

Parent Forum No.11 on Vision and Ethos Day 14th June 2022

A heartfelt thank you to all the parents who attended this first face to face Forum in two years. It was so good to see you. This is also an opportunity to congratulate Mrs Collins on her first year as Headteacher and highlight what a difference she has already made to the school.

The morning opened with a presentation from four Year 6 representatives of the School Parliament – two from Willow and two from Oak – who told us all about the achievements and experiences offered to the children throughout the school to develop their awareness of environmental sustainability and work towards their next Eco Award for Schools. They described bulb planting, growing flowers in tyres, The Jubilee Tree and the project to plant a specific tree for each of the classes. Next, they explained a trip Year 5 and 6 Eco monitors took to Gridserve, where they learnt all about alternative methods of producing and using electricity including PV panels and electric cars. Within school there is progress on our very own Courtyard Garden, which is to be a calm and peaceful wellbeing area for children and adults to spend time surrounded by mosaics designed by the children themselves (many of the design pictures are on the wall of the hall). As well as the OWL Curriculum introduced this year, which has benefitted the children's wellbeing, there was a real live Owl Week visit where the children experienced several types of owls close up, flying and free. Finally, parents were introduced to OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning Programme). This is an award scheme we have joined which sees us already aiming for Platinum in the next year. Our Parent Governor James Ivey who has attended some of the early planning sessions together with other parents, staff and children, explained the initial audit carried out put us at a Silver level already. The aim is to integrate the year groups more at play times and give them a far wider range of play opportunities from quiet spaces, mud kitchen and an outdoor stage with dressing up to a variety of other imaginative large and small scale equipment. It is a work in progress, so look forward to updates.

Having thanked the children, Mrs Gage (Chair of Governors) introduced the other governors who were present for parents to talk to informally and who will also be available at lunchtime after the picnic. Mrs Anya Radford has been a Parent Governor for many years and Chairs the Finance Committee, Mr James Ivey is our newest Parent Governor; a freelance musician and producer, he has already given the school immensely practical support in the performing arts. Mr Richard Silcock, our longest serving governor is also a Parish Councillor and has been invaluable in finding funding sources and community contacts. Mrs Kirsty Anderson-Taylor is our link to the village church and often gives assemblies in school; as a governor she shares responsibilities for Safeguarding, Health and Safety and Pupil Premium as well as PSHE. Mrs Yvonne Crome is our latest recruit, bringing her expertise in Health Visiting as a practitioner and trainer, Early Years, SEND and More Able children.

As advertised in advance, the main topic of conversation was PE provision. Mrs Gage explained this had come up as a concern in the Parent Survey at the end of the Spring term and she had brought three emails from parents who could not attend today on the same

subject. Miss Wallace, who leads on PE in school, started by explaining exactly what is provided at the moment.

On return to school in September and following the time of Covid, it was felt the curriculum needed reviewing. In September some restrictions on mixing with other schools, not to mention the complexities of staffing with so many Covid absences, meant that external competitions could not happen. Currently in PE, as it is the summer term, the children are playing Rounders and Cricket and indoors are doing more than just dance or gym, for example Year 5 have tried some martial arts and Year 6 Yoga. This term there are external competitions, but they are aimed at UKS2; in September Year 2 will be involved in activities with the other Consortium Schools. We do have the entire Sports Week coming up in school.

The question was raised of selection for teams. Miss Wallace explained that first she asks for volunteers, then, if there are too many, the selection is made randomly and endeavours not to choose the same children who were chosen perhaps in the preceding weeks. It was suggested a longer-term register could be kept to see that there is a real spread of opportunity which Miss Wallace thought a good idea for the future. She did explain that some tournaments dictate a specific gender balance e.g. a minimum of four boys and four girls on a football team, which can make selection harder. She also agreed it is sometimes possible to have a greater number of teams, but this is made more complicated by travel arrangements, outside schools asking parents not to attend, but needing those with business insurance and DBS checks to help with travel. Mrs Gage wondered about school minibuses. One parent reminisced about an in-school football tournament which Miss Wallace also remembered – a World Cup type event which might be reproduced. It could be very inclusive and encouraging.

The conversation moved on to the provision of after school clubs, currently all supplied by Premier. There were mixed feelings about whether parents and their children liked to have varied sporting activities for fun or very serious focussed coaching on specifically football or netball for high achievers. Some use the after school clubs as childcare, which is a nationwide need for working parents, while others wanted their children to be receiving high level coaching. When reminded by Mrs Collins, some parents remembered that football after school had been the cause of some behavioural issues. However, it was thought by some parents that if coaching was more serious and professional, none of that would be a problem and the idea of another outside agency coming in to deliver football coaching was suggested. One parent who is a professional tennis coach mentioned she had offered after school coaching free (to the previous Head), but her offer was not acted on. Mrs Collins said she would look on such an offer positively. Netball was also mentioned as a skill necessary particularly for girls at secondary level, and a good foundation in netball would aid their transition to senior school.

Miss Wallace reiterated that Netball and Football would be played as team games again in September, whereas this year we had been still constrained by covid regulations. She also drew our attention to other winter tournaments such as the cross country running held at Great Easton, giving more children the chance to shine.

This led to further discussion encompassing award and reward opportunities within school. Mrs Gage asked Mrs Collins and Miss Wallace to clarify the Class Teacher Awards and Jim Bear awards system. These are completely separate from Spelling Stars or Reading Champions or targeted academic recognition. They are completely free to acknowledge a child's achievement from kindness to citizenship or a purely personal goal in which they have excelled in any one week. Parents realised they tended only to be aware of the awards in relation to their own children's class or assembly. Mrs Gage also started a discussion about music and the arts as just as inclusive a non- academic opportunity as sport which is not talked about so much. It led on to a reflection of how schools in the under-funded state sector tend to shine in areas in which they are fortunate enough to have staff with specific interests and expertise.

Mrs Gage ended by asking parents to look at the Vision document on the wall and contribute by writing anything they agreed with or would like to add to the Vision on a leaf and Mrs Collins explained that she had provided the draft list of priorities for next year's School Improvement Plan with forms for parents to contribute their thoughts and suggestions. All contributions are gratefully received and will be read carefully and considered. Thank you all.