



## Fern Hill School Parent Council Meeting 28/01/2022 - Minutes

### Attendees

Sam Stephenson (Deputy Head)  
Caroline McDonald (Chair)  
Rob Terry (Parent Governor)  
Secretary and Y6, Willow  
Daisy am  
Daisy pm  
R Bluebell  
R Sunflower  
Y1 Foxglove  
Y2 Clover  
Y2 Bracken  
Y3 Rowan

Y3 Elm  
Y3 Beech  
Y4 Larch  
Y4 Yew  
Y5 Ash  
Y6 Elder  
Y6 Oak

### Apologies

Y1 Lavender  
Y1 Cornflower  
Y2 Heather  
Y5 Sycamore

### Welcome and Introductions

Caroline McDonald (CM) thanked everyone for attending and apologised that we were having to meet via Zoom. Rising Covid numbers in School have meant that we could not meet in person on School premises, during the school day. CM hoped that we would be able to hold our next meeting in person and asked whether PC members would like to continue meeting after drop off or prefer to meet early evening (outside the school day). It is generally agreed that in person meetings work better, especially for rich topic discussions. Attendance also tends to be better for in person meetings. CM advised everyone that the meeting was being recorded, to make it easier for the Secretary to prepare minutes.

### Parent Council Terms of Reference

CM asked SS to check that Kingston Educational Trust (KET) were happy to sign off the updated Terms of Reference (ToR). SS confirmed that the ToR went to the Trustees meeting on Tuesday, Fern Hill's first meeting as an academy. The document has now been finalised and signed off.

Rob Terry (RT) confirmed that he will be stepping down as a Parent Governor (now known as a Parent Trust Associate under the school's new academy status). He

asked PC members to have a think about whether they would like to put themselves forward for the role at the forthcoming election. He said that he had enjoyed his time in the role and endorsed it as a great opportunity to gain insight into and experience of school leadership at a strategic level. He is happy to talk to any PC members who would like more information about the role.

## **Feedback on Google Forms**

Google Forms were used for the first time to gather feedback from parents when we addressed our recent Homework topic. CM confirmed that the move enabled us to capture the views of parents from two of the three unrepresented classes and was much easier for us administratively. The only change she felt necessary was the removal of the optional name question. We only need to know the class and year group of each parent who responds. SS acknowledged that the overall response rate was significantly better for this topic than for the previous two topics, but is keen to further increase the response rate. We need to reach out to as many parents as possible in order for the feedback to be meaningful. CM asked PC members to think about how they can encourage as many parents from their class to respond as possible.

## **Homework – School’s response to feedback**

SS began by explaining to PC members what Fern Hill feel is the *purpose* of homework.

- At Fern Hill Primary, we feel passionately that the most significant thing that you, as parents, can do to support your child’s learning is to share books with them on a regular basis in promote love of learning. By this we mean reading to your child, listening to your child read and talking about what you are reading. As adults, we are all reading role models – there is lots of evidence that children seeing their parents read is a powerful factor in encouraging them to read more frequently. Basic skills little and often are a proven key to success. Practice with varied fluency.
- Developing an approach to homework which all stakeholders (families, teachers and governors) are happy with can be problematic. In short, many people understandably reflect on their own experiences of primary education to form their opinions on various aspects of schooling, particularly around homework. We hope that much of what we do is grounded in up to date, relevant research.
- Lots of evidence exists which states that weekly homework tasks (e.g. a maths worksheet) set in the primary years have minimal effect in raising standards.

SS went on to explain what the *expectation* of homework is at Fern Hill.

- Each half term a home learning grid with a selection of nine activities linked to the current learning sequences, deepening understanding and covering a

range of curriculum subjects is uploaded onto the Home Learning Classroom on Google Drive.

- Children need to complete a number of activities across each half term (rising to three activities for children in Y6). Children can either submit work via Google Classroom or bring it in on the 'homework showcase' date stipulated by the class teacher so that work can be acknowledged and celebrated.
- In addition to the termly grid of activities, children should complete a weekly mental maths and a spelling practise task linked to the week's learning to revisit and retrieve previous learning. Any work produced as part of this, does not need to be marked by the teacher, but should be monitored to ensure it is being completed regularly by the child.
- All children across the school are expected to read and log reading in home learning diaries at least 3 times a week, but ideally daily. Homework diaries need to be checked weekly by teachers or teaching assistants and should address any issues around children not reading.

### **Question 1: What do you think the main objective of homework set at primary school level should be?**

Consolidating classroom learning was the most common theme emerging from parents' responses. Other objectives cited include; to provide a challenge for the more able children, to encourage self-study, to prepare children for secondary school and to involve parents in their child's education.

SS identified the school actions in response, as follows:

- Times Table Rock Stars has supported basic skills for times tables and now RM maths has been introduced to support basic skills across maths curriculum.
- Understanding that homework set is a consolidation of all learning, not just current learning and that learning needs to be revisited little and often so that it becomes part of our long-term memory.
- Reading every day is the most essential aspect of home work and home learning diaries should be completed (teachers to stamp and monitor).
- Consider trialing spelling journal with copy of spelling activities to practice in some year groups to provide a greater structure for practicing spelling.
- We will be building 'maths' area with challenges for greater depth and add videos on how to support your child in basic skills spelling and maths.
- Y6 in January focus on maths SATS style questions which are then checked in class as a teaching point.
- Basic skills are about building a routine – there were lots of positive comments regarding the classroom being an effective bridge between school and home.

### **Question 2: What are your views on the type of homework activities set at Fern Hill, specifically the half termly Home Learning Grid?**

There was a diverse range of views about the Home Learning Grid. For some parents the grid provided an interesting and diverse range of activities for their child

to choose from. These parents were positive about the current homework and were more likely to have children in KS1 or lower KS2. For others, the breadth of choice was problematic and meant their child picked activities for subjects that they found easy, rather than those they found more challenging. For some parents, the Home Learning activities were random and disconnected from the topics their child had covered in the classroom. For other parents, the Home Learning Grid did not reinforce classroom learning and they favoured traditional weekly maths and English worksheets. There was concern amongst a number of upper KS2 parents that the current Home Learning Grid was not sufficient preparation for secondary school. Finally, there were a number of comments about the fact that their child was demotivated by the lack of teacher feedback to submitted homework.

SS identified the school actions in response, as follows:

- Home learning grids to be accompanied by a video to support ideas and inspire children to be motivated.
- Teachers to talk through home learning grid when it is introduced and then return periodically to promote activities and motivate children in activities.
- Phase leads to monitor home learning grids & classrooms to ensure consistency, progression, variety and pitch.
- Parents to understand that the activities will both consolidate, revisit, extend or deepen learning.
- In addition to the learning grid, add some sheets (maths in particular) in the maths section for a unit of work that parents can print out as extra practice e.g. algorithms for practice or handwriting practice.
- All work should be celebrated and teacher acknowledgement given either on work or if posted on GC via the classroom.
- Parents can reinforce with year-books to work through.

### **Q3. Have you explored the resources available on your child's Home Learning Google Classroom?**

The vast majority of parents who responded have explored the resources available on their child's Home Learning Google Classroom.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	77	71%
No	29	27%
Blank	2	2%

### **Q3a. If YES, what additional resources would help you to support your child with the basic skills of reading, spelling and timetables.**

Responses focussed on the following: current offering is sufficient; downloadable worksheets so that children can practice what they have been learning in class; a mathematics replacement for Mathletics; access to the half-termly assessments.

SS identified the school actions, in response:

- Teachers post the message, diamond work (KS2) & values certificates on a **Friday** and reminders given on newsletter and on parent mail link.

- Teachers to sign post any new material posted, e.g. extra activities or activities for more able, in their Friday message.
- Possibly include downloadable sheets to practice for a unit or work in maths (Y5 & 6).
- Times Table Rock Stars received positive comments but a need for broader maths curriculum (RM now introduced).
- Ensure books do go home each half term so that parents can see progress in learning – promote an understanding that it is not about testing and how they do in a test but progress in books.
- Subject leads will build learning videos within subjects to support certain areas.
- GC should be a bridge where parents know what is set but children are gaining independence in completing.

### **Behaviour topic and postponed curriculum evening**

CM explained that the planned Curriculum Evening has had to be delayed, yet again, because of Covid. It is hoped that the event can be re-scheduled before the end of the academic year. The evening will cover behaviour, English and maths fluency, together with basic skills. This was going to be an opportunity for the school to explain the current behaviour system via a workshop. We know from parents that there are mixed views and mixed understanding about Reflections. SS identified a big gap in maths fluency and the school are planning to upload maths videos onto Google Classroom as soon as possible. A homework club has been started for select children at Fern Hill, using Y12 TKA pupils as mentors.

### **Next topic**

School lunches was voted as the topic parents are most keen to see the PC address this academic year. SS would like to postpone this particular topic until the next academic year. Following the School's academy conversion, catering contracts are in a temporary state of flux and it would be more beneficial to hold off on this topic for the moment. Instead, SS would like to address the broader topic of personal development. The School are anticipating an imminent Ofsted visit and personal development is on the Ofsted framework. At present, there is no parent voice and the school would like to better understand what parents feel about curriculum enrichment activities such as; in-school celebrations, clubs, sports competitions, assemblies etc. LS will canvas PC members via Survey Monkey to whittle down the list to three activities that we can ask parents about.

### **AOB**

- A Y2 and Y6 PC member commented that it is no longer possible to upload homework onto GC. SS confirmed that she would look into this. It is possible that the facility was accidentally disabled when the pupil chat was disabled.
- SS confirmed that the home learning grid should be uploaded during the first week of each half term. She will check with her phase leads and ensure that this happens.

- Next meeting date to be confirmed. It is anticipated that it will take place in person in the Hawthorn classroom.