



## Parent Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday 24 January 2018

### **In Attendance:**

Lynette Searle (Headteacher), Michelle Browne (Assistant Headteacher), Joeleen Lefevre, Amanda Hayward, Lisa Frensham, Sarah Corless, Dil Singh, Joanne Hallel, Naseer Ahmad, Lilian Okunkpolor, Tina Young

### **Apologies for Absence:**

Serena Lee, Katy Woodhead, Joanne Bone, Maxine Birch, Michelle Stanley

## **1. PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Michelle Browne distributed the results of the recent parent questionnaire to all those around the table. Lynette Searle confirmed that these results will be published on the school Facebook page and also shared via Parentmail. It is noted that the highest number of 'disagree' responses relates to bullying at school. Lynette Searle confirmed that she has contacted individual parents to address these concerns; the feedback indicates that many incidents of bullying relates to historic incidents from a long time ago, or otherwise relates to poor student behaviour rather than bullying by its proper definition.

Amanda Hayward suggested that future parent questionnaires could contain different phrasing to highlight the separate issues of bullying and poor student behaviour. This may give more accurate results next time around. Lynette Searle agreed that future parent questionnaires will be worded differently to address this issue.

Michelle Browne highlighted that there is a 50/50 split of parents who indicated homework to be either too much or too little. Lynette Searle confirmed that this has been followed up with individual parents; it was found that most parents did not realise only reading and spellings are compulsory homework tasks. Other homework tasks are set by teachers to challenge the children and it is at parents' discretion to decide how much homework is suitable for their child.

Michelle Browne highlighted that the majority of comments by parents in the questionnaires are positive. The negative comments relate to homework or after-school clubs. Lynette Searle acknowledged that there is a lack of staff resource to be able to expand after-school clubs any further at this stage.

Lisa Frensham raised the question whether teachers running after-school clubs are willing to engage children who need additional learning support or have behavioural difficulties. Lynette Searle confirmed that extra help in small groups is already provided by the school for Year 6 SATS children and also for children with additional learning needs. Michelle Browne confirmed that the number of parents who completed questionnaires at last year's parents' evening is the highest response rate ever received, which is very positive.

**Action : LS**

## **2. PLAYGROUND UPDATE**

Lynette Searle confirmed that she has two representatives coming to visit her this week to discuss plans for playground improvements. One of these representatives is from a Company who has just recently fitted exercise playground equipment and re-surfacing at St Mary's RC Primary School. The proposal for the Harrow Lodge playground is to; (1) replace the current bike sheds with bike pods; (2) remove the large bushes to utilise this area for installing exercise equipment; (3) remove existing fencing. Dil Singh put forward to Lynette Searle that he has a good relationship with a Company who may be able to provide playground equipment and re-surfacing for the school at low cost. Lynette Searle confirmed that Dil Singh should give her email address to his personal contact and she will pursue this option directly with the Company providing that there is no conflict of interest.

**Action : DS**

## **3. TRIPS AND VISITS**

Lynette Searle confirmed that Partnership Learning invokes a policy whereby any parents who do not pay for trips/visits cannot send their children to take part in those activities free of charge. Feedback from around the table indicated there has been no complaints from parents in regards to this policy.

Lynette Searle expressed a concern that the Academy's strict policy may mean that some children are denied the opportunity to take part in educational trips/visits, purely due to the personal preference of their parent(s) as opposed to genuine financial hardship. Lynette Searle agreed that not much can be done to tackle this issue, except to ensure that parents are fully engaged and encouraged to see the benefits to their children by taking part in educational trips/visits.

Feedback from around the table indicated that the Kentwell educational trip was a huge success. It was also highlighted that parents find it helpful to be able to spread the cost of trips/visits by making part-payments via Squid. It is suggested that school trips/visits should be promoted via photos and videoclips on the school Facebook page and this should also be shared with the children. It is accepted that there is likely to always be a small percentage of parents who are adverse to making payments for school trips/visits. Lynette Searle confirmed that any parent(s) in genuine financial difficulty can speak to school directly on an individual basis, as concessions for trips/visits can be considered in those circumstances.

## **4. PARENT SUPPORT**

Michelle Browne confirmed that parent turnout at PTA meetings has improved considerably over recent months. Lynette Searle expressed that parent turnout for workshops may be affected by parents' working hours, or perhaps negative feelings about being in a school classroom setting due to previous experiences of their own. It is also recognised that EAL parents can be challenging to engage in workshops/meetings, due to language barriers.

Naseer Ahmad highlighted that many parents do not seem to be aware of the Parent Council, in terms of its purpose or meeting dates. He suggested it may be beneficial to write to parents individually to encourage their involvement with the Parent Council. Tina Young confirmed to Lynette Searle that a SIMS mail merge would be a quick way of providing personalised letters to parents; Lynette agreed this would be a good idea.

Lynette Searle confirmed that she had a recent conversation with Partnership Learning regarding a facility currently being used by Towers Primary School in Hornchurch which allows complete translation of their website content into ninety-five different languages. This could be a useful facility to allow Harrow Lodge to better engage with EAL parents. Lynette Searle has asked Partnership Learning to consider implementing this facility in Harrow Lodge Primary School's own website. It is noted that this is a plug-in facility which cannot be used for translation of Parentmail or teaching resources.

Tina Young confirmed that the PTA has been using more visual aids in its Facebook posts, i.e. advertising meetings and events via simple photos or 'snapshots'. This is a good way to highlight dates and times to EAL parents without too much complicated text. Feedback around the table also highlighted that Facebook has its own translation facility, which could be utilised more fully by the school in future Facebook posts if text is kept simple and straightforward.

**Action : LS**

## **5. FUNDRAISING**

Feedback from around the table highlighted that we are more successful in collecting money from parents when staff are present at the school gates with collection buckets, such as on non-uniform days. It was unanimously agreed that this will be a continued practice for collecting donations from parents in future.

Naseer Ahmad suggested that using a pie chart to visually display to parents how and where their money is being spent may be a good incentive to engage more people with school fundraising events. Tina Young confirmed that the PTA is very keen to ensure the whole school community is kept informed of total monies raised via its fundraising events. The PTA also wants to engage more parents in sharing decisions about how PTA funds are spent which will be publicised via social media, Parentmail and newsletters/leaflets.

## **6. OFSTED**

Lynette Searle confirmed that the new Ofsted Inspection Handbook has recently been released and is currently open for consultation. However it is believed the contents are unlikely to change significantly during the consultation period. Given the content of the new handbook, it is recognised that a great deal of work needs to be done by the school to ensure the intense requirements of the new inspection standards can be met. The main increase in inspection intensity relates to behavioural standards and curriculum content.

Lynette Searle confirmed that the previous Ofsted inspection result at Harrow Lodge School was let down by negative parent views, however the school has now greatly improved in this area. Naseer Ahmad pointed out that he is aware of several parents who have transferred their children from Harrow Lodge to other local schools including Benhurst Primary and Hylands Primary, but those parents have found themselves disappointed and taken the decision to request a transfer back to Harrow Lodge.

Joeleen Lefevre confirmed that Hornchurch High School publishes a contact list for all staff, whereby parents can contact teachers and/or senior staff directly via email. Lynette Searle agreed that she is open to the idea of implementing a similar system at Harrow Lodge Primary, once she has properly consulted her staff on the issue. It was unanimously agreed

that teachers should have an auto-reply to all email messages to confirm a 48-hour response time. Feedback from around the table indicated that parents may be less likely to give negative comments to Ofsted if they are able to address any issues directly with school staff by email, as and when they may arise.

**Action : LS**

**Next Meeting Date: 4th March at 6pm**

<b>Point</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Name</b>
1	To reword the parent questionnaire to distinguish between bullying and poor behaviour choices.	Lynette Searle
2	To provide Lynette Searle with the contact details of the company who could provide playground surfacing.	Dil Singh
4	To look into having a translation facility added to the school website.	Lynette Searle
6	To look into having an email system set up where parents can email teachers directly.	Lynette Searle Michelle Browne