

Minutes of Pixmore Parent Forum Friday 2nd October 2015

Present: Tracy Coates and Martha - Parent
Rachel Toddington - Parent
Clare Sheldon - Parent
Daryl Heath - Parent
Claire Winchester - Parent
Lena Whitaker - Parent
Lisa Akerman - Parent
Jo Fabris - Parent
Janet Ireson - Parent
Sarah Kazer-Roberts - Parent
Jeanette Mooney - Parent
Sarah Carlson - Parent

Pixmore School Council –

All present at the beginning, Years 5 and 6 remained to speak with parents and contribute.

Kath West - Governor
Anne-Marie Kennedy - Family Support Worker
Sue Willans - SENCo

Agenda:

- Welcome and introductions
- Homework
- Rewards systems in school – your views
- Special Educational Needs Policy review – have your say!
- AOB and suggestions for topics for the next forum

The new School Councillors joined the group to introduce themselves and talk about what they do. The councillors from Years 5 and 6 then worked with parents and contributed to the meeting.

This is what they said:

Welcome and introductions: It was great to see so many parents at the forum. The meeting was attended by several parents who attend regularly as well as new parents.

Thank you to all who attended; your views matter, and we always take them seriously.

Homework

Parents were asked for their views on homework and

What's working?	What's not working
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Variation on topic sheets allows for personal choice and personality• Enough time given to complete the tasks• Like the more hands-on build type home works• They get the right amount	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Require better explanations, or examples for maths methods – my son has memory issues and is told to 'finish what you did in class', but he can't remember• How long are they supposed to work on their homework for? – huge variation in time spent doing

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They get enough time • They are allowed to work with friends in Homework Club so it motivates them • Choice of topics • Varied things to do • Choice of presentation • All in one book works well • Synchronised across the years groups • Consistent timing across year groups • Different levels of choice • Choice of literacy • Good timing for maths homework to be completed • Interesting topics • My child chooses to go to Homework Club as he'd rather do it at school than home, so it works for us. 	<p>homework and don't really know what the expectation is.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handwriting practice sheets • Maths homework book – need paper with squares • Topic homework – would like separate books as it's getting lost in general homework • Homework club is seen as a 'punishment' by some children • Needs to be clearer and bigger print on busy sheets and full sheets, not small 'scraps' of paper • Could do with clearer tasks and explanations • We have no computer at home or internet • The tasks can repeat themselves • The work isn't always marked quickly enough • Maths questions should be marked individually – if the children are being expected to do 20 questions, then teachers should mark 20 and not just tick the page – are they all right or have they just been glanced at? • My child doesn't always understand the topic and the topic doesn't always link to learning in class at the time. • Not knowing how much is expected • Require a maths example • Lack of understanding of maths terminology • Too much homework – spellings, reading maths, times tables, literacy
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Ideas for changes:

- Guidance for homework and how long it should take – guidance in front of books on a sheet?
- Clearer message on expectation and time spent
- Communicate with the teacher if the child is struggling
- Hints and tips would be useful regarding expectations and methods for calculations
- Letter in homework book
- Could we have the Year 3 introductory talk, which includes homework, in the hall please as we were at the back of the classroom and couldn't hear what the teachers were saying.

The discussion about homework was lively and constructive. The children also passed comments on their perceptions of homework, which allowed their views to be considered. Explanations were given during the feedback to clarify some of the issues which could be addressed and other issues will be discussed with staff.

Action: SW to discuss with Mrs. Evans and teaching staff and feedback to parents

Reward systems

Sue introduced the topic by explaining the purpose of the reward systems in acknowledging children's learning, effort and many other aspects of their personal achievements, which may be linked to personal qualities such as being a kind friend or managing their distractions.

- Current rewards include House Points given by teachers (and sometimes teaching assistants) are linked mainly to work or learning behaviour; Golden Tickets are handed out either by support staff or teachers.
- Golden tickets are linked with Golden Ticket passes. The children collect Golden Tickets and place them in a post box in the library area. During assembly every Friday, Mrs. Evans draws a Golden Ticket and the person whose name has been drawn then chooses a reward from a menu. The options are voted for by the children at the beginning of each term and include DVD lunch with a friend, non-uniform day and cooking pass. This is a very motivating reward for the children.
- House Points are linked with our school house system. For every 10 points earned the children are given a token which goes into the House tower. The winning House at the end of each half term has a non-uniform day. House point books are cumulative and the children take them with them through the four years earning rewards at certain points.
- Golden Time – every child starts each week with 30 minutes and can lose this in increments of 5 minutes for making bad choices. Every Friday afternoon the children have Golden Time activities to choose from.
- Silver Leaves are awarded every Friday to two children from each class who have been recognised by their teachers for something they have done. This could be for being a good friend, producing a good piece of work, or anything which the class teacher feels warrants special mention. They also receive a certificate and their silver leaf is put on a tree near the main entrance.
- Blue tickets are awarded to a minority of children who struggle to manage their emotions and who benefit from a slightly different approach where they are being rewarded for good learning behaviour. The tickets are placed in a blue box and a draw takes place weekly. Rewards are similar to those for Golden tickets.
- We recognise that the children find some systems more motivating than others and teachers are aware of this and respond accordingly.

Following a brief introduction to explain the reward systems which operate within school, parents were asked to comment. The School Council members present said that they think the system is fair and understand why it exists, some saying that they prefer Golden Tickets for work, whilst others saying they prefer House Points.

Comments from Parents:

Parents would like the details of the different systems explained in writing so that they understand them all and know what their children are being rewarded for. SW said she would organise this. Parents felt that the reward systems are motivating for the children and now had a clearer idea of how the systems worked and links to different aspects of learning and personal development. One parent commented that she thought only teachers could award House Points. SW noted that this used to be the case but that some children prefer Golden Tickets and ultimately whatever motivates the children is what matters.

Parents agreed with this but all felt that neither Golden Tickets nor House Points should be given when children bring items in for Harvest Festival or for completing questionnaires, for example, as they feel this discriminates against those who do not when these rewards are meant to be linked to learning. SW explained the difficulties in engaging families and said that this was seen as a way of encouraging the children to go home and ask parents; these events can only happen if parents participate. However, it was agreed that this should be discussed with staff. One parent suggested that House Points or Golden Tickets could still be awarded but that instead of rewarding the individual child, a point is given to their house which then doesn't discriminate against individuals who aren't able to participate. This could be one option.

SW noted that a parent had reported a Facebook thread regarding reward systems and said that she hoped this clarified things. She also noted that parents can always come into school or email if they have any concerns, as issues

can be clarified more quickly and accurately than through social media. It was suggested that Pixmore could have its own Facebook or Twitter account, which SW agreed to discuss with AE

Action: SW to discuss points raised with AE. Letter home to parents regarding reward systems

Special Educational Needs Policy:

SW explained that this policy is due for review and asked parents present if they would be willing to read it, together with the school offer and Information Report linked with it and comment to ensure that the stated aims match their experiences and also whether the policy and information is both clear and user friendly. Feedback will be used to inform the review process.

Any other business:

- Clare said that she thinks the orange cones placed by the school gates to discourage people from parking across the gates when dropping off children are a good idea and work well.
- Several parents commented on the number of children and parents using the vehicle entrance point to walk through and described some near misses. This was noted as an on-going concern as support staff arrive later than teaching staff generally and need to use this entrance. It is hoped that this entrance could be supervised by a staff member in time, although this isn't possible at the moment.
- One parent commented that some parents use this entrance as their children have scooters and the scooter pods are on the same side of the entrance. Could the pods be moved?
- SW noted that road safety has always been an issue along Rushby Mead. If parents feel they would like to do something they can write to the local council expressing their concerns. The more people who do this, the more likely it is that something may be done in time.

Action: SW to speak to AE about moving scooter pods to reduce the number of children and parents using the vehicle entrance and about keeping road safety as an on-going item at Governors' meetings.

Next Parent Forum: Friday 27th November 2015 from 9:00-10:15p.m.