

Notes from Governor Drop-in

9am, 15th November

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.

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

International evening

As the one event that does bring 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

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.

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.

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?

Year 2

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

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.

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.

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

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

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.

Meeting closed at 10am.