

## **Parents Forum: 2.10.09**

Present:

Mrs. Wilson	Headteacher
Mrs. Richards	School Business Manager
Mrs. Maddock	Governor
Mrs. O'Brien	Governor
Mr. Huggins	Governor
Mr. Hunt	Governor
Canon Rev. Carla	Governor

Staff and governors were delighted to welcome 13 parents to the second forum meeting.

Subjects discussed:

- New report cards
- School meals – inc. Teddy Bear's BBQ
- Celebration assembly
- Communication

### **Report Cards**

Mrs. Wilson displayed the final version of the report cards (which are attached) and these were passed around the parents present. This is a new method of communicating pupil progress to parents, and it is hoped they will find it useful. The first cards will be issued just before the next parents evening and then every half term. Although, there will still be an end of academic year report, this will in future be much shorter.

### **School Meals**

Mrs. Richards confirmed that the School Meals Forum was now merged with the Parents Forum, and was keen to get some feedback from parents. So far 31 parents had been in to lunch, but only 3 had returned their evaluation form.

Mrs. Richards explained that this financial year the meals are being subsidised by almost £8,000 from the school budget, and that the only way to reduce this sum was to increase meal uptake. In view of the fact the public spending is likely to be reduced from next year, she is very concerned about the viability of the service going forward. Our uptake is currently only 50%, whereas Ford End School, who eat the same food which is transported, are nearer 60%.

One of the reasons for limited uptake put forward was the cost of meals for 2 or more children in a family, although it was recognised that the meals were value for money. There was still some surprise that there are families who never have school meals. Mrs. Richards reminded parents that it is possible to pay for meals fortnightly.

Suggestions to improve uptake were:

- January intake children who are part time to stay for lunch, rather than going home at 12.15
- Taste testing with all the children (not just the school forum) at break times
- More soups in the winter on the menu
- Selling tickets to senior citizen's lunches in the Village shop to raise their profile.

Mrs. Richards outlined the background to the Government's current nutritional standards, and emphasised that the school have no choice but to comply with County menus, since all food has to be nutritionally analysed – they carry out this task for us.

It was requested that the "parents to dinner" days are varied rather than always being on a Tuesday.

### **Teddy Bear's BBQ**

Following a suggestion from Wendy Wilkinson, this event will radically change in 2010, and will take the form of a picnic, with the cook providing many different cold selections. Although the BBQ started off as a good idea, now that so many people attended, all felt it was no longer a positive experience and we should move on!

### **Celebration Assembly**

Mrs. Wilson explained that the reason for the change of time was centred on the KS1 children, who become restless by the afternoon, and less able to concentrate. She agreed that perhaps once a term, it could be held in the afternoon to assist working parents.

A suggestion was that parents could be emailed prior to a celebration assembly to notify them when their child was to be presented with an award, such as Star Pupil. Mrs. Richards agreed that this would be possible providing the teaching staff passed on this information in time!

### **Communication**

All agreed that in general communication from the school was good, but sometimes at short notice. Mrs. Wilson apologised for those occasions – sometimes we make mistakes...

Other issues:

- Parentmail – parents should be updating their contact information via the website. This is done by visiting [www.parentmail.co.uk](http://www.parentmail.co.uk) and logging on as a parent, using the log in that was emailed at initial registration. If any parents have lost their password, they should let the school office know, and we can arrange to re-send the password. Mrs. Richards emphasised that due to the sophistication of parentmail, we are now able to target groups of parents with information specific to them. This has been well received by the majority of parents.
- Parents who were not registered with parentmail were reminded that it was important to check their child's bag every day for any paper communications.
- The drop in sessions were well received by those present. A reminder that the times are 3.15 – 3.45 on the following days
  - Class 1R: Thursday
  - Class 2: Monday
  - Class 3: Wednesday
  - Class 4: Wednesday
  - Class 5: Thursday
- A parent present emphasised that communication works both ways, and that parents were sometimes aware of an "atmosphere" and were not sure what they had done wrong!! It was acknowledged that this was a very valid point and Mrs. Richards highlighted a couple of common problems that the office staff experience:
  - Dinner menus returned after the deadline. The deadline is set a week before the cook needs the dinner numbers in order to order the food. This allows time for the

money to be counted, recorded and banked, and the meal numbers to be entered onto the computer system. Late returns cause a lot of additional work such as additional trips to the bank, and cause disruption in the kitchen.

- Items coming through the main office window that should be given to children to take into class and put into the pouch. This causes long queues at the window and takes up valuable staff time.
- Mrs. Wilson will look into the possibility of having a white or blackboard near the school date to write reminders for parents close to a deadline.

Mrs. Wilson thanked all the parents and governors who attended.