

## Parent Focus Group Meeting 24.10.24 from 1800-2000

In attendance: Kate, Becky, Rebecca, Kayleigh, Tania

<b>P.E Kits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A lengthy discussion took place with regards to the feedback received from the two week consultation regarding P.E kits and changing in school.</li><li>• There were a wide range of topics discussed that drew from the consultation: boys and girls changing together, religious beliefs, getting the children ready for transition to junior school, life before COVID, conflicts with Pantosaurus, children's/parents anxiety, hygiene, costs of additional trainers, lost learning time due to changing, lost kit.</li><li>• It was recognised that a clear decision needed to be made, that recognised the points raised, but that also supports the children who are transitioning to a junior school where children do get changed for P.E in Year 3.</li><li>• The final decision was that children in Nursery, YR and Y1 would attend school in their P.E kit. Children in Y2 would attend in their P.E kit for the Autumn and Spring Term, however following the Easter holidays (Summer Term), Y2 children will bring their Kit into school and get changed in preparation for the move to Junior Schools – we will separate boys and girls (even though guidance does not recommend this until later in their school life).</li></ul> <p><b>Action: 1. Doug to write to all parents informing them of decision in moving forward. 2. All P.E Kits to be sent home</b></p>
<b>Communication</b>	<p><i>A review of school wide communication was discussed.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It was felt that the new weekly bulletins are going well. Parents don't want daily reminders as this is overload.</li><li>• Learning overviews for each half term are welcomed. This ensures that parents are clear on the learning that is taking place across each half term.</li><li>• 'Getting to know you' sessions have allowed for parents to meet teachers from the outset, rather than waiting until the November parents evening.</li><li>• Dates for diaries (long term) document has been useful. Parents do sometimes miss key dates, so by having the weekly bulletin as well (as a reminder about what is coming up in the following week), that has been really helpful.</li><li>• Texts messaging is much better than Arbor app. Parent's don't want to receive a message, telling them that they have a message in the app to check – this is counterproductive. Just receiving the SMS is working well.</li><li>• Parent shared the Ocean Academy Splash document as an alternative layout to the weekly bulletin. Doug pointed out that from the last PFG meeting in July, our parents were very prescriptive about how they wanted our weekly bulletin to look.</li></ul> <p><b>Action: Doug to look at Ocean's 'Splash' document to see if there is any good practice we could learn from in terms of tweaking our own weekly bulletin.</b></p>

## Home Learning

*There was a lengthy discussion about home learning at Old Town, and the expectations of home learning that the junior schools have when children move up to Y3.*

- This year we listened to feedback on home learning from last year.
- We have introduced new reading diaries which were reviewed by the PFG back in July. Feedback is that these diaries have been well received, contain helpful information e.g. book bands/keywords. Having them pre-populated with weekly dates, makes the tracking of reading much easier.
- We also introduced 'additional' home learning on the Purple Mash virtual learning platform. These learning tasks link with either maths or literacy learning that the children are currently experiencing within the classroom. We have about a 50% response rate with this. Most of our families have access to either a laptop or tablet. Some families have also tried to use Smartphones to access the home learning -though there have been a few technical issues using this route.
- Doug was clear that home reading is so important – reading is the gateway into the curriculum and is such an essential skill in everyday life therefore it is a non-negotiable that at Old Town, parents will be expected to read at home with their child at least 3 times a week. It doesn't have to be the whole book. Could be a read of a few pages at a time (to build fluency), could also be parents sharing a book with their child (a favourite story). It is important though that the home reads are logged in the diary to prevent any follow up being needed.
- There is still some confusion about parents understanding of fluency and why a book is not immediately changed after it has been read once at home.
- Parents feel that there is a climate for more home learning now and that we need to prepare the children for Junior school – in Y3 home learning alternates between literacy and numeracy on a weekly basis. In Y3 home learning is sent home on a Friday and due in the following Wednesday. Maths/Literacy workbooks are used in Junior school – it was discussed how with younger children, it is important that they have the skills to independently access a workbook. Last year parents had raised that pressures on our home learning expectations had started to affect the mental health for both parents and children.
- Junior school also send home 10 spellings a week. Doug stressed that with writing being a school focus this year, it is important that we address misconceptions with spellings. All members of the PFG were supportive of five spellings a week being sent home across Y1 and Y2 and that spellings should be compulsory.
- Reception home learning is working well and has a good balance of phonics, as well as wider curriculum home learning that the children can access when out in the local environment.
- PFG felt that we need to re-evaluate the language we use when addressing home learning with the children. They need to want

	<p>to do the homework! Extra play/movie/rewards could be a good incentive?</p> <p><b>Action: 1. Doug to send out a follow up letter to all families about reading fluency. 2. Doug to explore appropriateness of a KS1 home learning work book. 3. Five spellings a week to be sent out across Key Stage 1 during Autumn 2. Doug to work with teachers on how home learning can be rewarded and children incentivised to complete their home learning.</b></p>
<b>Trips (Panto)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One parent has raised that the cost for the visit to the Pantomime at the Lighthouse is far too expensive at 15 pounds. Doug has spoken with the parent and advised that this is a school rate and discounted from the standard price of a ticket (if you chose to visit in an evening or during the holidays). Parent still feels that this is too much – considering that we are walking there and not getting a coach or mini-bus.</li> </ul> <p><i>See PTA comments below.</i></p>
<b>Reception transition</b>	<p><i>A discussion took place on the recent transition for the Reception children when starting school. This year the school made significant changes to when classes were announced, and there was a slower start (by one week) than in previous years.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This year parents felt transition was too slow. Working parents found it hard. Parents recognise the importance of the ‘stay and play sessions’, but would rather build to a full day quicker, rather than do one week until 12, the next week until 1315, the following week full-time.</li> <li>This year some children also lacked a sense of belonging from the outset as final class lists were not announced until the 16<sup>th</sup> September. Doug explained the rationale behind this decision and that this change has had a positive impact on class balance but most importantly friendships and relationships (between both peers and adults). The impact on this is a much more settled Reception cohort, compared to previous years.</li> <li>We looked at the calendar of dates for the next academic year and agreed that the following model could be more appropriate in phasing the children in quicker.</li> </ul> <p>Next year:</p> <p>Wed 3<sup>rd</sup> September -Fri 5<sup>th</sup> September, children attend in small groups.</p> <p>Week 2: Mon 8<sup>th</sup> September -Wed 10<sup>th</sup> September, children attend until 12 each day.</p> <p>Week 2: Thurs 11<sup>th</sup> September and Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September, children attend until 1315</p> <p>Week 3: Children attend full-time from Monday 15<sup>th</sup> September.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ‘getting to know you’ sessions are greatly valued by our new parents and we discussed how we could still deliver these in line with our Key Stage 1 meetings. Parents however, would need to attend these sessions after the school day (as opposed to a set time within an afternoon).</li> <li>The school recognises that some children will still need a slower start to school, and should parents feel that they need this for their child, they will be encouraged to approach the school directly so that this request can be accommodated.</li> </ul>

<p><b>PTA</b></p>	<p><i>Following previous discussions on the Pantomime trip a discussion took place with regards to the PTA.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently the PTA is low on membership. We need to think about ways on how to get more parents interested/wanting to make a difference.</li> <li>• Parents have asked for clarity on how the funds are being spent.</li> <li>• PTA's at other schools are subsidising the cost of the pantomime tickets. Ocean's are only charging 6 pounds per child. Oakdale have withdrawn their pantomime trip. Lots of our families cannot afford the cost.</li> <li>• Can we introduce specific fundraising events with the cause being clearly communicated to our parents in advance? The walk for reading event raised 3k due to families being clear about what we were raising monies for. Can we do the same with other PTA events e.g. Bunny Bingo for Panto tickets – we would then only subsidise by what we raise? PFG feel that more parents would then get behind supporting events.</li> <li>• Doug explained that lots of other schools are bigger than Old Town and as a result have PTAs that raise significantly more than us. It's too late to change the arrangements for this year, but this is something we can look at in going forward.</li> <li>• Some parents feel that by advertising a disco, they would expect a DJ and would be happy to pay a bit more. Doug explained that this is something we could look at in going forward, but PTA events cannot run at a loss. If we can't at least break even, we would need to cancel. The historic panto subsidy used to eat up nearly 50% of PTA funds, plus each year 800 pounds is usually spent on our Y2 Leavers t-shirts. If we can increase our PTA membership, there may be contacts we can draw on to secure better deals/discounts.</li> <li>• Doug explained that he is happy for this to be a parent led group, however the school has a duty to ensure that events are managed safely and adequate ratios are in place when dealing with large numbers of children.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action: Doug to write to parents to re-launch/gain further interest in PTA membership.</b></p>
<p><b>AOB</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walk to school programme – can Reception take part?</li> <li>• Some families asked about the Nativity -why is there just one performance? Doug explained that we had made changes during the COVID year to safely manage numbers in the hall, hence two performances, however the children tired quickly and the afternoon performance was not quite as 'oiled' as the morning performance. The school can accommodate two adults for each child for the one performance, so this shouldn't pose any issues. Date has already been announced.</li> <li>• Thinking ahead to the community picnic in May, Crazy Kev has been suggested as a performer this year.</li> </ul>

	<b>Action: 1. Doug to speak to Mrs Chase about Reception joining Walk to School initiative. 2. Doug to contact Crazy Kev for availability.</b>
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