

Sevenoaks Primary School Parent Council Meeting Thursday, 27th March 2014

MINUTES

Present

Jo Williams (Chair)	Claire James (RG, 2A)
Sophie House (Committee Secretary, RA, 4B)	Nicola Young (2B)
Alan Duffy (Headteacher)	Tamara Mann (2C)
Chris Aguss (6B)	Claire Hooper (3B)
Lizzie Bourne (6A)	Kim Pincott (SPSA)
Ali Lennon (RB)	Lindsay Anderson (Schools Finance)
Ali Owen (1A)	Claire Alborough (Independent Catering)
Kerry Mayes (1B)	Peter Hine (Independent Catering)
Sue Thompson (stand in for 5A)	Melanie Mcinerney (Governor)
	Caroline Gilmartin, Parent contributor, RA & 1A

Apologies

Clare Brooks (3A)
Kathryn Robinson (4A)
Claire Strickland (5B)
Sue Hopgood/Adrienne Skelton (5A)

Action

Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed the participants to the meeting and asked those attending to introduce themselves as there were several new faces.

Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last Parent Council meeting were approved.

Matters arising

- **Travel Plan Survey:** SH reported that there had been a good response to the Survey so far (the final figure was 197 responses). Leaflets on parking and safety around the school were planned to be out by Easter (this has now been revised to happen after the Easter break). A meeting with Karen Brinkman from the KM Group charity was being set up to organise efforts to encourage children to walk to school with for example badges etc. Banners reminding parents not to park on the zig-zags would be put up in Term 5.

School Meals

The Chair explained that school meals were being discussed as one of the rolling topics that are looked at by Parent Council each year. A representative of Independent Catering (IC), Peter Hine was attending the meeting, as well as Claire Alborough the Kitchen Manager at SPS. Three specific points were being responded to in particular:

1. Feedback for Independent Catering on comments received from parents

especially relating to the perceived high levels of fat/carbs/desserts (appendix 1)

2. How school lunches measure up against government guidelines on nutrition in schools
3. How school lunches could be improved

Peter Hine gave participants an overview of the company. IC provides catering for 51 schools in Kent, approximately 50% of which are primary schools. It works to the government's nutritional guidelines. These are due to change in January 2015, with some criteria being relaxed but most remaining broadly the same. The menus are devised termly to take account of seasonality. The nutritional content of the menus are analysed by a computer programme that indicates whether they are compliant with government guidelines. If they do not meet the requirements the menus can be tweaked until they do. Independent Catering has achieved the Food for Life Partnerships Silver award across all their operations. One of the criteria for the award is that a percentage of food is organic. All the pasta provided at SPS is organic. The meat is farm assured and foods can be tracked down the supply chain to the source. All suppliers are local.

A discussion of parents' comments and feedback followed, a summary of which is provided in Appendix 1. Other points and suggestions were made:

- Although IC does follow government guidelines, could even more effort be made to make the meals healthier such as including more wholemeal carbohydrates, using different oils for frying and reducing the sugar content?
- If there is concern from the parent body about the menus provided then these should be looked into. For example reducing the number of times fried food and desserts are offered.
- Peter Hine explained that although nutritionists are not consulted he does talk to many parents in schools.

It was agreed that specific suggestions for healthier menus that came out during the discussion (fewer puddings, fried food every other Friday, as well as the inclusion of wholemeal carbohydrates) would be put to parents to make sure that all view points were taken into account before considering any changes to school dinners.

Class Reps/

LA told participants that the School Lunch Survey had revealed that there would be an additional 27-30 meals per day in KS1 as a result of the government's Free Lunch Initiative. On top of that the extra form going through into KS2 would mean an additional 20-30 meals next year. The impact on staffing and space will need to be looked into but the school should be able to accommodate this increase.

AD explained that the children did not have their lunch at different sittings as such. Classes are asked to go into the dining hall when there is a gap, informed with the use of walkie-talkies. As a result there is less time queuing and it provides a more social environment.

SH also reported that the midday supervisors and Alan Duffy (when present) ensure that the children eat (most of) their meals before they are allowed dessert.

In response to a query about why sweet treats were not allowed in pack lunches while desserts were available in school dinners, the committee was told that

chocolate specifically was not recommended. Independent Catering added that they were only allowed to use cocoa powder in their desserts.

Regarding the food provided in breakfast club, conversations have been taking place with Mrs Sykes who runs it and changes will be made next year.

Opportunities for Physical Exercise/Clubs

Some statistics on the clubs offered by SPS are as follows:

- There are currently 53 clubs running in total
- 14 clubs are new this year
- Average of 10 clubs a day (14 on a Monday)
- 31 clubs run with same group for whole year
- 22 clubs are divided - mostly due to demand
- 10 fee-paying clubs.

AD explained that there were **a limited number of** sports clubs for reception children because they were usually exhausted by the end of a long school day.

He said that the reason children get a maximum of two terms in some clubs was that the accommodation available and the number of volunteers available were limitations when organising the clubs timetable. It was necessary to divide attendance over the year if demand was high in order for all the children who wished to attend a club to be able to do so.

The majority of children attend a minimum of two clubs, many doing more. The School Council is involved in setting up clubs, for example they ran the Busy Bees club for Reception children.

The school is looking into the possibility of starting a Hockey Club.

AD mentioned the need to give thanks to the parents and teachers involved in running the clubs in their own time.

It was suggested that expectation of clubs provision could possibly be improved. For example calling the clubs which run over two terms only, "tasters". It was agreed that more marketing of clubs and feedback to parents on the opportunities children have during school time would be useful. Pictures of the activities carried out could be posted on the website, and a note of all the clubs available to the children mentioned in the newsletter and website.

School Office

A reminder to parents to use the website to obtain information about the school should be given in the newsletter.

School Office

In response to whether the Mile Run was taking place this year, AD suggested that it may be added as part of an initiative in Terms 5 & 6 to walk to school. As part of this, parents should be reminded that children should bring water bottles to school. A suggestion is being made to the SPSA to provide each new child starting in Reception with a free water bottle and available to buy for all other children.

School Office/SPSA

On-line Payment Scheme

It was queried whether credit card details could be stored within the system. LA informed the parent council that feedback is regularly provided to the software provider and that this query would be passed on.

She also said that it was not possible to set up the system to pay less than £10. This is because each transaction costs the school so parents should be encouraged to bunch up transactions (e.g. for several children and termly activities at the same time). The transaction costs depend on the cards used. Some schools pass on the costs to the users, SPS chooses not to. A note should be sent out to parents reminding them of the minimum £10 transaction cost and about grouping transactions as far as possible. Parents should also be informed about which credit cards are the cheapest to use.

Finance office

Any Other Business

Teaching Assistants in Class: A comment was made that TAs often seem to take the classes when the teacher is absent: does this meet the teaching guidelines. AD explained that teachers are allowed one afternoon per week for planning. During this time the cover supervisors are TAs, who are selected by the subjects that they are best at delivering. E.g. music in Year 6, or swimming. The teaching is higher quality than if it were provided by an external supply teacher. However for illness or more ad-hoc cover, a supply teacher is usually called in. Newly qualified teachers are allowed one day of planning per week, so their morning session is actually covered by a supply teacher. Next year there will be designated time for leadership **responsibilities** for some teachers, and **qualified** teachers will be employed in their absence.

Access to School (side entrance): This issue has been discussed extensively and with the new building works planned this will be kept in mind for discussion at a later date (and will be addressed in the school Travel Plan).

Parent Council notice board/fliers: The Chair asked whether there could be a permanent space provided in the main reception area for a Parent Council board, as well as fliers of Parent Council representatives outside each classroom. It was agreed that the Parent Council might be able to use the notice board outside Foundation Stage to promote it to new parents and put fliers outside classrooms. Information should also be posted on the website and provided in the New Parent pack.

Parent Council/School Office/Chair

The meeting was closed with the request that members should get further feedback from parents on school meals as well as comments for the topic of discussion at the next meeting: "Attitudes to School".

Class Reps/Parents

Date of next meeting:

Term 5 – Thursday, 8th May 2014, 2pm

Sophie House RA and 4B

Attachments: Appendix 1 - Independent Catering's responses to parent feedback
Appendix 1

RESPONSE TO PARENT FEEDBACK FROM CLAIRE ALBOROUGH (KITCHEN MANAGER) REGARDING SCHOOL MEALS

Feedback: The meals are not balanced

Response: Independent Catering adhere to strict government guidelines. All meals are nutritionally balanced using a specialised software package.

Under the government guidelines, bread should be available to ALL children having a school meal should they want it.

We have tried serving brown bread but the children don't like it generally, although we are happy to give it another go.

Feedback: No need for breadcrumbs/batter on meat and fish

Response: Generally once a week, fish or chicken may be coated in breadcrumbs or batter. Again this is in line with government guidelines. Otherwise meat is clearly identifiable in the dish.

Feedback: Concerns around the quality of vegetables being served (overcooked)

Response: I try my utmost to produce al dente vegetables (for up to 350 children) and I believe I achieve that for the most part. In fact, the vegetables are usually removed from the steamer just before they are cooked through in order to let them sit in the hot cupboard for service without going brown/soggy. Some children do not finish all the vegetables; I believe that is no bearing on my ability to cook them!

Please be aware that the children can choose to not have vegetables but if this is the case they are encouraged to have something from the salad bar instead. Generally they choose cucumber or sweetcorn.

Feedback: Would rather fussy children have the choice of peas every day

Response: Once again, I would reiterate that the children always have access to the salad bar so we prefer to offer a variety of different vegetables every day for the less fussy eaters to enjoy. The 'fussy eaters' can then have a choice from the salad bar (this could include sweetcorn, peppers, carrots, beetroot, lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber or coleslaw).

Feedback: More variety of fruit needed

Response: We currently offer sliced fruit every day which includes melon (cantaloupe and gala), oranges, kiwi fruit and pineapple. We also offer grape pots and a fruit bowl is available every day with apples and pears. Fruit is often incorporated into our dessert of the day and our jellies contain fruit pieces also.

We would be open to suggestions on any other fruit which may be offered although we do feel we offer a good variety at the moment on the budget we have.

Feedback: Impact of 30 more children every year on quality and quantity and last sittings?

Response: Quantity of food will not go down towards the end of the sitting. Children are lucky enough to choose their meal on the morning they want it. I receive the figures by 9.30am and cook the portions accordingly. Quality will not suffer as an extra 30 children should only take a few minutes extra to serve.

Feedback: Portions of food are too small

Response: The portions served are in line with government guidelines. We do however allow the children 'seconds' if they are still hungry. This is usually a choice from the salad bar

Feedback: Cleaner dinner hall in between classes

Response: The hall is cleaned and the floor swept and washed daily after the lunch service

Feedback: Cleaner Cutlery

Response: We make every effort to clean the cutlery effectively. However when washing approx. 900 pieces of cutlery, it is inevitable for a few to 'slip through the net' in the dishwasher. We do leave a receptacle out for any dirty cutlery that is discovered. Children are able to choose their own cutlery.

Feedback: Desserts – No need for pudding apart from fruit

Response: Again our menus, including desserts, fall within the current nutritional guidelines. We do always offer fruit for those that wish to choose the 'healthier' option.

I have a list of children with special dietary requirements. I would be more than happy to have individuals on my file if parents wish for them to choose specifically fruit, for instance.