

Ellingham Family Forum

2-3pm Friday June 9th 2017

Agenda

Terms of the Forum

The names of individuals that have submitted items will not be used on the agenda or in the Forum meeting unless the person wishes to make this known.

We understand that some people would prefer to remain anonymous, and will accept anonymous submissions. It would, however, be useful for us to know who has sent them in because it would give us the opportunity to clarify anything we aren't sure about before the meeting, and to possibly suggest rewording

The school reserves the right to omit items that are sent anonymously, if we consider it appropriate to do so. Similarly, as this is an open forum, we will omit references that we think might be hurtful to members of the school community and are therefore better dealt with privately with a member of staff.

We will not use opinions that are unclear in origin or attributed to people other than the person submitting the item.

Welcome

In attendance

Mr Atherton - Headteacher

Mrs Pakes - Senior leader

Mr Atherton welcomed the parents and reminded them of the terms of the Forum. He reiterated the importance of anonymisation in discussion and the reasons for requesting that items are submitted in advance.

Parental consultation day

A parent requested that the school be thanked for a great parental consultation day.

It is always nice to get positive feedback - thank you.

Homework

Would it be possible to have monthly/quarterly 'homework' mornings, specifically for Maths/English? I think it would be very useful for parents to support teachers with the children's learning, but to know what/how things are taught so support comes the same way?

The school will, from September, trial providing parents with 'year group-specific' information packs containing, for example, questions to support reading comprehension, maths strategies, relevant vocabulary and explanations of age-specific English grammar and phonics terms. We would want to give as much information as would be useful, whilst bearing in mind the impact of this on the workload of teaching staff. Hopefully, once completed, these packs would, with minimal amending and updating, then be available for future classes. Mr Atherton also asked whether the parents thought that curriculum workshops for parents, both in the evening and during the school day, would be helpful and it was agreed that this was something that parents would appreciate.

Whilst the feedback slips, which, after discussion at the previous forum, are now stuck into homework books, have been well received, some parents felt that the way homework is given out and looked at during the half-term is still inconsistent across the school. It was requested that more direction be given about expected amounts, timings etc. Mr Atherton will now look into this so that the school can ensure that homework is as effective, enjoyable, purposeful and fairly executed as possible throughout the key stages.

Reading

It would be helpful for the teaching assistant and teacher to write a comment in the children's reading diary when they hear them read in a group or individually so that parents can know what they have been working on. It would be useful to know how children progress through colours and stages throughout the school.

It feels like there has been a difference in the number of times children get heard to read. In Reception it was at least weekly. In year one there has not been an adult comment in the diary for a whole term. It would be good to have consistency or know the expectation of how often we should see a teacher comment.

We are working to ensure consistency in reading across the school. The staff, with the help of some of the children, are working on a scheme that will make expectations and progression of stages clear, and will encourage reading a range of books throughout the school. This will be being launched in September.

The practice of stamping the child's reading record to say that they have taken part in a guided reading session has been appreciated by parents. This, however, only happens in key stage 1, so Mr Atherton said that he would look into what happens higher up the school and how we can communicate this issue to key stage 2 parents. Teacher's will be asked to indicate, where they deem it necessary, any specific areas of difficulty that their child is experiencing in reading, along with ideas on how to best help them. We will also ask parents to let us know if, when reading with their child, they feel that the child might have encountered an area of difficulty that needs addressing.

One parent requested that more guidance be given to children to help them to choose their own books. It was suggested by another parent that parents and children could be invited to share ideas for topic-related books, in order to increase awareness of the reading material available, and Mr Atherton agreed that this was a good idea - as reading remains a focus, investment in further reading resources will be a priority to support this.

FOE suggestion

As the school is trying to promote themselves as a 'healthy school' would it not be best to give each child a free 'Christmas Dinner' in December rather than a chocolate Easter egg? I understand that the school is a multi-cultural school, so instead of calling it a 'Christmas dinner' you could call it a 'celebration dinner' celebrating the hard work the students have put in throughout the year.

Mrs Pakes explained that, whilst the idea sounded lovely, and the school would see no reason not to refer to it as a 'Christmas Dinner', this item needed to be passed on to the Friends of Ellingham, as it is a decision that would ultimately have to be taken by the FOE committee, rather than the school. The main concern expressed was that of the substantial cost of providing a meal for each child, and whether this could be justified. It was suggested that FOE could perhaps, instead, provide extra Christmas treats for both hot and packed lunch children on the day of the Christmas lunch e.g. crackers. Member of the FOE committee are aware of this issue and will discuss it at a forthcoming meeting.

Playground music

I have just read a news article about a school playing music in the school playground and think it's a great idea. Would Ellingham consider doing something similar? It would be nice to have it once a week, maybe changing the genre of music each week?

Below is a link to the article:

The school that plays dance music at playtime - BBC News

Again - this was thought to be a lovely idea, although at present it would be impractical due to the children having separate breaktimes and therefore the noise would not help those learning inside the building. Mr Atherton is, however, working to make it possible for children to enjoy playtimes and lunchtimes together, so it is hoped that this idea can be looked at in the future. We would need to ensure that, along with providing a variety of musical genres, 'child-appropriate' versions of pop songs can be sourced for the enjoyment of the children and staff.

Date of next Family Forum

*The date of the next Family Forum **Friday 3rd November 2017, at 2pm.** There are two items for discussion which were submitted a little too late for the June Forum, so these will be added to the agenda for the November Forum. If any parent has any issues they would like to be discussed please sent them in to the school office at any time, but before Friday 20th October 2017.*