

GREAT MISSENDEN C of E COMBINED SCHOOL
CLASS REP MEETING – 4th February 2010

Present: Debbie Sim (6S), Justine McMullan (6D), Caroline Arnold (4C), Sara Rose (3B), Helen Hadden (3C), Felicity Hardie (1K) Somari Biehler (1K), Carina Gibson (4B) Ceri Parekh (6W) Caroline Piercy (6W), Libby Piper (5W), Helen Veldkamp (5W), Helen Lee (2B), Nicky Larard (Playgrp), Cynthia Finger (5K), Juliet Davies (2B), Charlotte Notcutt (Recep), Greg Nicholls (PTA), Mrs Greaves, Mrs Addis and Mrs Thomson (Chair).

Apologies: Kate Hartley (6S), Clare Walsh (4B), Kate Adams (3B). My apologies if anyone's 'apologies' have been missed.

Clerk: Felicity Hardie

Mrs Thomson began the meeting by asking for a show of hands for each discussion point on the agenda. This allowed the agenda to be revised to give a better chance of running to time. Agenda items postponed to the next meeting or for separate discussion were:

Report on Parent Council Forum 21.1.10
Foundation Stage
PTA-website, Quiz flyer and nativity costumes.
AOB

Good News

The "Good News" stories included;

- Thanks from Greg on behalf of the PTA for selling out the Quiz night,
- Nursery intake is up since January and the children are settling well despite the disruption caused by the weather.
- Year 2 are working with an artist all week and having a great time.
- Feedback from 5W that the VLE is great and that the wristband lunch system is working well...no more running out of food!
- Year 4 thoroughly enjoyed their Action Aid fundraising day and the event went down well throughout the school. Great fun, a great success and an excellent cause.
- Mrs Addis and Mrs Greaves were delighted with the success of the Indian Menu at lunchtime today. Samosas made in class by Year 4 were on offer and were delicious!
- Juliette had an excellent Latin Club!
- Caroline advises that there will be another "Big Breakfast" on 2nd March

Apologies if I missed anyone's news!

Actions outstanding from 11.12.09

Photos of Governors to be added to website – *This has been delayed due to the resignation of the chairman, but will be added in due course.* Action: Mrs Thomson

Photos of Staff to be added to website – *These have been added (with the exception of very new staff) however some computers do not seem to be able to view them.*

Reading in 3C – *The CRB checks have now been completed, but Miss Close would prefer parent-helpers to read outside the classroom and a quiet space has yet to be found. Guided reading is happening across the school but discussion revealed inconsistencies in the frequency of 1:1 reading. There was uncertainty expressed over the use of reading diaries, with some reps reporting no entries by staff since the beginning of term, while others reported daily or very frequent comments.*

Action: Mrs Thomson to discuss at next staff meeting

Uniform rules- *The children have been reminded of the rules in assembly and via newsletter. Full details of the uniform are available in the prospectus via the website.*

Numeracy Home-learning- *Numeracy home-learning is ongoing this term, although the emphasis is on "Speaking and Listening"*

School Council photos- *One picture has been changed and the others are judged to be ok.*

VLE

An open forum for parents has been arranged for **23/2/10** which will include a presentation on the VLE and allow for questions. Please note that the VLE is not to be used by parents to communicate with staff. As discussed previously, Staff do not correspond with parents via email or the website; all queries should go either by letter, phone or email to the school office. The discussion forums are intended for use by the children with some input from their teacher.

A parent has advised the school that they have seen some inappropriate comments being made by some children- in this case some making fun of another child's spelling. This was dealt with very promptly by Mr. Williams, with the class being reminded that they will be banned from using the VLE for inappropriate use. Teachers will monitor the VLE usage for just this reason.

Some parents in Yr 5 have been experiencing difficulty viewing the VLE which may have been down to browser limitations. This appears to have been resolved, but Mr. Williams assures us that a paper copy of any homework will always be available.

The issue of having more than one child wanting to use the VLE at any given moment was also raised, as was the issue of inclusion for the approx 6% of families who do not have access to a computer and broadband.

Greg Nichols raised the possibility of the school loaning netbooks to students, but this does not help if they do not have broadband access at home. There was also the suggestion of donating old computers to the school but this has proved impractical in the past. Overall, there was general concern that a two-tier system not be established. Mrs. Thomson and Mrs. Addis reassured the meeting that the roll out would be gradual and considered. Plans are still being made to ensure access for all, either at lunchtime or perhaps after school.

Mrs. Addis also confirmed that VLE was not the only mechanism for finding out home-learning. Every teacher writes details of the home-learning on a white board which remains up on the wall in the classroom. The children can refer to this if they miss the class when the home-learning is set.

School and packed lunches

Mrs. Thomson expressed her concern that school has been receiving some feedback from parents who regard the healthy lunch box policy as somewhat "draconian". We are all on the same side, with everyone agreeing that it is in the children's best interests for lunch to be healthy and delicious.

Mrs. Greaves had done some research on what is currently in many lunch boxes and had brought a large carrier bag of empty packaging to the meeting. This represented approximately 1/3 of the total waste for each day. Interestingly, much of the packaging could be misleading parents into thinking that they are providing healthy products when in fact they are astonishingly high in sugar, fat or salt. (Please see attached document from Mrs. Greaves for details.)

It was also interesting that Mrs. Greaves' price comparison made the average lunch box more expensive than a hot lunch, even when taking multi-buy discounts into account. This information will be circulated to parents.

The volume of waste packaging is also an issue for the school- the children are very "eco-aware" and perhaps this angle should be given more emphasis again, as it has been on school trips. In the case of parents who repeatedly send packed lunches which are not in line with school policy, the school will contact them directly, without allowing the child to feel victimised or singled out. Mrs. Thomson and Mrs. Greaves reiterated that they do not think it is appropriate to ban all treats- for example several stalls on ActionAid day were selling cakes, sweets and biscuits. The goal is to keep

to the 80/20 rule wherever possible. Some other local schools have banned sweets/cakes on birthdays. This is not the case here but Mrs. Greaves did point out that in a class of 30, this could become excessive. However, since the children do not receive the treats until home time this can be seen as being at the parents' discretion.

The number of children having school lunch has gone up to 266. There has been good feedback from all years on the wristband system and generally the children are enjoying the food much more. There is demand (particularly in Yr 6) for an option of a cold buffet or sandwich. Mrs. Greaves has also had this feedback from the school council, but it does not currently meet the goals of a Healthy School.

Some suggestions were made for improving the uptake of school lunches. Greg Nichols suggested a free lunch day, but Mrs. Thomson advised that were some children who were entitled to free school meals who still preferred a packed lunch- cost may not be the main issue. Sara Rose identified the need to get the message across to parents and children outside the meeting- as Mrs. Thomson said, she was "preaching to the converted". Mrs. Greaves highlighted the Indian Menu day as big success, and also underlined the link between diet and behaviour.

Other actions/suggestions which are in the pipeline;

Parent masterclass

Parent + child cooking class

Cookery club (already being run by Mrs. Addis)

Sample lunch box ideas (already on newsletter)

Recycling angle

Plates for packed lunches (already in use)

Overall there has been significant progress although there is still a long way to go. Parents of children who prefer packed lunches still feel slightly discriminated against, but Mrs. Greaves assures us that this is not the case with the children and that it is certainly not the intention.

There was a query from YR5 concerning clearing away- Mrs. Addis advised that the children were only asked to stack their own chairs as they left which did not seem unreasonable!

Yr 6 advised that noisy queues outside their classrooms were still an issue with Miss Stanley having to ask the queue to be quiet several times. Mrs. Greaves is aware of this and will continue to remind the children to be considerate.

School is investigating the option of benches instead of chairs which would allow more children to be eating at the same time. There was a comment that this may lead to greater "wriggling" in the younger children, but a trial will establish if that is a problem.

Year 4 staff changes

There has been some concern in Yr 4 following the recent and imminent staff changes caused by maternity leave and absence. Mrs. Thomson has tried to give parents as much information in as timely a fashion as possible, while respecting the privacy of the staff involved. The Year 4 team are now in place and working together on their planning for after half-term. Mrs. Harbord is joining the existing staff for their meetings and is also covering Mrs. Banks' class when she has an ante-natal appointment.

An open classroom/meet the teacher event is planned for after half-term, ideally in the first week back to school.

Action: Mrs. Addis to confirm date via newsletter

The general comments on this were that more information is always better- to avoid Chinese whispers. It was also suggested that perhaps a little more information could be given about each new member of staff, maybe a mini-profile they could write themselves for the website or even an interview for the school newspaper.

Year 4 Woodrow trip – a £5 discount has been agreed for the children in the second group going to Woodrow this year. This reflects that these children will have two hours less at Woodrow and also will need to be collected by their parents from Woodrow on Good Friday rather than having transport back to school.

Every attempt will be made to ensure that the children in the class being split will be with at least one friend.

Year 6 teachers

5K asked if they can assume that they will have a male teacher in year 6. Mrs. Thomson advises that the teachers for next year are not yet set, but that the past record of each class is taken into account when allocating staff.

Phone system

There are still some problems with the system, and attempts are being made to improve it. The answer phone messages are always picked up and actioned, but Mrs. Thomson is aware that there are issues and is working with the supplier to resolve them.