

Parent Council – Consultation Committee

Monday 4th October 2021

MINUTES

Present: Max Haimendorf (Principal), Beth Humphreys (Associate Principal, Head of Primary) , Liliana, Phillip, Gemma, Monna, Louise, Elodie, Josephine, Adam, Vicki, Aminah, Hayley, Fatma, Alima, Sharbani

Parents introduced themselves to the committee.

Apologies: Gabriela Gonzalez

School requests for feedback and consultation	
1.	Immediate feedback on Norovirus response and control measures
<p>The school has put a lot of control measures in place following advice from Public Health England including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • isolating people with diarrhea and vomiting • regular equipment cleaning (particularly nursery and reception) • washing hands <p><u>Parent feedback</u></p> <p>Parents have questioned whether the sibling of a child who is not well should be in school. The Principal informed the committee that this was not the guidance from PHE. The nature of diseases can be different. As with covid you can be asymptomatic carrier of a disease and that disease can spread very quickly, which is why sibling isolation was important at the start of the pandemic. Diseases are different in terms of severity and how easy it is to get it. At the moment, this virus is not at this threshold, but we do understand parental concerns. It would affect attendance if all sick children and their siblings were off school.</p> <p>A parent overheard parents talking about washing hands, apparently it is not happening as much as last year. The Associate Principal, Head of Primary responded for Primary; hand washing is back, PHE advice post covid there was a surge in people using hand sanitizer. PHE guidance was for children to wash their hands more regularly, at all key points throughout the day. PHE did not advise children to use hand sanitiser, only as an extra precautionary measure.</p> <p>A parent praised everyone for their level of compassion and understanding.</p>	
2.	Feedback on Covid control measures at start of this term, social distancing and masks
<p>This term feels different as the school has scaled down restrictions, particularly around bubbling which means there is more variation and interaction in activities (assemblies, lunch and play times). The school is still following government guidance but understands if any parents are still nervous. There was no parent feedback.</p>	
3.	Start and end of the day logistics

The Principal spoke to the committee. Last year arrival and dismissal times were staggered, and no parents were allowed to come to school. The Principal asked parents if they were happy with these changes. Parents felt that so far it is all going well.

4. GTKY dinners feedback and ensuring good communication with the school

The Principal asked the committee if there was any feedback on GTKY events and suggestions of the parent school relationship could be strengthened at the start of each year.

Parents shared that in Secondary they weren't sure how to get in contact with teachers, which was particularly important said that for their child in Secondary there were lots of new teachers this year but did not receive any comms from the teacher to inform him who they are, what subjects they teach and how the parent can make contact.

There was feedback from a parent that it would be good to have the GTKY events earlier in the half term, but Associate Principal, Head of Primary explained this wouldn't be possible as this would mean we would end up having siblings clashes. A parent said it was nice to come into the school, see the classroom and her child whilst learning.

5. Process for Relationship and Sex Education consultation

The Associate Principal, Head of Primary spoke to the committee. Compared to other schools we are in a good place. Schools have always had to teach this but from 2017 – 2019 there has been a national consultation about this important topic. Associate Principal, Head of Primary explained the process of consultation that would be happening about the current KSA policy.

The following points were raised:

- Knowledge of HPV
- Inclusion of SEN
- Importance of protecting children and informing them rather than promoting any behaviour

The Associate Principal, Head of Primary explained that in all curriculum subjects, especially PSHE, the school only teach children what is appropriate to their age. It's important that we talk to children about such subjects like relationships, otherwise children will go online to find the information and sometimes they might come across resources which are not age appropriate.

Slides discussed

Background:

- Relationships Education at primary and Relationships and Sex Education at secondary has always been an important part of the education we provide to our pupils in our PSHE and science curricula.
- The DfE carried out an extensive national consultation and these, along with Health Education, became a compulsory part of the curriculum for all schools from September 2020.
- RSE is part of both our PSHE curriculum and our secondary science curriculum
- Statutory guidance on safeguarding has told schools we must place a greater emphasis on teaching about sexual assault and sexual harassment and “assume it is happening.” We are also reviewing how we teach online safety and about peer on peer abuse. (Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2021)

Policy development and consultation:

- Informed by latest curriculum developments from the PSHE Organisation and advice and guidance from Ark Schools and other schools we know and trust
- Feedback from pupils in focus groups (Y5-Y13)
- Feedback from staff
- Feedback from parents
 - Coffee morning on Wednesday 6th October to introduce the updates and newly focussed topics;
 - Draft policy shared on Monday 11th October for two weeks with form to complete with written feedback
 - Second coffee morning on Wednesday 3rd November for discussion and next steps

Parent Raised issues

1. Uniform

Parents spoke about delays with the uniform supplier Stich Design which has been challenging. The Principal informed the committee that other Ark Schools have also reported delays with other uniform suppliers who are importing uniform from outside the UK.

One parent suggested if this was a long-term issue, the school could possibly bulk buy t shirts from Tesco and then the children could stitch on the logo. The Principal said that the problem with stitching on swatches is that we might end up with things that are not school uniform.

The Principal said that the school was keen to have second hand uniform donations as back up for parents.

It was confirmed there are samples available at both sites. Associate Principal, Head of Primary spoke to the committee to inform them that whilst we do accept donations, the school does need to get better at collecting uniform back.

2. Swimming

The Principal and Associate Principal, Head of Primary explained the approach to swimming – that the school is catching up on the year groups who missed swimming during the pandemic, that it takes a lot of capacity and financial investment to take the children swimming but the school does so because it is important.

The school feels that the walk is part of the physical activity, and it is advised that more young people need to be doing more physical activity and getting fresh air.

3. Parent communication including detentions in Middle School

Parents raised concerns about communication around Middle School Detentions – text messages and answering the school phone, which has caused frustration. The Principal explained that the school would in future be clear about when the school phone should be answered until (4.30pm, with all voice mails left before 4.30pm also being checked).

It was agreed that it was good to maintain the distinction between homework catch up and detention.

The Principal explained that the My Child At School app is in the pipeline and should allow parents to see demerits and detentions so they better understand the reason.

4. After School Clubs

The Associate Principal, Head of Primary explained that the main feedback is that parents wish the school were running more clubs, especially in nursery and reception. Associate Principal, Head of Primary explained that getting the right number of clubs is a bit of a balancing act – offering quality clubs but not taking away staff time from planning lessons. In the past there were too many clubs that were not necessarily invested in by staff or pupils and as a result behavior was not good in those groups. Therefore, the school made a decision that the after-school clubs should be a high quality provision that is reliable.

For nursery and reception the focus for families is most often childcare, and this is why there is an after-school care provision. Generally Nursery and Reception staff are pretty tired at the end of the day, and they need the time to plan for the next day.

A parent suggested taking payment for clubs, in response to this, the Associate Principal, Head of Primary said she didn't want anyone to miss out and that the school wants to be inclusive of the whole community by ensuring all clubs are free so anyone can sign up for these should they wish. The school will continue to think about if there are any high quality external providers (paid that might be facilitated, but even then these clubs often also need an additional KSA adult supervising.

Other items raised deferred to a future meeting

1. After-school monitoring of outside areas
2. Homework in Primary (late item)
3. Attendance badges (late item)