

**SEND and parent partnership meeting summary: 18.09.24**

As has been mentioned before, the main purpose and focus of these forums is less the school sharing information to parents, and more about parents raising their thoughts, observations, queries and possible recommendations. This meeting followed the same principles, whilst there being some specific elements that we wanted to discuss to gauge parents’ thoughts.

First of all, huge thanks to everyone who attended. The purpose of these meetings to aid school improvement and look into the things we can do better/differently. There was an acknowledgement that parents know their children best, that they should be their strongest advocates, but that there are indeed limitations on what school can do in some situations.

Discussion began with the current climate for SEND and the desire from government for mainstream schools to be more inclusive, with some schools and councils ‘failing to tackle a lack of willingness to “accommodate” children with SEND. The ongoing challenges clearly remain, including an opinion on the need of inclusion and the ‘excuses’ culture that certain sections of society hold. Here, a thought-provoking article was shared, which evoked further acknowledgement of the importance of being open and empathetic of families’ situations and experiences. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/oct/17/dont-drag-my-autistic-children-into-the-tories-war-on-woke?CMP=fb_cif>

We discussed how we had previously put on APDR meetings during the school day and it was questioned why we haven’t done this for this term, rather than sending APDRs home. The answer to this is both logistical and financial – we could only give specific times and often parents wouldn’t be able to make those times and we’d need to rearrange after school, having already got cover for staff, resulting in added cost. In some classes there are around a third of children with SEND and APDRs and it is unmanageable for teachers to have these meetings after school. There was a general understanding of this quandary.

Our capacity was discussed as was the relentless work of staff, and in particular Mrs Helyar, in championing our pupils with SEND and the myriad challenges they face, from social, emotional and mental health, to behaviour, to neurodiversity. The latter was discussed and the ongoing work that staff are doing to support children with this, along with being attachment aware and trauma-informed in our approach to that support.

Here, we discussed the PLACE approach. We discussed how it has a positive and consistent impact on the relationships between staff and pupils in school, whilst the enhanced sense of being valued and feeling safe enabling staff to maintain high expectations for the children and confidence that they can be challenged and challenge themselves with their learning and their behaviours. The PLACE approach is effective and here the question was asked about how we can help to reinforce this outside of school and parents use a similar approach at home. It was suggested that perhaps the materials in the appendix of our Relational Behaviour and Regulation Policy could be shared at Parents Evening, as well as putting on additional workshops for parents on the use of the approach. Megan Barber, family and childhood therapist who continues to work with us, is in line to do some more practical workshops in the coming weeks and months so watch this space.

Missing playtimes was discussed. Children will only ever miss playtimes in order to reflect on the choices that they make and work restoratively to take responsibility for their actions – there are no blanket sanctions. Sometimes, children may stay in to complete their work, but it is just as often their decision to do so as much as the teachers’. It was discussed how it is essential that children see value in their learning and the importance of doing their best and indeed, if they don’t do it in lesson and it isn’t playtimes, it might mean in some cases taking it home to complete as the remaining option, which may act as a deterrent if appropriate.

Own clothes days were discussed and it was put forward that changes like this, for Wear Red Day or wearing yellow for World Mental Health Day for example, is dysregulating for some children, and we could just as easily discuss and do activities in school to raise awareness of these important issues. Here, it was stressed that whilst we understand this may cause some challenges for some, wearing these clothes does help to increase awareness and further enhances our school culture of respect and taking active responsibility for sticking up for what is right and being kind in supporting and celebrating difference and uniqueness. It was added that we are a mainstream setting and we are doing our best to balance what is right for all of our children, regardless of need.

Mrs Helyar being in class for two days a week was also discussed, and here we acknowledged the importance of balance and the incredible job that she, along with all staff, continues to do in championing our SEND children.

We also discussed attendance and the raising of expectation here. Penalty notices were brought up and Mr Parker stressed that schools are now in between the rock and the hard place which is the government and parents. There is an understanding from school that holidays in term time can be of value and far, far cheaper than in school holidays. However, in order to be consistent, despite each being on a case-by-case basis, penalty notices will increase in number if people should make the decision to take their children out of school for family holidays. Unfortunately, until something is done about the cost of holidays during the school holidays, this issue will prevail.

Again, thank you everyone for attending and putting forward their views. There are myriad challenges that school and families face and it is important that we continue to be empathetic, open and honest and listen to one another. Any further thoughts and comments about our practice is always most welcome.