

**SEND parent meeting summary: 16.11.23**

The focus of our SEND parent meetings has changed somewhat over the course of the last couple of years. They began with a lot of information being given from school to parents on the state of SEND, what we do as a school, the processes and procedures of referrals, assessments, etc. and how the local authority play their part. More recently, it has taken on more of a collaborative look, with no specific agenda, but rather a forum to share thoughts and discuss what we might do better as a school, and how we can support one another as a community of people who care for our children with ‘special educational needs and disabilities’.

It was agreed that Urmston Primary has come a long way in terms of their support for children with SEND, due in no small part to cultural development and a shift in mindset. It was discussed how an environment conducive to good learning for SEND is one which is good for all and this is certainly the case in terms of a learning environment that can meet the needs of children who are neurodiverse. Some good discussions were had on the importance of this and it was stressed that whilst in some cases, neurodiversity may be particularly obvious, many children do mask and so it is important that practitioners create an environment which is beneficial for those with ADHD, ASD, dyslexia, dyscalculia, etc. This environment may be both to do with the atmosphere, but also the physical environment, and here the balance between having a busy/colourful classroom and having clear space away from the busyness, is important. Furthermore, it was discussed how ‘traditional traits’ and behaviours of a child with ADHD, for example, may also be displayed with a child who has suffered early children trauma and attachment issues, highlighting further the importance of creating a safe and inclusive atmosphere for all to flourish.

The question was asked about the level of training that staff had had. It was discussed how Mrs Helyar had only this week conducted a SEND walk-around and led a staff meeting on ADHD, which opened up rich discussion amongst teachers on what we do in school to support children with ADHD and what might be done to improve this further. Last year, staff also have had access to training on responding to attachment needs, an autism teaching assistant support network, responding to ADHD needs in school, and an introduction to sensory needs. This year, courses booked include training on Trauma Informed Support (With Attachment), Emotion Coaching, Supporting ADHD in school, Girls with Autism, Youth Mental Health first aid, Supporting Autism in School, Get it Right for Dyslexia - Get it Right for All, Helping Children and Young People Manage Anxiety, Supporting ADHD in school, Dyscalculia and Maths anxiety. Megan Barber from Roosts and Wings, who delivers play therapy in school, will also be delivering whole staff training next month on Attachment and Trauma-informed practice. The work of Mrs Ball as ELSA, Emotional Literacy Support Assistant, and Mrs Walker’s work across the school in supporting children social, emotional and mental health was also mentioned as part of school’s pastoral offer.

It was suggested that perhaps a little more could be done in school at times to consider children with poor executive functioning – those who have particular difficulty with planning and organising, as well as managing their emotions. How we remind and support children in remembering tasks set, etc. is extremely important and here visual timetables, homework reminders for parents, etc. was discussed, as was them being posted on Seesaw - and will be relayed back to staff.

The broader climate for SEND, both locally and nationally, was discussed. There can be no denying that services are stretched. Educational Psychologists are more hard to come by and referrals and assessments for ADHD, ASD and subsequent EHCPs applications\* are perhaps more challenging than they once were, with some local authorities having targets to reduce the numbers of EHCPs by up to 20% in order to be able manage support and provision. Of course, this, along with a severe lack of spaces at alternative provision and ‘special’ schools, means that getting culture and provision as right as it can be in mainstream schools is paramount. It was mentioned that Trafford SENDIASS do provide excellent impartial information, advice and support to children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers. They can be found at <https://sendiass.trafford.gov.uk/Home.aspx>.

Finally, and most importantly, we discussed pressures and anxieties. It was widely acknowledged that things are tough at the moment and that more and more children are anxious and at times lacking self-esteem. This can display itself in their behaviours both at home and at school and it was stressed that as a school, we expect parents and carers to be the strongest of advocates for their children and to hold school to account for doing all they can. It was discussed how parents can often struggle with guilt and whether they are doing what is best for their children and clear messages were given here – just like we say to the children, your best is always good enough. As all schools are, Urmston Primary is externally judged predominantly by its Quality of Education, but schools are now needed to be so much more that. If children are not emotionally and mentally ready to learn, they will not learn. Therefore, their sense of safety, wellbeing and happiness is what we must prioritise, and that same priority should be reserved for ourselves as parents – if we are not feeling this for ourselves, how can we expect to convey such an important message to our children?

\*At the next meeting, Mrs Helyar will discuss how and when to go for an EHCP.