

**Parent Council Meeting**  
**26th January 2018 at 2pm**  
**The Aviary**

**MINUTES**

**Attendees:**

Mrs Cahill  
Mrs Barley  
Deborah Speed (Chair)  
Class Reps/Parents

Mrs Cahill thanked parents for attending (15 in total) and said that as it was a full agenda she would like to address all the points raised as comprehensively as possible in the limited time that we have and would be happy to deal with any questions at the end, time permitting. If there was not time to deal with all queries then Mrs Cahill stressed that, as always, she was very flexible in meeting with parents at another time.

**1. School Results**

a) *“St Agatha’s came bottom or close to bottom of each KS2 progress and achievement metrics across primary schools in KT2, particularly reading and writing, and the only response I have seen to that was in the Newsletter. Given that St Agatha underperformed across the board, together with the fact that it is in the minority of schools in the area not rated outstanding by Ofsted, I thought the Chair of Governors response was a bit too vague to be reassuring and would like to understand what some of the actions and measures referred to are, and how these are going to be assessed and monitored going forward”.*

*“ Why has St Agatha's dropped so far down in the league tables following the results published in Nov/Dec. Would like to understand the reasons behind it & what is being done to address the issue. The aggregate score is well below both the National & London average which is very concerning”.*

b) *Linked to the above keen to understand when the next Ofsted Inspection is due.*

Mrs Cahill summarised her understanding of the question, i.e. that it was around the attainment and progress of last year’s Y6 where results did not follow the school’s usual pattern, what actions the school has taken and how this is being monitored. It was noted that Early Years, KS1 and Phonics followed their usual pattern. Also, the question was raised as to when the school’s next Ofsted is due.

**Context:**

- **Attainment:** As parents will know, although attainment results at KS2 in maths, reading and writing were all broadly in line national results, they were below previous years’ results. One key factor to understanding these results is the mobility of that year group (commonly known as the bulge year) - the school had a three, rather than two, forms in this year. Because this year group was never full the school had a high number of spaces that were filled throughout KS2 and in particular in year 6. A characteristic of St Agatha’s that we highly value is our overseas students. These students, if from English speaking countries, are counted in our results even though they have been with us for only a few months and had not covered the four years’ curriculum that are tested. For students from non-English speaking countries, if they can access the tests (even one of them) they take the tests and all results are usually counted. They can often do the maths but their English is not yet well developed enough to achieve the expected standard in reading and writing (despite excellent progress). This level of mobility is not such a significant characteristic in the other KS2 year groups

(although it is present).

- Progress: this is a measure of children's progress from the end of KS1 to the end of KS2. It is important to note that a number of children arrived during Y5 and Y6. Again, the school is measured on the progress these children make over four years and not just during the time they were with St. Agatha's. The school is therefore judged on other schools' impact.
- Progress: last year's Y6 also had a much higher percentage of children with barriers to learning. Although we were very proud of the progress those individual children made against their personal targets, when progress measures are included within the year 6 cohort the average drops. The writing assessment used to be a 'best fit' grade, but last year children had to achieve all strands.
- Another high-achieving child was ill that week and did not achieve expected results. Mrs Cahill stressed that the welfare of the children will always come before an exam.

#### Actions:

- As you would expect, the school conducted an in-depth analysis of each child's results, question-level analysis of the test results and reviewed all aspects of school provision. This evaluation led to a tight action plan.
- Mrs Cahill invited the Local Authority and the Diocese to the school to review all planned actions – both holding on to identified strengths and building on key areas to further develop.
- All staff across the school have been working hard to ensure objectives are achieved and staff performance management objectives have been revised and implemented.

#### Key Priorities include:

- Ensure latest guidance and best practice for teaching and developing reading is embedded throughout the school – key focus is comprehension. Introduced fortnightly comprehension home learning in KS2. Greater focus on developing vocabulary and encouraging children to read more challenging texts. Raising the importance of spelling. Mrs Cahill had looked at each question answered by each child to see if there was a common strand of difficulty, e.g. inference questions. She also looked to see if there were any particular strengths in other local schools that we could draw on.
- Maths – key area identified was fractions. A maths consultant was brought in to support work on the creation of a new fractions policy which is out for consultation with staff and will then be shared with parents. As previously, workshops will be held for parents and information put on the website and in newsletters.

#### Monitoring Progress:

- This is done weekly by school leaders, and half termly by school governors. We have an external consultant who visits termly to test out our data, evaluation and identified next steps.
- Mrs Cahill invited in a team of three consultants from the LA to carry out a teaching and learning review of the school (November '17). They judged teaching to be effective in all areas. They agreed with Mrs Cahill's evaluation of strengths and next steps. The Chair of Governors has met with the lead consultant.

#### Ofsted:

- Statutory visits happen between three to five years from date of last inspection.
- We have now reached three and a half years since last inspection so an inspection is due any time.
- A Key aspect of an inspection is pupil outcomes (Early years, Phonics, KS1 and KS2).
- It is important to note however that a recent report from the head of HMI is that too many primary schools are becoming exam factories to the detriment of the emotional well-being of pupils. Ofsted look at safeguarding, behaviour management, a broad and balanced curriculum, pupil voice, British

values, social, moral, spiritual and cultural provision (amongst other things). One of our many strengths is that we also develop pupils' learning behaviours (skills that employers are looking for).

Predictions for Y6 2018:

- Data analysis indicate that the school will be performing back where we would all expect.

Keeping parents informed:

- Mrs Cahill was very pleased that a number of parents approached her on the schoolgate with questions about the results. They recognised that EYFS, Phonics and KS1 results had been maintained but there had been a dip in Y6.
- From these conversations Mrs Cahill decided to further strengthen home/school communication by having a regular slot in the school newsletter – the first one was an Introduction to Reading. These slots will cover aspects of school development priorities, different areas of the curriculum and how to support at home.
- Mrs Barley and Mrs Cahill are also developing a page on the school website to keep parents informed of school priorities, what they are doing and impact seen. In fact, Mrs Barley would like to set up a working party of parents where parents would look at the website and give a view as to whether the information is useful and answers parents' questions. A request will be going out soon in the school's newsletter.

Mrs Cahill reiterated that she would be very happy to meet any parents who would like to speak about any aspect of this in greater detail.

## **2. Holiday Approval**

*Quite a few parents are concerned about the approval process when requesting leave for extended holidays/time out of school. They know of instances where parents are lying in order to have holidays approved (with success) and those that are honest are not approved. Is this creating a culture of lying to get approval?*

*Likewise quite a few families do not have any relatives in England and must travel to see them. They do not have the luxury of being able to walk to their grandparents house or go by train to see cousins after school or on weekends, let alone for important occasions like birthdays and weddings etc. They feel disadvantaged in the approval process because of this distance. It is impossible for quite a few families to visit relatives in the two days over a weekend but if an additional day is requested it creates a pattern of leave which will then prevent future approvals, even in circumstances that are highly important to families. Is this the appropriate way to address these requests?*

- As a school we have very little scope to change anything around this contentious issue. There is statutory guidance about what can and cannot be authorised as absence. Mrs Cahill is just not allowed to authorise holiday.
- What headteachers have been given is a small amount of discretion to grant authorised absence where special circumstances are given.
- As head, Mrs Cahill holds parents in high regard and trust what they tell her.
- The only way things could be changed is for governors to decide that the Head has no discretion to give authorised absence except for illness. Where illness goes over a certain number of days, then medical evidence would be required for absence to be authorised (current practice).
- There was a letter that went out to all parents a couple of years ago which gave details of the policy, and this will be put on the website so parents can refer to it.

### 3. **Parents' Waiting Area**

*This time of year it's cold and dark after school and some parents/carers need to wait the hour after school while their children are in after school activities. Is it possible to have a room made available for parents to wait inside?*

- As a school we would very much like to be able to offer a place for parents and children to wait whilst clubs go on. The problem is however that the school building just doesn't lend itself to this.
- Classrooms and the hall are all in use by clubs or teachers. The cleaners are also busy from the minute children leave at 3:15pm.
- On the odd occasion, due to exceptional circumstances, the library has been used by a parent and their children. We understand that there are occasions when individual parents may need support in this way however by opening up the opportunity for all parents to stay on a regular basis would very quickly make this unmanageable.

### 4. **Cake Sales**

*Would it be possible for the amount raised and what it has been spent on to either be included in the newsletters, or communicated to the parents by the form teacher?*

- At the last PSA committee meeting Mrs Cahill gave details about the amount of money raised at cake sales. The PSA has said they will share this in their next newsletter.
- In the meantime, teachers will be sharing with parents in their class how the money was spent or will be spent.
- Mrs Cahill expressed her thanks to all parents for their support with cake sales – they are always enjoyed by the children.

### 5. **Follow up from previous meetings**

- A facility has not been set up on Agora to make variable payments as each trip, event etc is costed per pupil. The school recognises that payments are voluntary and thank parents who chose to pay. Where parents choose not to pay or cannot pay we respect this. If many parents chose to underpay or not pay then a trip could not run.
- If parents would like to make a part payment this can be done by cash or cheque left with the office.
- Mrs Cahill now has the information on secondary schools selected by parents over the last 3 years and is organising for a summary of this to go onto our website.