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*Headteacher: Mr S Parker* ***‘Growing Together. Empowered to be more’***

***SEN...a working party/forum***

Dear Parents and Carers,

As I mentioned recently, our parent partnership meeting was extremely enlightening in getting views and gauging feelings from parents on how we are doing as a school and what we might do better. One of the areas that came up was how we can further develop the way we support our children and families who experience ‘Special Educational Needs and Disabilities’.

The term, ‘SEND’ is one that is used so frequently in education and many might almost forget the vast spectrum of needs that it encompasses; quite often it can be used as a term for simply having cognitive difficulties with learning. But it is so, so much more than that, with cognition and learning being just one of four core areas of SEND - the others being communication and interaction, social, emotional and mental health difficulties, as well as sensory and physical needs.

Indeed, the latter of these was discussed at length at the meeting and how many of our children are very adept at masking their sensory difficulties at school and when they get home, the shackles come off and you might then bear the brunt! It just might be that your child may have difficulties that could be alleviated with some very simple things at school or at home and yet the streams of communication might not always be easily opened.

It was discussed that sometimes the processes and procedures for referrals and assessments can be a little muddy and unclear (for both you and us!) and it really would be good to have some clarity and perhaps a platform for questions. Jane Helyar, our SENDCO, has a wealth of skill and knowledge about provision and what school and wider services might offer, with this information sometimes going out in newsletters or on our website. But we realise that an opportunity for some more direct communication might really help.

And here the idea for a UPS SEN forum was born (although I can’t claim that I came up with it!).

It was suggested that many parents might feel reluctant to come forward about any concerns that they may have about their children’s needs and that it would be extremely useful to have a place where not only school can offer up some clarity, advice and guidance (and perhaps arrange some speakers and workshops too), but that parents can use their knowledge to support each other, also.

I have spoken to Jane and Briony Ball and Katherine Walker, our SEN/Pastoral TAs, who both have immense skill and expertise in SEN and pastoral care. They are all very keen to be part of this forum, which may provide a stimulus for greater clarity, confidence and communication in talking about SEND moving forward.

So, if you are someone who has had some nagging concerns about things that your child finds difficult and you haven’t perhaps wanted to say, we really hope that this will be an opportunity for you to talk about this and gain greater confidence in sharing your experiences and directly getting the information you might need. There have been a number of suggestions made already (such as drop ins, etc.) and so the forum might provide us with a chance to get our heads together and see what might be of most use for everyone.

The frequency of these forums and the remit is not yet agreed but perhaps the first meeting might open up some thoughts on where this might lead and what would be most useful for you. We’ll also certainly have some Q&A opportunities and suggest that this also might lead to a specific SEND email address that we can regularly check and get back to you on any info you might require.

It would be great to get this up and running as soon as we can and begin to formulate a plan of what would be useful in these sessions and what a great SEN community might look like. All this could be discussed in the first forum which we’ll have on ***Thursday 9th December at 1pm.*** It will still be via Zoom (although we’ll hope to make these face-to-face at some point this academic year). I know the time is not ideal for everyone and the idea is that as we discuss further streams of communication, the whole thing might be more personalised. Of course, if you can’t make it, please email in your questions, issues or concerns, or give me a call). The link is below.

We really hope to see you there if you feel it’d help.

Many thanks,

***Simon Parker***

Headteacher

Urmston Primary School is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: SEN meeting
Time: Dec 9, 2021 01:00 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/9502660814?pwd=dWE3cFhXWExhM1FHUTRLQXowVUd4dz09>

Meeting ID: 950 266 0814
Passcode: 374009