



Newsletter

April/May 2019

Dear all,

We have been delighted to have so many of you join us for the parent forums this week, as well as hearing from those of you that have got in touch in person, via the new postbox and via email.

We understand that some of you have a number of concerns right now and many of you have questions. In this newsletter I hope to be able to answer some of those that have been raised so far.

As always, please be in touch with the office, staff or Leadership Team should you wish to discuss anything 😊

Mrs Emily Gore-Rowe

Lunchtimes:

We fully understand the concerns that some of you have regarding the recent lunchtime changes and many feel that you were ill informed beforehand - a point which we fully acknowledge and take on board for future plans.

The forums this week were originally planned to talk about Ofsted report and next steps but of course many of you had questions about this as well as the Ofsted/plans.

As discussed at the forums this week, we will be running another Parent forum next week, and would like to invite you **Wednesday 8th May 8.45am**. This was intended to have a specific focus on Lunch times, however given that we spent time on this at the Ofsted etc. forums, many of you also have questions that went unanswered so we hope to be able to spend a bit of time on this then.

Please accept my apologies if things did not seem clear at the beginning of the week, we had not anticipated so much resistance to an extra-curricular system that works so well in a great many other schools adding enrichment to the curriculum. I have introduced similar systems in two schools and know of several locally, the nearest being in Ely.

Most schools have autonomy of choice over the zone as well as the activity itself and it was always the plan that this will come into the plan in time – once everyone is familiar with the areas and activities. More on this is explained further on.

I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank those of you that have got in touch to share your/your children's worries/concerns about lunchtimes, or any other aspect of the school, as well as those of you that have also got in touch to share that you appreciate what we are doing and that your children are enjoying lunchtimes more. We have, and will continue to take all feedback into consideration. In light of those so far, some of our plans for further extending the range of activities have been accelerated and adaptations made as a result. This includes bring forward the plans for pupil run clubs where they can enjoy activities with their friends. We will be writing to you separately to share the feedback so far from pupils and staff (with photos) of how things are going, impact so far and how things are evolving through positive conversation, as well as clarifying a number of misunderstandings. So far I have met with all the KS2 & Year 2 classes and will also be meeting with R/1, as well as School Council and the Play Leaders again later this week. I have specifically focused the changes within the programme around the concerns that have been raised, so many thanks to those of you that have brought these to our attention.

Lunchtimes continued:

I understand that for some this approach may appear as 'knee jerk' response to Ofsted, however in truth we first began discussing this back in January, largely in response to bullying concerns raised in the Autumn term. It has taken a long time to set things up. I completely acknowledge that parents feel that they should have been better informed – the parents we had spoken to were very keen to see lunchtimes extended and become more active and healthy. I have been bowled over by how much this community cares about how the school works, with many of your really interested in the finer details – this is not a criticism, but an observation that in many school this would not necessarily be the case and I am committed to working with you to ensure that you are more informed in future.

It is not our intention to 'force' anyone into friendships or deprive anyone of their social circles. There will be times when children are together with their house (e.g. for their weekly Sports Coach sessions) however the children will also have days when they can choose their own clubs, with their friends in different houses if they so wish.

Though there will be flexibility and greater choice in time (not too much), house groupings to start with was a necessary measure for a number of reasons.

It would have been super to introduce this gradually, starting with a 'sign up' approach, however once we looked closer at the lunchtime bullying issues, we realised that a change needed to happen more quickly. The results of the pupil survey showed that 33% of pupils feel that bullying was an issue at lunchtime and given that even when this may be deemed to be of a 'low level', bullying stays with you for life, we are committed to ensuring that this is reversed - if at all possible, eradicated. Seeing the survey results bolstered the view that we could no longer delay and given that Ofsted recognised that the pace of improvement needs to increase, we needed to speed things up. Whilst we appreciate it had been unsettling for some, these measures are designed to drastically reduce this quickly, at the same time providing a greater range of activities.

The original plan was for the first 1-2 weeks to be 'orientation' where the children get to engage in the new spaces such as the music room, Art & Design studio and Library, Sports coach and the range of enrichment activities on offer and once they had the idea, begin to extend the breadth of activities further and increase the flexibility of who they play with.

Once the children were used to the new zones and type of activities they could start to take ownership over it and co-design the further developments by running their own clubs with their friends. **This is the key part of the plan we have brought forward.** I myself have been with the children almost every day, ironing out the wrinkles and hearing from the children their views and how they would like things to develop further, beginning to set up the pupil led clubs. We have been bowled over with the enthusiasm with which children have come forward to run their own – from languages and history clubs to further sporting activities and cookery clubs for the little ones. These will continue to be set up over the coming days, prioritising those pupils who are not yet enjoying the new arrangements so that by half term we can have 100% who enjoy lunchtime rather than around 80% which was previously the case.

Some of you have expressed concerns about how we are spending our school time/budget in this matter. The school receives over £18k Sports Premium Grant which is ring fenced for expenditure on increasing pupil engagement in Sports and physical activity. So far little of this has been spent so far, other than a new outdoor table tennis table. It has cost little in time, other than my own time in the Easter holidays where I spent close to 5 days with the Nurture team, Mrs Bradley and the amazing Mr Bate reorganising the Nurture & Music/Performance rooms as well as the Studio space, intervention space and the school office), making use of the FOSS donation and begin to bring the vision to reality, launching into the new term, signalling change post-Ofsted. The DfE outline a number of suggestions and guidelines as to how this money should be spent, in order to extend current opportunities for Sports and physical activity including 'active playgrounds' and introducing an 'active mile'. This amount has recently been once again doubled so we will be doing even more over the next 12 months to ensure that this is spent in such a way that it supports school improvement with the clear aim of excellence and enjoyment for all pupils.

Further DfE guidance that we are using to ensure that we make best possible use of this money can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pe-and-sport-premium-for-primary-schools#how-to-use-the-pe-and-sport-premium>

Parent Partnership & Communication:

One of the things we discussed in the Parent Forums this week was how we fully acknowledge that communication is an issue across the school. We hold our hands up, saying we know we need to work harder on this – myself included, which I am committed to doing. It is not about excuses, however a school of our size would usually have a much bigger admin team – our lovely ladies in the office are fantastic, however historically the team has been extremely understaffed and going forward we are now recruiting to expand the team. This means that we will have greater capacity for adding information to the website, writing more regular newsletters (currently I write them all myself – hence the haphazard nature lately as other pressing matters have reduced my ability to do this!) which will now be fortnightly as well as other improvements in this area.

Parent forums and newsletters:

We are planning to hold Parent forums fortnightly for the next couple of months in order to give parents increased opportunity to talk to us at this critical stage in our journey as key changes start to take shape. We understand that many of you are unable to make meetings during the school day which is completely understandable - we are not always able to run them after hours, however if you are unable to make a forum but have a question, concern or suggestion then do please let us know via email or the post box in the office. Until recently we have not been able to send out commentary from the Forums to all parents, however in future we will have someone there taking notes so that a summary of discussions can be put in the following newsletter (which will also be fortnightly).

Class Dojo:

I am aware that the Class dojo has not yet been working at it's full potential. Staff are now making sure that all classes are using this with more consistency going forward. If you haven't already, we encourage all of you to engage with it via the app or online – it is our goal to get every parent on board with it because it has a huge number of fantastic features but most importantly, as you will quickly see, it is one of the easiest ways to get in touch with us and for us to communicate with you. A helpful guide for parents can be found here:

https://static.classdojo.com/docs/TeacherResources/ParentFAQs/ParentFAQs_ForParents.pdf

Using the office & emails:

Most people have got in touch through the office, however I would like to politely remind some that unless it is a safeguarding emergency, it is not appropriate to email staff directly, outside of reasonable working hours. Staff often work well outside reasonable hours as it is and direct communication of this nature further adds to their workloads and has a negative impact on their well-being (we are humans too).

Therefore we ask that all parents please consider this and between the hours of 7.30am and 6.30pm make use of the office@sutton.cambs.sch.uk who, in line with GDPR & Safeguarding protocols, treat all emails with the strictest confidentiality and forward on to the relevant personnel during working hours. This also ensures that emails from parents are tracked and filed, rather than getting stuck in junk or otherwise missed (which is all too easy when some email accounts receive upwards of 50-100 emails per day!)

As has always been the case, when emails come through we endeavour to reply as soon as possible, and we aim to respond to all within 48 hours (ie 2-3 working days).

Post box:

You may not have noticed the post box that is on the wall by the office window – however you can now use this for a variety of things: post a comment, question, suggestion or raise a concern (these can be named or anonymous); drop off forms, dinner money or leave a note for staff. As well as giving you another way of getting in touch, it may just save you a bit of time rather than queueing in the morning or at the end of the day!

FOSS: Many thanks to those that organized and took part in the Easter Raffle – we raised a further £75.55, which is great! We are now busy organizing the fete on 8th June – if you would like to pitch in, please get in touch. 😊

Management Information System (MIS) and school payments:

Across the county many schools are moving away from the old SIMS system to host pupil and school community information, from personal data, to assessment information to finance and accounting. Along with a number of other schools, in our cluster and in Cambridgeshire we have chosen a new system 'BromCom'.

This system went live last week and, as is unfortunately all too common, despite plans and hopes, there have been a few teething issues. One of which is how we manage payments for dinners, trips and other sundry items. At present this is only affecting those that are behind with dinner payments, however we are hoping that BromCom will have this ironed out before it starts to catch up with the whole school population. Until this is resolved we are unable to process online payments, only cash. We apologise for the inconvenience.

A further issue in the longer term is that in the past, in order to be as flexible as possible for parents, Sutton has endeavoured to continue to accept cash payments (most schools no longer do this). However due to a further bank closure we are now having to travel to Ely on a weekly basis to bank cash income which is no longer financially or logistically viable. Whilst we will continue until the new systems are properly working this is just to give you all warning that this will cease in the future. Once we know more about a timeline for this we will let you know.

Ofsted, School Improvement and next steps:

We hope you have now been able to read the full report and summary plan and have a clearer understanding of where we are as a school. We feel the report validated our judgements, the inspectors made clear that our plans for improvement were appropriate and they recognised that we are making the necessary changes. We are pleased to be able to say that the pace of this is now starting to increase.

There is a programme of improvement, development work and training for this term, as well as plans for next year and beyond. The next Parent Forum will be focused on our immediate next steps: addressing Behaviour for Learning in the classrooms; improving the precision of Teachers' assessment and planning and Phonics & Early Reading.

Many thanks to those of you that have got in touch with kind words of encouragement, suggestions and offers of support as we move forward on our mission: ***Raising everyone's game – excellence and enjoyment for all.***

Supply cover:

Whilst we are doing all we can to minimise the amount of teacher cover that we use, our number one priority must be to invest in the training and development needed to ensure that the quality of teaching improves as quickly as possible. For this reason it is necessary to release teachers from class and our current staff structure means that we do need to use supply teachers to do this. We have good relationships with a number of regular supply teachers who we use whenever possible. Where there have been issues, we thank those of you that have gone in touch



Just a gentle reminder:

Dogs are **not** permitted on the school site for Health and Safety reasons.

Whilst many of us love and adore our dogs, there are those who are afraid of them.

However mild mannered, dogs can quickly snap at one another,
which easily frightens little ones in close proximity.

If you do bring your dog on site, please don't be offended when you are politely asked to leave.





Dates for your diary:

- Football match - away at Haddenham: 7th May 3.30pm
- **Parent Forum:** 8th May - 8.45: Active Lunchtimes and Ofsted responses
- W/B 13.5.19 - Y6 SATS week - all Year 6 pupils are **invited** in for breakfast club from 8.15 - 30 mins early in order to have the calmest possible start to the day Pupils can come to the front door and the day will start a relaxed and enjoyable breakfast* of cereal, toast and fresh fruit alongside a few warm up activities to set pupils up to be on their A game. If they would rather have breakfast at home that is absolutely fine - this is optional, however we encourage all pupils to come in early if possible and benefit from the positive atmosphere and calm start to the day. All Year 6 to come to the front entrance or hall as soon as they arrive rather than wait at the gate or on the playground. Year 5 will be taught as a yeargroup
- Year 2 SAT tests will be undertaken over the two weeks 13th - 25th May. These are undertaken in a low pressure, non-stressful way and pupils can come in to school in the usual way.
- **Phonics** workshops for Year 1 parents: Thursday 16th May - 5.30pm
- **Enterprise week:** Week beginning 20th May: Based around the work of Leonardo Da Vinci, the children will be creating and pitching their own inventions to a number of 'Dragons' in a 'Dragons Den' at the end of the week. Would you like to be a 'dragon'?
- **Open lunch dates:** join us this week for lunch, have a tour of the school, see what has changed and is changing, including the new lunchtime arrangements. Further details to follow.
- **Football matches** -home vs St. Andrew's: 20th May 3.30pm;- home at Wilburton: 22nd May 3.30pm
- **Parent Forum:** 23rd May - 2.45: Post Ofsted action so far & future plans & class structures
- Break up for ½ term break 24th May, INSET day Monday 3rd June, children return on Tuesday 4th
- **Art Week:** week beginning 10th June
- **Parent Forum:** 11th June - 8.45am
- **Football matches** -home v The Weatheralls 24th June
- **Governors Teaching and Learning Committee meeting:** 26th June - 6pm
- **Parent Forum:** 27th June - 2.45pm
- **Summer Sports Festival:** Week beginning 1st July House tournaments & circuit days and race day Tuesday 2nd (further dates and times to be confirmed)
- **Year 6 Transition days** 3rd & 4th July. Jump up days will also be on these days.
- **Year 6 Residential** 10th-12th July
- The dates and times for the end of year performance will be confirmed later this week.
- **End of term community service at St. Andrew's church** 24th July

Further dates TBC:

- YR Phonics SOLOS
- Early Years, new intake transition programme to be published this week.