

Langafel Parent Council Digest

January 2018

Your Parent Council has been beavering away, working with Senior Leaders to help 'our' school be the best it can be. We've been looking at a range of things that parents have told us are important to them in supporting their child's learning at school. Many other issues have been raised with PC also. We have tried to prioritise what we feel are larger issues and have included and grouped personal, specific comments and issues that have been raised with us into larger topics.

The agendas and minutes of our meetings can be found on the school website if you have a larger appetite for the detailed discussions. However, we are all busy people, so here is a brief summary of what has been discussed and what the outcomes are so far this academic year.

Apologies that this document is not very 'digestible'! In the future, we intend to issue a summary of each termly meeting so it is not too dense and easily digestible.

Do keep talking to us – parent partnership in school is so important for all our children's success.

Kind regards,

Julie Howlett (Chairperson) and Parent Council

You said:

Parent Forum was not as active or representative of the wider 'parent voice' as it could be.

As a result:

- *A new Parent Council was established, with formal Terms of Reference and a structure which would ensure a volunteer representative from each phase and part of school.*
- *Mr Taylor(DHT) or Mrs Woodbine (HT) attend every meeting and discuss the views and points raised with Staff and Governors. Sometimes, a Governor also attends in order to develop a meaningful overview of parent opinion.*
- *Parent Council publicised their members and the Chair's email address was shared with parents who might wish to raise issues via email initially, rather than face-to-face.*

You said:

I would like to have more of a say and understanding in things relating to my child at school. Sometimes I get frustrated as I don't know enough information about things, or I get to hear about things second hand. The school gives headline information but sometimes lacks the specific information I need.

As a result:

- *A communication survey was drafted by Parent Council to find out about the ways in which parents would prefer to communicate with school.*
- *Parent Council suggested that school use Survey Monkey to find out parent opinion on a range of issues. It is hoped that this will increase the uptake rate of surveys as most parents have quick and easy access to the internet, making a survey not too onerous and flexible, even for parents who work full-time.*
- *A survey about Communication should be coming out before the February 2018 half term break.*

You said:

I would like to know more about the behaviour of my child and how behaviour is managed generally within school. How does it change between different phases? How will I know about my child's good or poor behaviour choices?

As a result:

- *The Behaviour Policy was due for its annual review, but this time, parents were invited to complete a survey, regarding their knowledge of existing systems, their view on the effectiveness of the systems for children and the communication around their child's behaviour.*
- *Results showed that parents can see the British, Christian and School values in practice in the school's behaviour management, but that they felt that consistency and communication around behaviour could be improved further.*
- *The results of this survey were used to update and improve the behaviour policy.*
- *A document summarising the changes should be coming out to parents shortly, along with the link to the full, amended policy on the school website.*

You said:

Why are our children who have school dinners not able to have water with their lunchtime meal – only after, at the drinks table? We were provided water with our meal in our YR 'First Lunch' with our child so why is this not normal practice? We always have a drink with our meals at home – why is this not a normal expectation in school? This cannot be good for digestion or our children's hydration and health.

As a result:

- *Discussions took place in Parent Council when Mrs Woodbine initially stated that in the past, when children did have water, there were too many spillages compromising health and safety. Furthermore, she went on to detail how the catering company does not have enough cups or washing-up turn-around-time for two sittings of children.*
- *Trials are now taking place at YR/KS1 and KS2 of a few different methods of ensuring all children have adequate water with their meal. These include: children taking in their own water bottles to drink from with their meal; water being poured at the serving hatch and carried to tables; supervisors pouring water for children at the tables.*
- *At Parent Council's January 2018 meeting, Mrs Woodbine outlined how initial trials at KS1 had a few teething problems, as children are not used to drinking with their school lunch – cups of water were being thrown in the bin along with their leftover food.*
- *Mrs Woodbine described how Principals catering continue to have issues in providing the number cups to meet the reasonable expectation parents have about water with a school dinner.*
- *However, Mrs Woodbine reassured Parent Council that children would be able to have water with their lunch in one way or another by next term, with the current trial at all key stages aiming to ensure a workable hydration solution until Principals can meet the contracted need for cups.*

You said:

The Rainbow Tracker is sometimes confusing because it is overly simplistic. I'd like to know more about what my child's specific strengths and areas for development are. Some specific ideas about how I could help them at home would be good too. Why don't we have two lots of Parents Evenings each year like most other schools?

As a result:

- *School introduced an extra blue arrow on the Rainbow tracker in December to show the average expected progress for that year group, hoping this would enable parents to see how their child is progressing against the average.*
- *Discussions took place in Parent Council and suggestions made about more specific and personalised feedback, so school is now aware what seems helpful or not, from a parent's perspective.*
- *School are mindful not to overload teachers beyond the statutory minimum of one meeting a year. However, parents are able to make appointments with teachers on an ad-hoc basis whenever they feel they would like an update on their child's progress or have an issue to discuss.*
- *School would also like to remind parents that they are very welcome to speak with their child's teacher at any of the open door/stay and play events organised termly.*

You said:

End of school dismissal from KS1 classes in the playground (which is used as a car park) is quite chaotic and we often struggle to see our children as too many people and cars are in too small a space. The occasional child has slipped past their teacher into the throng of people and cars. Is there a safer/better way?

As a result:

- *School shares parent concerns around this issue.*
- *Parent Council suggested and discussed various options, including: different classes exiting from different doors; parents join different queues to collect children according to their class; tweaking timings to ease the congestion.*
- *School will discuss this and carry out some trials, gathering feedback from parents in order to establish the best way forward.*

You said:

Car parking in and around the school is difficult and a small minority of people are not considerate of others, leading not only to inconvenience, but also safety issues. This is the case both in the playground car park and also on the roads outside school. Is there a better solution?

As a result:

- *School have always acknowledged the parking issues. However, virtually all primary schools are in the same situation; schools and surrounding roads were not made for the amount of people that drive to school nowadays. The Walk on Wednesday initiative aims to reduce the number of cars at school and promote walking to school, where possible, for its health benefits.*
- *The irresponsible parking by a few parents (who park on the left side of Gorsewood Road as you exit the KS1 playground, or enter and exit the car park through the opposite gates or park inconsiderately in the car park) causes unnecessary congestion, which in turn, places children/other pedestrians in further danger. School has attempted on numerous occasions to engage with KCC Highways to try and get yellow lines on the left side, but to no avail so far.*
- *Parent Council suggested School reach out to parents interested in generating possible solutions to the parking/safe walking problem, and ask for volunteers to form a Working Party on the matter - school and parents can join forces to make a real difference here. Why not join in?*

Do contact the Chair of PC (parentcouncil@langafel.kent.sch.uk) or catch a parent rep for your phase if there is something else you wish to be raised and discussed in PC. Don't be shy! School leaders will not know how things are from a parent perspective unless we share open and constructive discussion with them!