

Notes from Parent Forum 18 March

7 parents attended plus 2 ISS (school meal service) reps

1. School Meals

We discussed the School Meals first to allow ISS to leave after this item. We had a very positive and useful discussion with IS reps.

Attendees outlined their concerns with school meals – including quality, portion size, cold food which should be hot, meals running out, lack of choice. Parents had asked if they could come in as “mystery shoppers” to try food, rather than at organised tastings.

ISS noted that there is a new menu cycle starting after Easter. They always take feedback from each menu cycle and put it into the next set. They have already had feedback via Miss Sawyer . Acknowledged that current menu not most exciting, and have already planned changes.

Choice - With school have agreed that choices will go up to 3

Quantity - Note that there is a standard portion size (recommended by government) but this means 1 size from reception to yr 6. Briefing on-site staff to understand this.

Food running out – at present, children choose only hot meal or grab bag. Orders sent in by 9.30, no pre-ordering. Would it be possible to ask children who are choosing the hot meal to specify which hot meal (main, veg /baked potato) in the mornings – would only be 1 more wrist band – and then they could cook with more accuracy?

School will discuss feasibility of this with staff and look at trialling, but could be difficult especially with younger children – at present teachers ask the children “hot dinner, grab bag or pack up?” in the mornings. Three more choices would have to be added to that list, and probably repeated with each child – could take a huge amount of time and often children cannot decide what dinner they want until lunchtime.

Temperature – now have a new counter to keep food hot

Quality – have had issues with staffing and now have a new permanent cook

Feedback – ISS very happy to have parents coming in and spot-tasting/mystery shopping. We understand that school needs to arrange this and supervise – is it possible to do this with all safety etc arrangements made with school but not tell ISS?

School willing to try this once per term - will need to be booked in advance and can only be very small numbers.

ISS will have more feedback opportunities for children “rate my lunch” – now in progress; tastings (now in progress). Will look at feedback slips

Need to encourage children to speak up about negatives and positives at lunchtime

They will encourage the cook to come out and chat to children

ISS noted that at some schools they do toast at morning break – possibly for KS2, could we do this at Park Grove?

Concern that this could lead to children spending much of their morning break queueing for toast rather than going outside. Flapjack day sees huge queues. School very happy for children to bring their own (healthy) snacks in for playtime, and KS1 already have their fruit snack

ISS noted that they would be happy to talk to the forum again and will be coming into school regularly .

Forum thanked ISS for their attendance and very informative and constructive discussion.

Note – ISS have immediately implemented a lot of their suggestions e.g. tastings, feedbacks etc

2. After School Clubs

A parent had emailed the forum asking if there could be more on offer for lunchtime or after school clubs, particularly for KS1 children. Or perhaps they had missed the advertising, or did places go very quickly? The parent had also asked about the provision of music activities – were there any groups, lessons or chances to try instruments for KS1 children.

Attendees noted that there were a number of activities but tended to run for half terms, not throughout the year. Chair noted that this is because free activities are run by the teachers in their own free time, and it would be very difficult to expect them to run things for the entire year. There are some paid for clubs which are run by people from outside the school e.g. dance and drama. In general attendees thought there seemed to be good provision.

We noted that there was a noticeboard by the gym with information about clubs and activities on it, and people can also find out via the website – at the beginning of this academic year there was a front page link to after school sports clubs which was very helpful, could do that again to point to activities?

As noted at the forum, all of the clubs that the teachers run mean that they give up their own time. We run a variety of clubs throughout the year to give children the chance to try different things at such a young age, with a particular emphasis on a range of sports clubs to give a wide range of choices. Some parents and other friends of Park Grove also give up their time to run clubs. This year clubs have included cricket, journalism, total energy, football, hockey, netball, table tennis, rounders, Zumba, Curiosity (science), handball, sewing, coding, drama, dance, ukulele...

Website information request noted and this is now being monitored and improved by Mr Stoner

We noted that **music** provision has been discussed before. There is music in class, visiting tutors, choirs and other opportunities. There is instrument tuition by individuals that can take place at the school – again noticeboard has details.

The school is passionate about the importance of music and the arts and works hard to fit it in around the demands of the National Curriculum. There is no government requirement for music and so it has to be creatively included where possible. The school have run choirs, entered the Young Voices scheme, bring in workshops where possible (e.g. all of KS2 had drumming workshops this term). Ofsted noted the broad and balanced curriculum as a strength of the school. Note also the Theatre Royal partnership, the use of arts in enrichment days, the school plays (all on top of the curriculum).

3. Homework

KS2 parents noted homework projects now more frequent – every 2 to 3 weeks. Wondered if there was a reason for this (thought it used to be 1 per term?)

The homework policy at school has been developed in response to the homework questionnaires sent out a little while ago. Projects were seen as a popular way of doing homework. They are not compulsory, and because they are so varied, they are designed to appeal to different children, and people can spend a lot of time or a little time on them. Have increased frequency slightly to encourage variety of tasks.

My Maths – sometimes difficult to log on?

School is investigating

Weekly newsletter as an email – can be tricky to open in order to see full text. Any chance of attaching as a pdf?

Working to improve this with the IT provider – can't be a pdf but can work on the text issue

4. AOB

A parent asked about Playground buddies system – could it be explained?

Trained in summer term over a few weeks and gain certificate. Voluntary as can't be expected to be "on duty" every playtime. They look for children on buddy bench and then go to play with them, and also help organise games for little ones. They are still only young children themselves, so the system will not always be in operation every single playtime – won't always remember, or will be distracted. The system was brought up by both KS1 and KS2 children in their discussions with Ofsted and commented on very positively. The Pupil Support team are leading on it this year.

Languages in school – can school clarify which languages are taught and how often at each stage?

KS2 are taught French for 45 mins per week (1 language is compulsory under National Curriculum) by native French speaking teacher. KS1 has some informal French (no requirement under National Curriculum) with French speaking senior teaching assistant.

PLEASE NOTE

Hazel Colquhoun, who has been coordinating and chairing Parent Forum, has stepped down as a school governor and is also stepping down from the Parent Forum. Any parents interested in taking on the Forum, please contact Ms Sawyer.