

School Responses to issues raised - Governor Drop-in (15/11/17)

Present:

13 Parents - 9 of them with a child in Y1, 4 also with a child in Y4, 3 in Y2. No Y5 or Y6.

2 Governors - Elizabeth, Yvette

Yvette Chairing

Topics raised

Sport

One parent - though very positive about PE at Brookfield (and Haseeb in particular) - raised concern about some of the Camden tournaments that Brookfield children have been taking part in.

The concern expressed was that children selected felt excited about being picked and expected to then be representing Brookfield. At the tournament that triggered concern - children were instead put in mixed groups with children from other schools so that they weren't playing for Brookfield.

The parent complained that the games were then very poorly monitored and cheating occurred unchecked.

Medals were then distributed without consideration so that of the returning Brookfield children only 1 or 2 didn't get medals with the consequence that these children left the tournament feeling upset and dispirited. The parent concerned said she would not permit her children to take part in another tournament like this. Another parent stressed that most tournaments are run very effectively and positively.

Several parents echoed that PE could be more inclusive at Brookfield; that some children are being turned off at an early age by the competitive nature of sport played and eg the bleep tests.

Action - Feedback parent comments to School. Ask Haseeb to explain how these specific tournaments are organised, to consider a response on the question of inclusivity and competition.

Haseeb has met with the two parents concerned. He now clearly writes in the letter that the competition is a 'mixed' school event and also explains what this means to the children selected. This approach has proven to be successful.

Being Vice Chair of the CSSA, Haseeb raised this point immediately and now one member of the CSSA monitors games and the adult in charge of each 'mixed team' is given the rules. It is also made clear that they must be followed at all times.

Regarding medals, as much as the school wants everyone to receive them, these are given as rewards of achievement. The winners, runners up and both losing semi - finalists receive medals and those who don't are congratulated for showing determination, effort and good sportsmanship. Children won't always win medals and it's important that they develop the resilience to keep persevering until they do. Haseeb always provide feedback on performance for the children and tell them where they need to improve.

There is little emphasis on competition in PE lessons for kS1. They are taught about the basic principles of sport and we do not focus on a result rather than what they have achieved.

With regards to the beep test, Haseeb shares the previous score and asks them to achieve the same score or try to better it, celebrating improvement rather than who set the highest level. He also discusses 'base line fitness' and how maintaining a good level of fitness will benefit children later on in life - giving himself as an example.

PTA

A parent raised that they would appreciate a more open dialogue between the PTA and the school over how money raised by the PTA is spent (eg on musical instruments).

Action - to ask Mark to consider the above

Mark is open to a more open dialogue with regards to how PTA money is spent.

International evening

As the one event that does brings the entire diverse Brookfield community together it was felt by a number of parents that this event should raise funds for the school and not for any external cause - particularly given the current funding situation.

Action - to ask Mark to consider the above

Mark would consider this, particularly in light of all the cuts

Diversity Role Model workshop

There was concern about poor communication from the school about the content of these workshops. Year 2 Parents in particular were not expecting their children to be taking part. They had understood it would be Y3-6. There was some concern over content of the workshops but more over the lack of

information ahead of time. Some parents would have appreciated the opportunity to withdraw their children from certain non-curriculum aspects of the workshop but were not given the option.

Action - to check what happened with Year 2 communication on this this year. To ensure adequate information is given out ahead of time in future.

Mark did check this and communication should have been clearer. From now on, the school would make sure that communication regarding events like this was super clear and timely. This had been achieved with regards to the recent NSPCC assemblies and workshops.

Premises

Concern was expressed that only two water fountains are currently working, that taps in the toilets don't work and that toilets frequently overflow. A number of Parents stressed that playground cleaning was very poor - that there was always rubbish and clothing left lying around. Governors explained that the overflowing toilets are an issue that is being investigated. The push flushes are too difficult for kids to use so they don't flush, things back-up and then overflow. Cost is an issue but solutions are being sought.

Action - to gain feedback from Premises committee on the issues raised.

At present, 3 water fountains are up and running in each playground. The fountains are supposed to be turned off during the winter months to avoid them freezing and breaking. As it is, the water fountains are left on as we recognise that children can still get dehydrated after activity. There is water available in all classrooms and at lunchtimes in the dinner hall.

The use of Reception toilets has greatly improved since the start of the year and the flushes are working fine.

Playground cleaning has improved as a result of Derek and Tom hoovering it twice weekly and children litter picking from time to time. Coats are regularly picked up at the end of playtimes and lunchtimes to keep them safe and easily located. Recently a parent had taken it upon themselves to reorganise lost property. There is still the need for greater supervision of wrappers at the end of school.

Parents also commented that some School redecoration seems necessary and wondered if a volunteer parent task force could be persuaded to get involved if funds for this are limited. It was said by some that the school feels 'scruffy'. Elizabeth explained that Camden gives £8000 a year for maintenance of this kind but we have already had to spend a large sum on security and fire safety from this so far.

Action - Mark - parent decoration taskforce?

Mark is open to this possibility - some areas of the school lend themselves better than others. However, before Mark started at the school, a painting party was set up and it proved more trouble than it was worth - lots of making good afterwards

A Y2 Rep commented on how low staff morale seemed to be as a consequence of the decrease in TAs. Parents felt teachers are palpably stressed. One parent asked for further explanation of why the school had had to lose so many key staff and Elizabeth explained the difficult decision-making process that had occurred as a result of funding cuts, apprentice levy, increased business rates etc. Elizabeth assured Parents that the impacts of the decisions taken were being closely monitored by the 'ways of working' committee.

Parents wondered if funds could be raised eg to cover a TA salary but Governors explained that this was difficult given the long-term nature of the funding commitment for salaries. The issue of the use of volunteers came up again and it was explained that the school is working on this. Parents suggested that more could be made of curriculum meetings given parents are a captive audience here - in terms of roping in parent volunteers. It was also felt curriculum meetings might generally benefit from being a bit looser/open/less formal.

Action - update on parent volunteer programme

Mel has sent out a letter and parents have responded. Mel is currently in the process of setting up some training and induction and getting the parent volunteering up and running

Values at threat

Some parents said they feel concerned that the key Brookfield values - "community and creativity" are under threat - that 'community' is now almost non-existent in KS2 and there is a sense of the school culture changing. They thanked the school very much for the changes that had been brought in to try to address the negative consequences of softstart in both playgrounds but some concern remains.

With regard to creativity some Y1 parents are still feeling the lack of opportunity for their children to 'learn through play'. They mentioned their children filling out worksheets and feeling turned off school.

As an example of the above - the Xmas card workshop was raised - a creative opportunity for the kids to be involved in raising funds for their school. No time could be given to this within curriculum time apparently and insufficient space was available for the lunchtime workshops. As a result lots of children were unable to take part. A parent spoke of 'enrichment at threat'.

Action - Could we consider making time for this - a 30 min session - within curriculum time next year? Mark to respond on issue of community and creativity and change in school culture.

With regards to issues of community and culture, it was inevitable that the soft starts would have an impact – particularly in the morning. Opportunities did still exist at the end of the day in both playgrounds to build community with gates closing at the later time of 3.45pm. The school remained

committed to providing a warm, welcoming, inclusive culture and promoting positive home school relationships. Creativity is still very much at the heart of the curriculum with Shakespeare Schools Foundation working across the school and teachers committed to developing innovative practice within writing this year. Extra -curricular activities continue to be prioritised, despite the reduction in staffing levels and increased opportunities were in place for children to participate in dance activities this year

With regards to children having opportunities to learn through play in Y1, there were increased opportunities to do this as a result of introducing Integrated Learning. Katherine (Y1 phase leader) was working closely with Y1 teachers to help resource a wide range of activities which promoted learning through play.

Mark suggested that if Christmas cards are to run as a fundraiser next year, then more thought needs to be given to promoting this with parents and children and ensuring that there are sufficient workshops to include some of the younger ones.

Y1

A parent Rep raised that they hadn't received any communication as yet from the school to know what - if anything - might be being done to resolve some of the R/Y1 transition tensions for next year that had occurred this year. Governors explained that the school had definitely found Y1 parent feedback instructive and would be looking at transition again to ensure improvements for next year.

A parent thanked the school for listening to concerns from year one parents. Parents were really glad about the extra time in the playground and that the school had listened to parents concerns.

Action - speak to Mark to find out if written communication to parents on this is planned.

Mark sent out a letter to Y1 parents in December.

Menu

Some parents asked whether a lunch menu for the week/ the day could be put up on a board in the playground like it used to be.

Action - ask School

Mark to ensure that the menu is put up in the KS1 playground.

Email

Raised by a parent outside of the meeting - the issue of email exchanges between Parents and teachers. Given email is now the main form of daily communication available to parents this particular parent wondered if some guidelines would be useful on response times. She mentioned that she often doesn't receive responses or only after a protracted period.

Action - Mark to respond

The commitment from teaching staff remains to checking their emails once they arrive at school and to respond at their earliest convenience.

Positives

Parents - despite the concerns raised here - were actually very positive indeed about Brookfield and were keen that this positive message from them was also conveyed. "Educationally it is good". "I wouldn't choose another school". "I chose Brookfield for its creativity". Parents are recognising and are concerned about current pressures on staff and morale. Parents present wanted to pass on a thank you to all teaching staff for all their hard work and commitment.

We are really pleased that this is how parents feel despite all the concerns. Brookfield is a great school and we are glad that parents recognise this. Thank you so much!

Meeting closed at 10am.