Charity Number 1108417

15 December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

BE KIND AT CHRISTMAS

You may remember back in July the Chairs of the Junior School PTFA and FOSIS sent out some "Guiding Principles" which we would encourage everyone within our community to do their best to uphold; this includes parents, carers, teachers, school leadership and children. In particular, once the excitement of Christmas has passed and we trudge our way through winter; please consider these guiding principles before addressing any issues with the school directly or on parent led social media channels.

Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.

Teachers and Parents alike have been fighting battles behind the scenes both at work and at home. We have all been trying to juggle new ways of working, schooling and parenting with many of us also caring for vulnerable and shielding members of our own family too. On top of that we're all trying to provide reassurance and a sense of normality to our children who are fed up with washing their hands and with not being able to play with all their friends.

Be kind to yourself too. It's been a tough year and this is an anxious time for everyone and it's totally OK not to feel OK. The school understands how hard this year has been for children and parents alike; we ask that you try and understand how hard it is for the school staff too.

Trust the intent

Our teachers always have and always will have the best interests of our children at heart. Whilst school decisions may sometimes conflict with what you think is best for your child, please remember that they are trying to balance the needs of approximately 630 children across the two schools, each with individual needs and in landscape that is constantly changing. We should trust that everything they do they do with the best of intentions. As some poet once said "to err is human", mistakes are inevitable especially when people are exhausted (parents and teachers alike) and issues are emotive.

Seek to understand

There is a rationale behind every decision that is being made. You might not agree with every decision but we want to ensure that you understand why that decision has been made. If you don't understand the rationale then ask the school or your class representative; you're probably not alone and the school will be happy to provide clarification to everyone.

Don't shoot the messenger

Whilst the school is making some decisions, there are a significant number of requirements being placed on them by the Department for Education; it is probable that these requirements are as frustrating for them as they are for you but they can't tell you that!

School Community Support

We're all in this together, so if you have questions or concerns then please do raise them with your class rep who will collate them and feed them back to the school regularly to save the school having to answer the same question 630 times. Also, if you or your child is struggling then please do speak with Karen Allen.

We continue to feel such a strong sense of community with our school at the heart of that community – by working together, guided by these principles, our children will thrive in the safety, security and comfort of the community that is our school.

We hope you all have a lovely break over the Christmas period,
Yours faithfully,

Annette Hixon
Headteacher

Jo Tearle
Deputy Headteacher

Jen Bleack
SJS PTFA Chair

Nicola Howarth
SJS PTFA Chair

SJS PARENT FORUM

Forum date/time

Wednesday 9th December 2020 13.00 – 14.00

Prepared by

Rachel Holloway, Jo Tearle

Purpose: *The parent forum is an important and valued communication link. It provides an opportunity for a representative group of parents/carers and the school to discuss whole-school issues that have been raised by multiple parents across different year groups. It ~~also~~ enables positive feedback to be provided by parents/carers, and gives an opportunity for the school to discuss and seek feedback on new ideas and initiatives. Through their involvement in Parent Forum discussions, Class Representatives support other parents/carers to understand whole school and year group decisions made by the school. By working together, focussing on solutions and supporting each other to see different perspectives, we can continue to make Shirley Junior School a great place for children to thrive.*

Attendees

Jo Tearle – Deputy Headteacher

Nicola Howarth (PTFA Co-Chair)

Jen Bleeck (PTFA Co-Chair)

Amanda Web - Treasurer

Rachel Holloway – Parent Forum Coordinator

Year 3: Laure Drothier (Bumblebees), Vanessa Lee (Fireflies)

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

Year 5: Michelle Elcombe (Arctic Wolves), Poonam Pathak, Jen Cook (Huskies)

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

Apologies – Louise Fox, Elspeth Fenton (Narwhals), Elissa Collins, Laura Scott (Nightingales), Catherine Howard (Hippos), Sarah Scott (Honeybees), Nina Hickman (Honey Bees)

Agenda

- Intro and welcome
- Summary of positive comments
- Discussion points:
 - Communications
 - Online reading platforms
 - Future parents' evenings
- AOB
 - Other support for the school?
 - Homework
 - TT Rockstars
 - Hot lunches

Discussion Points. Responses from SJS in green

Item	Response/Proposed Action
Communications How to improve communications between parents and school/teachers/office given current situation and feeling quite distanced	
Weekly comms <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are the school considering going back to email for weekly communications? Be useful to have weekly email again, with link on the email to the website.• Could the school consider putting weekly communications and letters on the same page on	We are shortly going live with a new IMS (Information Management System) which will allow us to send letters as emails – February launch. We are not going to be changing the website any further at the moment. Suggestion from forum for emails to contain links to letters etc on website.

the website so that everything for each week is in one place?	Suggestions as nice to have: tag subjects to enable easier searching of letters etc, file letters in alphabetical order by subject.
Emails <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emails not being responded to – perhaps another reminder/ clarification about which email address people should use would be helpful It would be nice to get an acknowledgment of the emails sent to the school office email address- it's difficult to know if your email has been received/actioned or not. 	<p>There is an auto-reply acknowledgement now, and your email gets forwarded to the correct person. The office are very diligent about checking the email address throughout the day and emails get forwarded promptly to the person they are for. It may be that the teacher has actioned the email and did not think a response was needed, if you need a response and didn't get one then please resend your email with a request for a response – please be considerate with wording when chasing up your email.</p> <p>Please check your spam before chasing up your email – we have had reports of lots of emails going to junk mail boxes.</p> <p>Expectation is for teachers to respond within 3 working days where a response is required.</p>
Forms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can Google forms or equivalent be used instead of paper forms that need to be returned to the office. 	Jo T to look into this
Online Reading Concern about the amount of online reading required, as opposed to reading hard copies of books	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can see the benefit of an online reading platform whilst the children can't take books home, but it is not the same as reading an actual book and is decreasing my son's love for books/reading. It also increases screentime (especially if the only time you have to read is just before bed). Once we are back to normal (fingers crossed), will the school revert to books as before, or will they carry on with the online books? The recent change to a requirement for only two sessions of actually reading a book and writing a reflection in his planner, in addition to two reading plus sessions, whereas previously he'd been reading and reflecting 4-5 times a week, feels such a shame. I know reading plus includes learning in addition to the actual reading of a text. I wouldn't mind if a possible solution was more reading of books (not just the twice weekly currently requested) in addition to the reading plus requirement. If it is an expectation then X will do it, but because he knows that twice is all that's being asked for that's all he's prepared to do Books that have been started (but not finished) on Reading Planets have now disappeared/ Some quizzes on Reading Planet are not showing as completed. We will look into why this happened 	<p>We appreciate these points. At the moment it's the best way to make books available to children.</p> <p>We don't want to decrease any child's love of reading. If you feel it's having a serious effect on your child, please get in touch with the class teacher to discuss this.</p> <p>We have requested 2 x Reading Plus and 2 x Reading Planets/Free read, because the Reading Plus sessions take 35 minutes and we felt that was a lot of extra time to suddenly expect families to find, especially if they have siblings at the school. For this reason, we reduced the written reflections to 2 per week. These are minimums – you could always ask the class teacher to encourage the child to do more</p> <p>Jo T to investigate if more flexibility/options can be given to the amount of online Vs offline reading.</p> <p>Jo T to put newsletter together on the benefits of the online platforms.</p>
Parents eve Importance of parent/teacher contact	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I did miss having a phone call this parent's evening. I didn't request one as there was nothing from the targets that I felt I needed to discuss and I'm sure my child is doing fine at school. I didn't want to overburden the staff even more, and don't really have any worries. However, I still miss making that connection with my child's teacher and getting that other reassurance from them / being able to share a 	<p>Staff miss the connection with you too and would have much preferred a normal parent's evening.</p> <p>The A4 sheet was never intended to be, or billed as, a 'report'. It was a paper version of the information you would normally be given</p>

<p>few 'soft' comments (e.g. about friends, who they're sitting next to, that they don't enjoy etc.).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A summary about the child in general would have been nice. Things they are doing well at as well as their targets for things they need improvement on. • Can they consider the next parents evening to be done by video conference. The piece of paper (report) was not very informative or individualised and did not feel as helpful as a normal parents evening. 	<p>at parent's evening: whether they are on track in Reading, Writing and Maths, what their next steps are and how these can be supported.</p> <p>Yes, we can look into the next one being done by video conference. Sometimes, it's useful to try out different things.</p>
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AOB Discussion points

Other support for the school?

- Discussed other ways that parents/carers could support the school.
- Jo T discussed that teachers are under a lot of pressure at the moment with additional safety rules in place for Covid and are working extremely hard and are trying their very best and with our children's best interests at heart. Parent reps to help other parents understand this and to encourage feedback/emails to be sent with a more constructive and understanding language where possible.
- A big thankyou for the love cake delivery – this came at a tough time for staff and really picked them up.
- A big thank you for all the positive comments – these are also such a big morale booster.

Homework

- Sometimes homework is asked for and doesn't seem to be looked at or taken in by the teacher.
- Jo T to look into this for year 3. Most of the time homework is discussed and often put out on display.

TT Rockstars

- Jo T confirmed that end of year 4 Government timetable test is undertaken on a computer – it is not a written test.
- Jo T to look into yr 6 TTs to see if they can be done in 3 minute chunks.
- Jo T to check if there is an issue with TT rockstars loading more timetables – e.g. a yr 3 one only has 2,5 and 10s.

Hot lunches

- Jo T to clarify if hot school lunches are available after Christmas as a new menu was sent on weekly comms and it was discussed in the Infant forum. **We are bringing back hot school meals, which will still be eaten in class and will be delivered by the Kitchen Staff on a meal tray with a lid and cutlery. There will no longer be grab and go option. The choices each day will be either a meat or vegetarian option or packed lunch. The cost remains the same at £2.25 per meal**

Other comments received and answered separate from forum

Responses from school in green

Covid rules

- If my daughter at secondary school is sent home because of a case in her class (but she has no symptoms), does my daughter at juniors need to self-isolate? **No, not unless the secondary school girl gets symptoms.**

Toilets

- Child has told me that toilet rules have changed again and that they are not allowed to go more than twice a day. Not sure if this is just year 3? Is this actually the case? **No, it's not the case at all; please contact the teacher if you are concerned about your child's individual situation, though.**
- I think the usual, boys loos gross holding it in all day to avoid going. **We are finding a lot of children are not flushing the toilet, it seems as though they are forgetting. This is a tricky one because teaching them to flush is not really in our remit. We will put reminders on the wall, although not all children notice these. We will also double check that the cleaning rota is being followed.**
- The door to re- access school after going to the loo is frequently shut and can't be opened from the playground. (It's the door we all access the playground by at pick up). They aren't supposed to go back

through school as it's the one way system. Can't this door be left with the latch up during the day please? It's a frequent occurrence as far as I can make out. Thanks. **We are aware of this and resolving the situation.**

Timetables

- Yr4 - Do they have a big maths test that test anymore? If they do, please could we know how often, what is tested (all tables,) and their progress (scores don't seem to be written in planners anymore). **From Y4: Every Friday. For next three weeks 6x table only. (Done 3 weeks on 3x and 3 weeks on 4x). In Nightingales they are doing paired tables again with top pair winning a prize for highest combined score. Forgot all about writing scores in planners...many apologies...will get team on that this week.**

Drop-off/ Collection

- Could drop offs be longer so there are not so many people going in in a short space of time? **The drop off times are a window of at least 10 minutes, which most people aren't taking advantage of. It's fine for you to come along towards the end of the window.**
- Can we really not be trusted to go in the playground and not touch things? **It isn't about trust, it's about distancing, and limiting the number of people on site. Since lots of people are not distancing in the queue or going through the gate, we do not feel it's right to make changes at the moment.**
- Hollybrook don't have any staggered starts and seem to be coping but they are a smaller school. This would keep the pavements clearer and maybe negate road closures and teachers /other helpers having to man the roads. **As you say, they are a smaller school, on a quieter street. We don't think that ending the staggered starts would keep the pavements clearer as more people would be arriving at the same time.**
- I am concerned by the number of parents congregating across the street from the school, between collection times, who are not socially distancing or wearing masks. Please can the school send another reminder to families requesting parents wear masks and distance both on the school grounds and around the school premises. **This is on the weekly communication as a regular reminder. Parents have been asked to wait on that side of the road to prevent the queue from going past the end of the rainbow on the railings, because otherwise the corner gets blocked up. People with hidden disabilities may be exempt from wearing a mask and people may be in support bubbles with another family who they have arrived with at collection time. Everybody is doing their best in their own unique situation.**
- Can anything more be done about the overcrowding on the streets especially near the shop and USH students saying the most foul language. **USH are aware of this and regularly have staff on the street monitoring behaviour. The Street Pastors are also regularly present. We are monitoring the area directly outside the school; it feels a little much to be expected to monitor USH students and the shop as well!**

Music

- Thank you for allowing SMS lessons to continue in school. Is there any way that any kind of orchestra could re-start? e.g. just a year 6 group so staying within their bubble? Maybe just strings even? My child found this so motivating when learning her instrument, it was really one of the highlights for her. **SMS are planning to reintroduce it in year 6, with reduced numbers for safety, communication about this is imminent.**
- What is the music provision like at the moment. I'm aware that there has been some discussion around singing. Is it allowed in school? **In2Music is happening in Year 4, with half a class at a time. Peri lessons for children who had them last year have continued but no new peri lessons have been offered due to the increased need for space and cleaning between lessons. Singing is allowed in classrooms, staff have been very cautious up until now but in the run up to Christmas, singing will begin to happen again.**

Tables

- If anything can be done to cover the sharp edges on the desks as all the pe tops are now unwearable from snagging. **We have appointed eager children in each class to do an audit and we will fix the issue once we get the results in.**

Home learning

- Will these be updated on the website **Yes, of course. This is on our list to do!**

Lunch

- Do Chartwells ask for feedback on their menu? **They do every so often, and I am always happy to pass on any feedback in between times so please email it in the Office@shirleyschools.co.uk marked FAO Mrs Tearle.**

- Can pizza day be a regular thing? **We will request this.**
- Why have hot meals not resumed? Hollybrook kids have a full hot meal menu, jacket or sandwich. **We are bringing back hot school meals, which will still be eaten in class and will be delivered by the Kitchen Staff on a meal tray with a lid and cutlery. There will no longer be grab and go option. The choices each day will be either a meat or vegetarian option or packed lunch. The cost remains the same at £2.25 per meal**

Rewards

- Yr4 - Effort stars- there seems to be some inconsistency as to what these are given out for and the amount. Some children feel they are trying really hard but are not being awarded many effort stars when compared to their friends. **My apologies. We do our best with this and it is regularly raised and discussed. I would find it frustrating too, as a parent. The problem is that our staff are human beings and so there is some built-in variability. This seems to be a positive in most instances, so I think this is just going to be one of those unresolvable things. Maybe it could be seen as an opportunity to discuss uniqueness with your child, and how everybody does their best in their own way, and everyone has different strengths and areas for development? It could link to the Character Strengths session they did in their first 3 weeks. Also, I would encourage any child who thinks they have put a lot of effort into a piece of learning, to let their teacher know this and ask if they can earn an effort star.**
- Following the change in reading homework expectations, are the children still working towards a reading reflections reward this year and if so, what do they need to do to receive it? **Yes: 2 or more Reading Planets a week and 2 or more reflections in the planner.**

Uniform and positive change

- The girls uniform change (leggings/skort) is a really positive change and has meant my daughter is much more physically active at school. Is this something the school would consider as a permanent change? **We love it too and definitely intend to make it permanent.**

Positive comments received

General:

- Thank you so very much to all of the staff at SJS. This is such a challenging time and we are so grateful to you for all of the additional effort you are putting in to make the school as safe as possible! You have continued to provide interesting and captivating opportunities for the children, while working under unprecedented conditions.
- The children seem to have handled covid and all of its challenges really well. The children do not seem to have suffered as a consequence of the changes you have had to make. Well done!
- I am incredibly grateful to all of the teaching staff, and the school administration for trying to adapt to the current circumstances. They are going above and beyond to help our children continue to learn, while striving to provide a safe environment yet putting themselves and their families at greater risk, during a global pandemic.
- Thank you to all the staff at SJS for continuing to provide a safe and stimulating environment for our children to be safe, have fun and learn, whilst clearly under a lot of pressure themselves. Thank you for all that you do.
- Massive well done to all the staff/teachers, I think they are doing an amazing job at this current time. There are SO many additional challenges in schools and I know how hard they are all working. Can only speak for my child but she is really happy.
- The street closure is fantastic and makes drop off and pick up so much less stressful and so much safer. Thank you so much for the effort that has gone in to making this happen.
- Thank you for allowing them to run and play games through their playtime. So important to counteract the time spent in classroom. It had got quite disheartening last year when most running games seemed to have been banned and my daughter was finding this very frustrating. (Last year my daughter states that stuck in the mud, it, manhunt, British bulldogs were all banned).
- Thank you very much for the beautiful Remembrance Day video. It was a lovely tribute and wonderful to see the children in their classes.
- The signed remembrance song was absolutely lovely and the efforts much appreciated. Brought a tear to my eye.
- The Remembrance Day video/song was so lovely – thank you so much for putting this together.
- My son has been enjoying the extras provided with grab (frubes and fruit) and so thanks for this being put in place.

Reports/parents' eve:

- My year 6 report was excellent.
- My year 6 report was great - specific to my child and with clear achievable targets of things to work towards.
- Husky Class - thank you so very much for providing a detailed and personal report that referred specifically to our child's strengths, targets to work towards, and ways to help meet the targets (eg bbc bite sized link).
- My year 3 report was exactly what I expected. There were a few more 'generic' comments but one was very specific to my child so it was clear that thought had gone into them.
- I would also personally add that I thought the report for my yr 6 was exactly what I expected - a report on how she was settling in during the first half term. There were also helpful personalised targets for which I am grateful. I look forward to hopefully seeing her teacher in the new year when there's more academic progress to report on but right now, I just needed to know that all is well so thanks to the teacher for that.
- Ditto year 3, 4 and 5
- My year 4 report was really helpful and more than I was expecting (and to what is normally received at parents' eve in terms of targets). Also, I requested a phone call as well, which was very well organised and communicated through MM, and was really useful to have a chat to the teacher – thank you for organising this.

Curriculum update:

- Thanks for the Yr 5 curriculum update. It was brief but did provide us with an understanding of what they will be up to
- The curriculum update for year 4 was really useful – great to see/meet the teachers and hear what the children are up to. Thank you for doing these.
- Thank you for organising the curriculum updates, and recording these so that these can be watched if we missed the session – really useful.

Science:

- my son loved the science thing they did the other day about lung capacity sounds like it really got them engaged.
- The year 6 lungs/balloon activity was very much enjoyed, thank you!
- Science in Year 3 has been really well delivered. The SJS Wellness Spa topic seems to have been very well adapted and my child has been enthusiastic about it throughout. Her smoothie letter was amazing!
- My son (year 4) has loved the science activities this year – has really engaged him – thank you.

Year 3 specific:

- Yr 3 settling has continued to go well, with no concerns from my child.
- My Yr 3's handwriting has improved massively since starting in Juniors, well done on the effort and support that has gone into this.

Year 4 specific:

- Thank you for the yr 4 trip to butser farm. So glad it could go ahead and such enthusiasm for the day. I've never had so much feedback for a school day!
- I would like to say thank you to the year 4 team for the Buster Hill trip, it sounds like they had fun. Also that it is really nice, they are planning the usual Christmas things, but in a covid friendly way!
- Thank you for organising the Butser Farm trip – my son really enjoyed it and it has really engaged him – he couldn't stop talking about it when he got home.

Year 5 specific:

- Kids loved the CSI Shirley topic – all of the intrigue, working together to solve the mystery and various different activities and experiments that were included in the topic were all fantastic.
- X is loving the most recent year 5 topic, and is learning so much in school and is really engaged.
- X loved the recent activities – badge making, baking etc – thank you to the teachers.

Year 6 specific

- The common room passes seem to have been very motivational. I've gotta high 5 this.
- I also think The Common room is great.
- Great positive attitude (from teachers) with the kids welcoming attitude and good direction of learning for early morning starters.
- My daughter is loving school & her teacher. Her teacher often sends MM at the weekend, this is hugely appreciated.
- My Yr 6 child remains enthusiastic and positive about school, which is quite some achievement given her attitude at home sometimes - well done!

Teacher specific:

- Great help & support from Mrs McQuay & Mrs Mendez for child having a few issues at the moment.
- Miss Blake – thank you for your regular MM messages – it's lovely to hear what the children are up to and the messages are always so happy and enthusiastic.
- Thank you to Miss Blake for our report and also taking the time to talk about my child on the phone, which was much appreciated – thanks for all your hard work. My child is so happy in year 4 and I'm sure that's mostly down to your enthusiasm.
- Thank you to Mr Hack for his website and google classroom session – really useful.
- Our report from Mrs Booth (& Mr Burns) was very detailed and personalised to our daughter. It clearly stated her targets, ways to support her in reaching each targets, and personal details about how she has settled in – thank you.
- Mrs Booth has been amazing this year – she has worked really hard to ensure a smooth transition for the children. She is thorough, thoughtful, and so wonderful for the children.