



Milverton Primary School Parents' Forum

Thursday 19th June 2014



Present:

Jo Potts, Bridget Branson, Sarah Nall, Katharina Dehnen-Schmutz, Preeti Gupta, Jo Geale, Sarah Simon, Sarah Onions, Kay Lawrie-Stiven, Jo Twigger, Ben Wilde and Alastair Geddes

Apologies: Marianne Talbot

1. Welcome

BW welcomed everybody to the Parents' Forum Meeting

2. Matters arising from last meeting:

Proposed expansion of the school:

BW reiterated what has been communicated through school newsletters that the proposal for expanding the school has been stopped due to the lack of support that was communicated through the consultation process. This decision was made at the cabinet meeting on Thursday 8th May.

3. Your Views On:

Edmodo, a social learning platform for schools:

Mr Geddes introduced Edmodo and gave some insight into how it has been used in Yr 3/4 this school year. Feedback from parents, both those who have children in Yr 3/4 and others was generally positive and in support of Edmodo being used through the school as a way of the school community communicating. It was agreed that the ability to be able to set up different groups would encourage communication for parent groups such as the PTA and parent reps. A number of useful observations were made and questions were asked:

- School would need to be mindful of parents/children who do not have access to the internet/computer at home? What is provision for those who can't access?
- Home learning should not just be done using a computer – children need to have opportunities to develop their writing skill. The ¾ trial showed that home learning activities set through Edmodo were not successful due to IT issues.
- Concern over the increase of time children might spend in front of a computer screen. Parents would need to manage this for their home context.
- All children are going to become increasingly exposed to social networking and learning the conventions of appropriate use and how to stay safe within a 'controlled' environment should be seen as a positive learning experience for all children.
- Do we need to be more aware of what secondary schools are using for learning platform/social networking so that there is consistency? The skills of social networking and conventions are seen as generic and so learning through the 'Edmodo' experience will support children's development in this area.

- Need to be aware of pressures on teachers' time to engage in platform. This something that staff will be discussing – clearly it does depend on individual staff and their use and engagement with technology.
- There have been a few clear opportunities for effective learning where children have made inappropriate decisions about using Edmodo. These have involved parents and had significant impact on children's subsequent usage.
- It should be seen as a tool to support children in using technology to support their learning and has value if used appropriately.
- Some felt that its use should be restricted to a 'school focus' and not encroach into sharing of things outside of school, other parents disagreed and felt that a wider use would promote more opportunities for learning .

Action: AG to develop plan for school engagement with Edmodo from the Autumn term.

Parent Class Reps:

As well as those present at the meeting feedback had been given by other class reps not able to attend.

In summary....

What's worked well?

- Examples of securing volunteer help for classes through email contact
- Issue resolution through class rep communicating with teacher
- Filling time slots to run stalls etc at fair
- Organising of some social events

Things to do differently

- Clarity needed around understanding the role
- Ensuring lines of communication to parents especially for those reps not on the playground regularly – emails?
- Awareness raising – who the class reps are

The question of whether they are really needed was raised. The feeling through discussion was yes the role can add value to the school community but moving forwards some things need to be in place:

- Flag up the role and need for volunteers this term to help recruitment early in the autumn term
- A face to face meeting early in the autumn term to clarify roles and meet other reps – ideally with teachers present as well
- A space on the newsletter and blog space on the new website for class reps to be able to communicate through
- A standard process initiated through school to try and get parent contact details to class reps early in the autumn term
- Contact details of parents of new children starting in year should be given to class rep (with permission) to initiate contact and help welcome new parent to the school community.

4. Discussion Items:

Communication re Year 2 SATs:

A concern was raised regarding the impact on children in completing their tests and parents not being clear when they were taking place.

Ms Twigger explained that the tests had been completed differently than in previous years due to the school being moderated by the local authority. This meant that the children sat a number of tests over a shorter space of time. The school has always tried not to make a 'big thing' about the tests that are one part of the overall assessment process, not wanting to put pressure on children. It was agreed that the school will ensure that the assessment process is covered in more detail at future welcome meetings and in communication to parents at the beginning of the summer term.

Action – Ms Twigger to ensure communication to parents re tests next year.

This led to a brief discussion regarding parent communication with teachers beyond set parent/teacher meetings. BW explained that as well as being available at the end of the school day that all teachers have school email accounts that can be used to make contact. It is clear that staff email communication is being used differently by different teachers.

Action – Staff email contacts to be made available on the new school website (sept 14)

Water in School:

A query was raised re the accessibility of water bottles in school. BW stated that water bottles should be accessible to children in their classrooms throughout the school day.

Action - BW to remind staff about access to water through the school day

Milverton Christmas Stocking : carried forwards to next meeting.

Date of next meeting: Autumn Term 2014