

Parents Voice Minutes

Meeting 5th March 2014

(Combined 9am and 7pm)

ATTENDEES

8 Parents

3 Governors (1 x parent, 1 x community, 1 x Vice Chair/LEA)

Guest Speaker – Rebecca Scott (SATS)

We had 2 parents who put forward topics / agenda items who could not attend. These were added under AOB.

AGENDA

1. Review of Minutes from previous meeting
2. Matters arising
3. SEN Overview and Q&A
4. Accelerated Reading parent feedback
5. Lunchtime working party
6. AOB

1. Minutes from the previous meeting

Agreed as a true representation of the meeting and approved.

2. Matters arising

No matters arising

3. SATS Overview and Q&A

Mrs Scott as per parent request, described the purpose of SATS and what they mean for pupils. Mrs Scott explained that the fundamental reason for SATS are for the school to be measured on performance and pupil academic progress. Should a school present with poor results an automatic Ofsted visit would be triggered.

How SATS work has changed over time and this year there are less papers than there used to be. The exam programme for SATS week is as follows:

Monday – Reading comprehension paper

Tuesday – Grammar / punctuation and spelling test

Wednesday – Mental maths paper and Maths paper 1 (no calculators)

Thursday – Maths paper 2 (no calculators)

Typically school opens its doors early for children taking SATs for breakfast / toast before exams start. Children often enjoy this informal get together before they take their exam as it

boosts moral and teamwork feelings. Times and details to be provided to parents nearer the time.

Each day, exams are normally finished no later than 10.30am, and the remainder of the day is still educational, not too heavy, giving the children time to recover from the exam and gently practice for the next one.

While some schools focus heavily on exam practice and technique for months beforehand, Irchester maintain their wider curriculum leading up to exams, using the usual interactive topic techniques to teach a wide range of subjects and discretely prepare children for the exams. Children will have been used to seeing the exam papers and their format since year 5, and in year 6, will have an additional hour a week specifically focused on exam technique.

Any children that require additional SEN support are carefully catered for in the planning and also on the day.

Irchester do instil the importance of SATS to the pupils but really focus on the approach of 'doing your best'. Irchester want to ensure progress but without overloading the children or worrying them unnecessarily over exams.

Some secondary schools use the SATS results to put children into sets when they start secondary school, however Wollaston don't.

SATS week starts on Monday 12th May and results are due in July.

A parent did ask if a future guest speaker could do what Mrs Scott has done, but focusing on KS1/KS2 transition and grading's. **ACTION – Jo Thom to fit this question into a future meeting schedule.**

4. Accelerated Reading parent feedback

(Mrs Scott stayed for this section of the meeting)

Thanks were given to all parents on behalf of Mrs Alison for all the help parents have been given in the mornings with Accelerated Reading. This has really helped and has been really appreciated by teachers.

One parent said they still feel Accelerated Reading (AR) is purely a memory test, however most parents said how much their children enjoy and thrive on the tests and are keen to do the next one. Mrs Scott explained that all tests are undertaken with the book present and questions are normally in the order of how the answers appear in the book. This means children can flick through to find the answers. Obviously for more advanced books like Harry Potter, being longer books then the test is more memory based.

ACTION – Mrs Scott to circulate some children's feedback on what they think of Accelerated reading.

Mrs Scott explained that results from AR tests are reviewed and patterns can be seen where there are common problems in certain areas. This allows teachers to target help specifically to children where they need it in class.

A parent asked if the programme was National. Mrs Scott explained that it is not a national programme, but one Irchester use. It has typically stemmed from secondary school, but is now filtering into primary education too.

One parent asked if children can take the tests at home because holiday periods i.e. Easter are a long time to 'remember' a book and their children often wants to read more than one. Mrs Scott explained that tests need to be taken at school **ACTION – Mrs Scott to circulate via parent mail some suggested questions parents can use at home.**

Another parent commented how in the mornings children often are rushed and GRAB the first 'right level' book they find, rather than taking the time to choose a book they are interested in. Mrs Scott explained that whilst the levels are there for a reason, school actively encourage children to choose books they want to read and not be bound by their level. So, if they see a book that's easier or harder than their level and they want to read it... go ahead! This is only caveated is not wanting children to consistently read below their level. Parents suggested maybe teachers could teach the children how to search more efficiently by points.

5. Lunchtime working party

The purpose of the lunch time working party was re-explained to those that had not heard of it. Parents were encouraged to join the working party by visiting the office and putting their name down. As explained the logistics and planning for lunch times is under review due to the introduction of free hot school meals to all KS1 children from September. Therefore any parents who want to be a part of shaping and decision making on how lunch times should be run/managed moving forward are invited to join the working party.

ACTION – Can school put a notice up on the foundation whiteboard outside their entrance doors, and on the KS1 doors inviting parents to join?

6. AOB

Assertive Mentoring – A couple of parents explained that whilst they were pleased with the information provided in assertive mentoring sheets, the RED colour in the RAG (Red, Amber, Green) system was unnecessarily alarming. For example, when a parent or child sees RED on their report they immediately think there is a problem, when infact they may be well ahead of their target, have recently shot ahead in progress and are currently plateauing. It is the plateau which shows on the report as 'not making progress' when in fact the child is doing well.

All appreciated that progress is what school are measured on and what we all want for our children, regardless of what stage or ability they are. **ACTION – could the school re look at the colouring so that it isn't so alarming for parent and child?**

This has already been done and is now a gentler pink.

A parent asked if Assertive Mentoring is national. A governor advised that whilst the points system is national, the way a school chooses to report is by choice so this feedback will be taken back to Mrs Alison.

Merits and Mufti Days – A parent who couldn't attend expressed concern that their child had never had a mufti day, and their child was confused when they are continually receiving value beads. All discussed the differences between the Merit and Value system as follows:

Value Beads are awarded to children who demonstrate the school values i.e. caring, respect etc. Value beads are put into a central school pot, and then when the school as a team have a full pot the children are all given a treat – i.e. bringing board games into school for golden time.

Merits are awarded for good work. When merits are awarded, they are placed into the house team box and these are counted monthly. The team with the most merits are awarded a mufti day at the end of the month.

Facebook Usage – A parent who couldn't attend, sent an anonymous letter to parent voice, which expressed frustration and significant upset about the mis-use of Facebook by some parents. It refers in general to unknown parents openly discussing their concerns about school and teachers in an aggressive and threatening way.

Parent Voice attendees were in full support of the parent who was expressing their concern via an anonymous letter. (Parent voice is there for everyone whether they can attend or not).

All acknowledged that everyone has a right to free speech, but perhaps some parents may forget how 'not private' Facebook really is, and how upsetting stumbling across these comments can be not only for other parents of the school and local community, but also for children who see these comments

All agreed that Facebook is often used to vent frustration and when issues are resolved or misleading are not corrected or deleted. One concern was that the school is unable to respond or help resolve problems or concerns they are unaware of.

Parent Voice would encourage parents to think about how best they can resolve their worries or concerns about school. Comments made by attendees at the meeting included:

“Say something where it counts,” like at parent voice, the forum or anonymously in the parent voice box in reception.

“Facebook doesn't solve problems, talking does”

Parent Voice discussed the need for parents to get the best possible outcomes to their worries and concerns and that the complaints procedure should be followed to ensure matters are dealt with quickly and face to face. All agreed, “How can school fix something if they don't know it needs fixing”.

One parent who uses Facebook at the meeting advised that the year group pages work well for sharing information about day to day things like... 'Don't forget welly boots etc.', and for social events.

Bikes to school – a parent at the meeting asked if school could do anything about allowing children to ride their bikes to school. A governor advised that a questionnaire has recently been issued (at parents evening) to find out how popular this is and what would need to be done logistically to make it happen. The parent was given a questionnaire to fill in. **ACTION – update to be given at the next parent voice meeting.**

After School Clubs – a parent asked what the latest was on this. **ACTION - Julie Lea to check at next Governors meeting and report back.**

Another parent re-expressed their desire for more choice re clubs at school for those that can't attend after school clubs. Jo Thom advised that Mrs Loasby was in the process of setting up and investigating the new clubs suggested at previous parent voice and is or soon will be making contact with the volunteers she had at the meeting.

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