

Governor Drop in Minutes

Monday 14th March, 2016

Present

Yvette Mahon

Elizabeth Dormandy

4 parents and carers

Concerns raised

1) School lunches

- A parent raised the issue (which has also been a concern expressed at times by other parents) of inadequate provision of school lunches in terms of the quantity of food available to children. This is particularly an issue when a year group is the last group in - when food quantity and options available are much reduced. It was acknowledged that the school does rotate the order of entry to lunch, so this is shared out. The parents are pleased with the quality of school lunches. The parent also mentioned that the school had pledged to allow parents to come in to have/observe lunch with their children on occasion but that this had not happened.

Action

Raise with Mark/Cee

Response - Cooking for 350 plus every day is a challenge - there are always 3 choices - (a fish dish as well as a vegetarian and non-vegetarian) plus any leftovers from yesterday. Inevitably, there will not always be a full choice for everyone - the children who go in first have the full choice, and whilst the ones that go in last may not have as much choice, they have the option of seconds if they want them. All the children are encouraged to ask for more food if they want it, and many children do - the kitchen staff do ask the children if they have enough food as they serve. The junior classes are rotated throughout the week so they will only be last in once a week.

We do have a good feel for the number of children who take each dish and we cook more of those choices that we know are popular, but there's no way of knowing who will choose what on the day, and no way of actually enforcing these choices even if children were asked to choose in advance. Many of them wouldn't remember their choices and might change their mind when they see it. Bearing in mind

we already have to subsidise the service from the school budget, it is not possible to increase the amount of food we cook without incurring additional costs, charging more for the meals and increasing wastage

2) Mansfield Bowling club - Brookfield's lack of engagement

- A parent raised a question concerning Brookfield's prior lack of interest/engagement with the Mansfield Bowling club issue, despite lobbying by those involved (NB Nigel Bannerman did engage). Now that the issue is resolved positively, for the potential benefit of the local community, parents are keen to know whether Brookfield would be interested in making use of the reserved space as they are now putting together plans. Would Brookfield be able to give this group of parents a sense of what the school might ideally like to use the space for (if anything)? Brookfield would not be held to using the space, but all local schools are being consulted in this way so it is a real opportunity to put in a request/a bid for certain facilities.

Action

Raise with Mark/Haseeb

Response - Brookfield did engage with the Mansfield Bowling Club. It was fully discussed by the school and a response submitted. Oliver Lewis - former Chair of Governors - represented the school and spoke against the planning application when it was discussed at Council. The school made it clear at that time that it would be theoretically interested if space was available for sport etc and was open to approach on this. Haseeb has now taken a look at Mansfield Bowling Club but due to time restrictions on lessons and state of repair feels its hard to envisage how we might use it at present.

3) Homework policy

- A Y2 parent raised ongoing concerns about the excessive quantity of homework children continue to receive in her view (on top of reading, spelling, timestables). She recognised that the homework policy had been recently updated but feels frustrated that the school has not properly informed parents - about some evidence there exists - that homework offers limited benefit for primary children - until perhaps upper KS2. Even then for homework to have any value she said the evidence is that it should be about reinforcing learning that occurs in school and not about introducing new learning (and feels this is not what is happening). She mentioned the ongoing lack of feedback given when homework is completed and that this should be essential. She feels strongly that parents should be made aware of the evidence and that the next parental survey should more fully tackle the issue of homework. She made several proposals -

- That parents should be provided with the evidence/or lack of evidence regarding the effectiveness of homework

- That the next parent survey should seek responses separately (on the homework issue) from KS1 and KS2 parents. That this might more accurately reflect parent opinion about the quantity of homework given according to age.

- That some homework be 'optional'

Action

Raise with Mark/PSWB committee

Response - The concerns raised have been noted, passed to LAC and will be taken into account when the Homework policy next comes up for review. However there is a broad range of parental opinion on the issue of homework and whilst the school invites and welcomes parental engagement on this - it has to be the school's ultimate responsibility to make the final judgement about what is best for the majority.

4) Reception area

- Despite feedback from the last GDI that the Reception area is a 'work in progress', parents apparently remain concerned at the 'unexciting' content of the work currently being carried out and the slow progress on this. A parent also asked whether Reception staff have had sufficient input into the choice of activities/structures being put in place? The parent also asked whether Reception could not make use of the Nursery garden at times - as has happened in the past?

Action

Raise with Michelle/Seek response from Premises committee - on timeline of works and consultation with Reception staff.

Response - Project now largely complete and Reception staff had clear input into choice of activities/structures. It isn't practical for the nursery space to be used by reception children given Nursery's own demands for space.

5) Art provision

- A parent raised the question of whether there is space in the school for a proper Art Room (which might also double as a Science lab?). This was part of a larger concern that whilst FAB has been a great initiative for Brookfield - a more solid/consistent approach to Art would be welcome.

Action

Raise with LAC/Premises

Response - Lovely idea but sadly no space currently

6) PTA funds

- A question was raised - should the PTA not have more say over how money raised through the PTA is spent by the school?

Action

Raise with Mark

Response - Re PTA funds, my understanding is that this year the PTA are going to be approaching both the school and parents for ideas for future spending