

TRANSITION Parent Focus Group – 15.10.20

The purpose of the meeting was to focus on transition following the reopening after school closures.

Please read the notes alongside the PowerPoint presentation that was used to prompt thought and discussion.

In attendance:

Helen Morris – Headteacher

Karla Strong – Deputy Headteacher

Sara Hughes – Governor

4 parent participants (PP)

After sharing agreements and objectives of the meeting, anything to raise before we look at the key themes?

PP: I'd like to praise the school for their quick response to the situation and in light of the resources available.

PUPIL MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

HM: Outlined the school's approach. Pupil mental health and wellbeing was a priority with all staff asked to consider how our curriculum as well as our school day might look. Personal, social and emotional education is at the heart with daily circle times, worry boxes and time built into the school day to share enjoyable experiences, build relationships and a sense of belonging. No formal assessments (testing) took place in the first two weeks, however, teachers were making ongoing assessments in the classroom to ascertain gaps in knowledge and inform future planning.

PP: Are many children displaying anxieties or worries?

It is a mixed. The vast majority of our children returned happily and settled quickly. Some however do feel anxious and have worries. Our approach is to be open, accept that feeling worried is normal and help individuals talk about and feel supported. Each child's experience during lockdown was different.

PP: Have the children found the classroom layout tricky?

EYFS and year 1 are not in rows but from Yr 2 upwards desks are forward facing. Some teachers and children have found it very beneficial, others have found it more challenging. Teachers put time into strategic seating plans to ensure children thrive academically and socially.

PP: From my perspective my child was very nervous about coming back but they have settled well and it has been positive. The children were taught about colour feelings and this really helped.

PP: My child was absolutely shattered to start with but it has been so positive coming back.

PP: Even though my child was reluctant to participate in home learning, the return to school has been positive for us all.

VIRTUAL TRANSITION ARRANGEMENTS

As a school, the current situation has forced us to think outside of the box and do things differently. There are many good things that have come from this that we will continue with.

PP: What is the best way to 'catch the teacher' given we are socially distancing at the classroom door?

HM: ClassDojo is an effective way to chat directly with the class teachers. However, if it is urgent or you need a response the same day, please contact the school office and the teacher will get in touch with you.

PP: I found the virtual tours and stories were really helpful for my child who was starting school because you could revisit them and watch them again.

PP: I love the communication on ClassDojo and feel like I really know what is going on in the class.

PP: The virtual arrangements really helped prepare the children for the return and made it feel 'not so new'.

PP: What I have enjoyed about ClassDojo and the videos is feeling as though I am getting to know my child's class teacher too. Individual personalities come across and it is important we know each other.

PP: ClassDojo is great because you cannot always chat to the teacher on the door but my child's teacher has always responded when it has been convenient.

PP: The virtual arrangements have been a really great handover between classes.

STRUCTURE OF THE SCHOOL DAY

PP: I think the drop offs and pick-ups work well. The times are really clearly communicated

PP: The site works well but there are very long queues outside and some families don't think they need to wait and go straight to the front. Worthing Road is congested and dangerous.

PP: Overhanging bushes and trees also take up space on the pavement.

PP: Is it possible to open the back gate to ease this?

We are very aware as a school of how difficult it has been on the roads outside school and in particular Worthing Road, where the pavement is particularly narrow. Our Chair of Governors has been a couple of times to observe the systems in place and felt overall it was running smoothly.

Our site works very well and problems occurred when adults cycled along the pavements where families were queuing. Unfortunately, at this time, there are two reasons why we are not opening the back gate; one is staffing capacity as this is another area that would need to be marshalled and the second is because we currently have a risk assessment in place written in conjunction with the police and Local Authority Safeguarding Team. Part of this risk assessment is to ensure that we can be sure who is coming onto our site at all times with only one way in and out.

PP: Is it possible to use parents to marshal too in order to open the back gate?

It is brilliant to have the support of our community. Unfortunately, at this time (due to the risk assessment we have in place), we cannot open the back gate. If this changes, we will consider that, thank you. We are keeping this under constant review.

PP: Is it possible to encourage parents to walk further round and down Windsor Drive where it is safer to queue?

We'll include this in the next newsletter – great suggestion. When we changed the timings of the staggered start/finishes, there was initial congestion but this has settled now and things are flowing better again.

PP: Having staff available to talk to at the start and end of the school day is really useful.

PP: Is it possible to only open classroom doors when it is the allocated time slot? Some parents don't keep to the timings and this causes congestion.

We do have a large number of families with more than one child and we understand also that many of our families are working parents. We know that some smaller schools 'hold' siblings in the hall until the given time. Due to our numbers, we would not be able to do this safely without 'popping bubbles'. We do encourage as many families as possible to stick to the designated time slot but are also mindful this may not be possible. Teachers are using this arrival and departure time carefully and have a good grasp of when children arrive so plan activities accordingly.

PP: I think the whole arriving and collecting works well so long as the adults take responsibility for themselves and their children when they are off site.

The majority of families are very good at having just one adult pick-up/drop-off. This has been greatly appreciated by staff.

SUBMITTED QUESTIONS

See PowerPoint

AOB

PP: Is it possible to have warning signs on the roads like in the village?

This is certainly something we could look into.

We would love to have any suggestions of themes / topics for any future parent focus group meetings.