

Mary Howard Parent Forum Minutes

Date: Thursday 16th October **Time:** 2:45–3:30

Attendees: Miss Miss (Executive Head), Sarah Orgill (Deputy Head), Mrs Raybould, Mrs Keates, Mrs Keeley, Mrs McGuire, Miss Bower, Miss Bytheway.

1. Welcome and Introductions

The attendees were welcomed, and introductions were made.

2. Thanks and Reflection of 2024–2025

The school community was thanked for their support with Siams, Ofsted, all fundraising events, and the growing gardens. It was noted that the school is working well because of the community and the involvement of everyone.

3. Communication

A reflection on current communication methods (Dojo, Website, newsletters, and Arbor) took place.

Topic	Discussion/Feedback	Decision/Action
Newsletters	Parents find the weekly newsletters useful and would like them to continue. Mrs Keates misses the pictures of children's achievements outside of school. This was discontinued as newsletters are placed on the website.	The school is happy for parents to send in photos for inclusion on Class Dojo, as it is a closed platform only accessible to staff and parents.
Arbor	Arbor is considered great for payments. It tends to be more secondary-based.	The school confirmed they are happy to keep Arbor.
Class Dojo	The class dojo characters are more aimed at primary level. Another school lost Dojo and consequently lost the immediate communication that Mary Howard currently enjoys.	The school will keep Class Dojo as well as Arbor.

Website/Events	Most parents use the newsletter. Miss Bytheway, as a new parent, requested clarification on whether events (e.g., harvest) are for parents to attend or just for organization.	The school will add event clarification (whether it is for parents to attend or organization) to Dojo going forward. A reminder was given about the website and syncing events to a phone calendar.
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4. Outdoor Learning – Garden Volunteers

Thanks were given to the PTFA for the growing gardens. The garden opening and initial planting were noted as huge successes.

Need	Action Point
Volunteers	Volunteers are now needed to help care for the gardens. SK is helping in care club every three weeks.
Recruitment	Parents will ask around for volunteers who have knowledge of when and how to care for the gardens.

5. Trips – Outline for the Year

RM shared a brief overview of the year and thanked parents for supporting trips and enrichments. Parents are mindful of financial implications but are on board, recognizing that enrichments are positive.

- **Mini Bus:** The mini bus has been a brilliant success, and thanks were given to Mr Buckley for driving. Mrs Aston Wright is going for her permit.
- **Future Trips:** The school is looking at experiences closer to home.
- **Ukulele Program:** The ukulele is a hit, and parents agree that they would like to continue this, perhaps focusing on Year 3/4. Parents are happy to subsidize the program, noting that this arrangement reduced costs considerably.
- **Instrument Learning:** The possibility of a two-year cycle of learning an instrument, or changing the instrument, was discussed.
- **Young Voices:** It was decided that Young Voices will occur every two years, as it is expensive but offers a great experience.

6. Upcoming Events

- **Zaktiv at St Andrews:** Thanks were given for supporting these events and for transporting the children to St Andrews. Using St Andrews' hall makes sense. These events are possible due to economies of scale, splitting the cost with St Andrews parents or PTFA. Parents are happy to support this arrangement.

- **Parking:** Mrs Keeley is investigating the option of parking on the Green Man car park for drop-off and collection.

7. New School Secretary

Vicki Jones will join the school after half term. She is described as a positive lady and is expected to fit right in. Appreciation was expressed for Mrs Boag's services and her decision to leave.

8. Open Forum/AOB

Topic	Discussion	Action/Decision
Menus	Parents felt the existing menus had "gone downhill" and were not very nutritious. Miss Miss shared the new menu, which parents were happy with.	The new menu will be trialed, and parents should give feedback to Miss Miss, who will pass it on to the catering manager for the MAT.
Football at Lunchtime	Children seem to think they are not allowed to play football because of the poly tunnel, and the school does not want them to think the new growing garden is the reason. Mrs Orgill was unaware of this belief.	Mrs Orgill will investigate this issue.
Sports Leadership	Miss Bytheway suggested that older children could lead younger children in drills and skills related to different sports. Class 3 children were identified as suitable for this role, especially if tabards were provided.	A rota will need to be set up for the older children to lead sports drills.
Afterschool Clubs	The feasibility of having afterschool clubs was discussed, noting the conflict with the existing after-school club and related finances.	Mrs McGuire and Mrs Keeley will look into this for the school.

9. Next Steps and Closing

Thanks were given to everyone for their support and views contributing to making the school a better place.

- **Next Meeting:** Another forum will be booked for next term.
- **Time/Day:** The school will let parents know the date, but the meeting will be a Thursday at 2:45.