Furzedown Primary School
Flourishing from a Firm Foundation
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Parent Forum Notes 26th April 2024

Thank you all for attending the Parent Forum today.
The forum is an informal space for discussing different areas of school life.

Item 1- Update on Capital Works and Dining Hall

Work on the heating system began in January, with pipework and radiators are being replaced, providing hot water and a slightly more efficient system. The last few snagging jobs are being completed this week. The Asbestos Works were brought forward, so that the pipework could be completed.

Phase 2 is to replace the Boilers. Our current boilers (in the older part of the school building) are old, unreliable, and inefficient. We have historically had to top up our heating in the older block with electric heaters. We hope that phase 2 will be in the summer of 2025 (delayed due to the need for a new kitchen) with new boilers and heat source pump installed.

We have been awarded funds to build a new kitchen. Together with Wandsworth Council we have looked at several options for creating a new kitchen. The options that made most sense and was the best value for money, most easily built and accessible was option three, extending the Cookery unit. Works are not scheduled to start before January 2025. We will keep parents updated on the progress of planning and the works.

A Temporary Solution- The current situation is not working and is affecting the quality of the food and at an additional cost. A Modular kitchen is being considered, it would be in the Car Park, costing £60,000 + which the Local Authority will be funding. All interested parties, e.g. our caterers, the council and ourselves are in discussions and hope that a decision is made soon. Utilities would be supplied by the school and via a generator.

The car park will return to being used as a carpark and once the kitchen has been built and the temporary kitchen removed. At this time, a review of the entrance and need for extra playground space will be undertaken.

The Hall will be used for children to eat lunch; therefore, we need to consider tables and seating. Due to a lack of space for storage and that the existing table and chairs in Cedar Hall are old and need replacing, alternatives have been sought. The school is looking at Wall pockets, tables and benches that fold away into units affixed to the Wall.

Item 2 – PTA- Class Lists

Urv- Co Chair introduced herself and her co-chairs and committee, who are responsible for the legal Charity aspect of the PTA. The focus for the PTA is fund raising for the school, but they are also keen to extend the reach of the PTA.

After talking with many parents in the school and PTA Members, a list of concerns was collated.

-Lack of inclusion
-Communication
-Visibility of Events

Ability to communicate with Parents directly rather than via Whatsapp or school newsletter.

The looked at a selection of Apps designed for Parent and teacher associations and settled on ClassLists, which is free to the PTA and parents. It is a closed/private social network, which is completely GDPR compliant. Parents and carers own their own data. Personal information such as phone numbers are hidden and not available to other users.

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Features of the app – you can purchase items/tickets via the app, receive announcements/messages about the PTS events and to find other parents within the school. Messages within the app can be whole school, year group or class. There is also a public profile, which allows the PTA to advertise to the wider community, whilst protecting everyone's personal data.
There will be a phased roll out of the app to the point where Classlist will be the only mode of communication for parents. The PTA Facebook and WhatsApp groups will be phased out.
All parents will be invited to join. For parents who English is a second language there is a feature within the app which can be used for groups. There is a possibility that messages etc can be translated. The PTA and School will work together to encourage English as a 2nd Language parents to get involved.
Messages within the app can be whole school, year group or class.

Item 3-Homework/What children are learning.
Mrs Morris thanked all the parent who had completed the Parent Survey. Some points raised so far are Homework and more detail of what my child is learning.
Homework policy was circulated. This can be found on our website-
https://www.furzedownschool.co.uk/Policies/
There is no homework set at Christmas or Easter Holidays as the school wishes for children to have a break. Homework focuses on Core skills in Maths, Reading, Phonics and Spellings as well as a termly project grid with different activities which is optional.
As children progress up the school there is an increase in the amount of homework they receive, this is to help with their preparation for Secondary School.
Q. A Parent asked for clarity as her child is aware that certain pieces of homework were optional and as a result did not want to do it, although the parent wanted to encourage the child to do it.
Q. Another parent said that it is hard for parents with children who are resistant to doing homework in general, what can be done to make this easier.?
To improve issues around doing homework, talk with your class teacher, to look for ways to get your child to engage, find out what support there is.
Q. Parent asked for additional written work linked to the reading.
As the children move up the school, they do get additional homework linked to reading e.g. Comprehension.
Q. When there are projects, some children can produce fantastic pieces of art/dioramas etc but not all children or parents have the resources, time, finances, or skills to do these projects. Is there some what we can have a Scrap store for children to access art materials etc?
The school is always looking for ways to ensure all children can get involved despite limits on parents' time, money, skill. Staff do give out paper pencils and glue etc when needed or requested by children/families.
The idea of the scrap store is a good one and will be investigated.
Marking- at Furzedown we do not mark work but give feedback to the children. Making note of areas that the children have made mistakes, errors or not comprehend. These then feature in lessons to ensure all children grasp the concepts being taught.
There is also Peer marking, which help the children to recognise errors and reinforces work they have learnt.

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-**Q** Some parents are finding that the class email is not responded to quickly. Especially when emailing about changes to pickups.
Class emails are responded to within 48 hours and not constantly monitored as the Teachers are teaching. Therefore, if it is a time sensitive message, e.g. changes to pick up or medication, please email the office by 2.30pm. After this time call the office but do not leave a message. By doing this the message will get to the right person. All general class related emails can be sent to the class email address.

Item 4- Staff Absence
Historically Furzedown had the three teacher per year group model, which meant that when teachers were absent, there was a teacher to cover.
This is not the case now and results in us having to use Supply Agencies for teachers to cover. Unfortunately, in recent weeks we have had some long-term sick leave and as a result had to use Supply cover.
On the first day of absence of a teacher the class will be split across other classes with the Class Teaching Assistant monitoring the children. They do their own (pre-prepared) work whilst in another class. For day two of absence Supply is used and each class has a cover folder, which is used in the event of the teacher being absent. The folder includes name labels for the children, details of SEN and Health needs, seating plan, information about school policies and planning and resources for lessons. This allows for continuity in teaching. At the end of the day the Supply Cover will complete the Cover Report to pass on any vital information.
The Senior Leadership teamwork with Supply agencies to book excellent teachers to cover and build relationships. We often booked teachers we have used before and this helps with continuity and helps to build relationships with the children, especially when it is a long-term absence.
Q. A Parent suggested that this could cost as much as a permanent teacher, why did we not do this?
A Permanent teacher would cost more as there are on costs such as pension and NI. A permanent teacher would be useful but would not solve all our absence problems. There are occasions that we have more than one teacher absent and so need to still use Supply. By not spending on a permanent teacher, we can be a bit more flexible with the Supply cover.

No suggestions were suggested for future items.