

**SEND meeting summary: 28.04.23**

The meeting began by summarising the actions of the last meeting in February.

This led to important and lengthy discussions about the importance of playtimes, and how there should be no circumstances when children miss playtimes – the benefit, socially, emotionally and physically, is too significant. This was agreed by everyone and staff present, including Mr Parker, Mrs Helyar, and Mrs Ball, said that sometimes teachers might deliver the message of, ‘You’ll have to finish in your break time, if you’re going to spend all your time chatting now.’ It was then discussed how important it was for strong relationships between teachers and pupils as the messages that are given are all in delivery and interpretation and whether pupils feel safe and treated fairly and with sensitivity under those circumstances. This is a very meaty topic, and Mr Parker stressed that it will need time among staff, and SLT, to come to an agreement. This then led to very interesting conversations about treating pupils on an individual basis, often taking into account their needs. In theory, this is essential, but so is consistency, and here the balance between the two is key. Culture plays an important role in this. The point of missing break times, and how this is approached in a fair, individualised, yet consistent basis, will take time, as will any alternatives…if work is sent home for example, will this be done, should it be done, and what would parents thoughts be about this? One parent mentioned that the teacher asked her if it would be okay if her child could miss some playtime if necessary. She commented that being included in this process meant that she was able to have a conversation with her child, and this led to deeper understanding. This was a really interesting point.

The following agenda was set largely by parents in the SEND WhatsApp group and the following points were discussed:

1. Not missing playtimes was already discussed - blanket sanctions are never appropriate but children staying in to finish work is a little less pithy. If it is due to generally poor behaviour, then it could be argued that it’s justified. However, really interesting discussions were had and points made about the fact that some children may behave in particular ways because of unmet or even unidentified needs. On the contrary, the question of nurturing independence and accountability is one that needs to be spent time on - we want our children to realise that they live in a world where you should be accountable for your behaviour, and yet we must acknowledge need. The challenge of this balance was generally accepted by everybody, it seemed, and this point was somewhat of a theme throughout the meeting: the balance of support and nurturing independence and preparation for the next phase of education.
2. APDRs were then discussed. Mrs Helyar made it clear that they should be reviewed on a termly basis and outcomes and next steps should be a collaborative agreement between teachers and parents, rather than the teacher completing and handing parents a piece of paper. This has happened on occasion, and Mr Parker said that it will not be happening in future – ensuring that teachers have timetabled time to arrange meetings with SEND parents, rather than having to do so in their own time, would mean that more time can be spent on such important meetings, rather than a tag on to parents evening meetings. This will be a key action going forwards and will be discussed with staff and SLT. Mrs Helyar mentioned that APDRs will be blue in autumn, yellow in spring, and green in summer.
3. Fidget toys and the like were discussed. They have become more and more prominent resources to support our children in school, initially beginning with Mrs Helyar, offering somewhat of a library service. However, these have become more and more commonplace, and whilst, in most cases, these are useful aids to soothe and help children focus (such as wobble cushions and weighted blankets) it is becoming more frequent that children are bringing allsorts in and they are becoming more of a distraction. These aids are there to support specific children and should be agreed with Mrs Helyar or the class teacher before children bringing them in on a whim. Whilst on this topic, it was commented on how important it is that we raise further awareness of different children’s needs, and what each of us need to support us in our learning, and indeed in our lives in general. Mr Parker mentioned that friendship groups, where children spend time in groups across the phases, will be utilised for this, and next week’s focus will be: recognising, accepting and celebrating our differences, and making each other’s lives, a little easier – helping children to realise that we all have different needs that make us special, and asking the questions of whether we are aware that some of us see, hear and feel things differently, more brightly, more loudly, and more sensitively. The possibility of linking this in with talk homework, to raise awareness of varying needs and behaviours with grown ups at home too(!) was seen as a real possibility, as was inviting parents in for children to put on a play or show of sorts. This will need some deeper planning and thought.
4. There is an issue with Y3/4 children needing access to a calm, quiet space, as the lower KS2 building is a little tighter than the others. This is something that will be looked at, with Mrs Ball, perhaps taking a role in this as the school’s ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant). It was mentioned that the KS2 library, and small area next to it could be utilised, as was the idea of looking into bifold doors in the Hornby building, rather than windows in the Y4 classroom. This is a very interesting consideration and will again need some thought.
5. The busyness of the hall at lunch was discussed and how some children become overwhelmed due to the noise. The question was asked whether there was an alternative option and Mr Parker mentioned that certainly in the summer, when the packed lunch children went outside, the atmosphere was considerably different. Mr Parker said he would speak to lunchtime supervisor, Mrs Ingham, about this.
6. Sound/dynamics in the UKS2 building was discussed. Mr Parker and Mrs Helyar said that we are beginning the process of carpeting the Y5 and 6 classrooms.
7. One point on the agenda was about structured playtimes and supervision. Mr Parker and Mrs Helyar added that new equipment has been purchased and zones created in the infants and juniors, and this is already having a positive impact. This led to further discussion on children being inside and outside for playtime, and again the importance of supporting children and nurturing them towards independence and being outside with their peers was emphasised – along with that recognition of balance and consideration for children’s needs on a case-by-case basis.
8. Mrs Helyar mentioned that she had spoken to music tutors in school about ensuring that those staff are aware of children’s needs, but also stated that in many cases, parents and children may not want this information to be shared. She also mentioned that the one-page profile in teachers’ SEND folders should be shared with supply teachers so that they are always aware of children’s needs within the class. Consistency here is needed.
9. The importance of transition, from all year groups to all year groups, cannot be underestimated, and time was spent discussing the options here. Mr Parker said that it had been agreed with SLT, and would be discussed with staff, that half a day will be given for all children to meet their new teachers before the summer. This time will be spent talking and getting to know each other, helping the children to feel comfortable and confident for when they return after the summer holiday. The process of transition will begin, particularly for some SEND pupils, in the coming weeks, with some children, especially in Y2, having visits to the junior side of the school. Mrs Ball mentioned the importance of Y6 transition into secondary school and will be running some groups for some of our most ‘vulnerable’ pupils, with the intention of allaying fears, and supporting anxiety and self-esteem.

It should be stressed that our school will not always get things right and these meetings are incredibly important to maintain awareness of how we can improve.

It is undoubted that due to a willingness to listen to parents, who know their children best, our school continues to improve its provision. It is therefore clear that our parents continue to help develop and improve our school. These meetings help us immensely so we’d urge as many parents as possible to attend, whether their children have specific and identified needs or not.