

**Thorndown Primary School - Parent Forum Minutes**  
**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

**Present:** Heather Wood (Chair), Vicci Godbold (Head teacher), Cathy Sweet, Clare Lorman-Hall, Sam Poole, Louise Keeley, Florence Monk, Mrs Fox (SENCO), Pawel Kurkiewicz, Russell Burgess, William Kofie and Verity Windmill

**Apologies:** Jenny Cowens

**1. Welcome – no matters arising from previous minutes**

**2. Main topic: Transitions**

Transition arrangements happen throughout the school as each year group moves up a year.

**Starting Pre-school** - In terms of pre-school, now that it is run by the school, the intention is to introduce home visits for new children/families joining pre-school as this already works well when children start Reception.

**From Pre-school to Reception** – this year children from eleven pre-school settings will be joining Reception in 2017. Children can attend three ‘Stay and Play’ sessions in Reception which are attended with either parents or their pre-school key workers. In addition, teaching staff visit the pre-school settings and Mrs Fox will visit to discuss any identified additional needs. Home visits are arranged for early September and children also receive a pictorial booklet with photos of the classrooms to help familiarize them with the setting.

**Rest of School** – this year there will be two x move up mornings when children will spend time with their new teachers in their new classrooms. It is felt that the two x mornings will be more effective than the previous single afternoon because it allows teachers more time to get to know their new class groups.

**In response to a specific query, it was confirmed that children find out on the day who will be their new teacher and classmates. Based on previous experience, Miss Godbold advised that this works more smoothly than sending out classroom lists to parents in advance of the day. This is because it does not allow as much time/opportunity for worries and anxieties to fester. In addition, data protection regulations mean it is no longer permissible to post full class lists for all parents to view.**

As in previous years there will be an open classroom session in July when parents and children are able to visit a child’s new classroom and meet the class teacher for 2017/18. Miss Godbold confirmed that newly appointed teachers will also be attending the open classroom session.

In previous years (and in the current year) children have been asked to choose four friends they would like to be with in class – the school then aim to ensure each child is with at least one of their chosen friends. However, this is often problematic because there are other competing logistics to consider such as a gender balance, a mixture of ethnicity, ability and any special needs requirements. This means that guaranteeing friendship groups is an additional complication.

**Question: Miss Godbold and Mrs Fox sought feedback from those present as to whether the school should continue to ask children to express friendship preferences.**

Feedback from those present was mixed and included the following responses:

- Children were unhappy if they couldn't be with all four of their choices (and didn't feel listened to).
- Children liked being able to express a preference and felt listened to.
- Helpful for children in Reception to be able to express friendship preferences – offered some reassurance when moving up to big school.
- Children felt bullied (or were scared of being bullied) if they didn't include certain names on their 'friend' list.
- Children tried to play the system ie by adding one name, three times or by second guessing who they were most likely to be put with.
- Expressing preferences was unhelpful given the complexities in organising classes that already exist – children need to learn to get (on or at least show tolerance) of everyone as they will not have the opportunity to pick colleagues or classmates later in life.
- Friendships can be pursued in the playground if it is not possible for best friends to be together in class.
- Being able to choose a friend offers stability and security and therefore helps learning.

**The views were varied and so a vote was held. 70% of those present said that, from 2018, the school should no longer ask children to choose their friendship preferences in class.**

It is recognised that only a small number of parents participated in the forum and so the vote is not strictly representative. However, in view of the fact that the topic and date were advertised and that the forum is open to all parents as their route for expressing opinions and shaping school decisions, it is considered reasonable consultation and there are no intentions to hold further discussions with parents at this stage.

In addition, Miss Godbold and Mrs Fox will seek the views of the Student Council and also the Governors before deciding how to proceed in future years.

**Transition to Secondary School** – all children will visit their Secondary school. In addition, teachers from the Ivo attend Thorndown and will teach some lessons to Year 6. There is also a Sports Day for Year 6 to attend at the Ivo.

Mrs Fox meets with teachers at the Ivo including the SENCO and discusses every single child. They also consider which children should and shouldn't be together as well as sharing information about each child's learning and progress.

**Mid Year Leavers** – if anyone leaves the school mid year, there is a transition pack that can be sent to the new school containing information about the child including likes, dislikes, learning progress etc.

**Mid Year joiners** - as above. Thorndown will ring the child's previous school to find out about them and, if required, Mrs Fox has can sometimes visit the school to find out more about the child.

There are also service packs for Forces children leaving/joining the school. The school does not have a transient gypsy/traveler community but the information/transition packs could also be used in this situation.

### 3. AOB

A query was raised about the funding situation and whether the school was able to balance its budget. Miss Godbold advised that the situation had become much harder over recent years and that all schools in the county were struggling to produce a zero budget. A particular issue for Thorndown is that funding is based on pupil headcount (usually taken in the Autumn Term) and then set for the following academic year. However, the school is in a growth area and the intake of new pupils each year has exceeded the number of children leaving by approximately 30. This equates to a whole class of children who are unfunded.

Despite this, the Governors have made the decision to maintain the single year teaching groups because of the powerful impact that this is having on learning progress in the classroom. In the past FOTS helped to fund the 'icing on the cake' but we have now entered a situation where they are being asked to help fund the cake i.e. in terms of buying teaching aids for the classroom (i.e. additional books).

A suggestion was made by parents that the school could produce a 'wish list' with different books or other teaching items on that parents could purchase if they wanted. (There is no expectation on parents to do this, but those present expressed a preference to purchase a gift for the school each year rather than sending in end of year presents for teachers). It was also suggested that the list could include more expensive items too as some businesses might be in a position to make donations.

**Action: Miss Godbold will ask Mrs Cook to investigate the possibility of an optional wish/gift list for parents including a refreshed list for pre-school.**

#### 4. Date of next meeting and topic

**DATE: Monday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2017 at 7.15pm** in Dragonfly Classroom

**TOPIC:** Priorities for the coming year

All parents are members of the parent forum and are welcome to attend the meetings. If you cannot attend but wish to raise an issue you can email [parentforum@thorndown.cambs.sch.uk](mailto:parentforum@thorndown.cambs.sch.uk) post a note in the suggestion box in the lobby or raise it with your class/year representative.

#### **Year Reps**

Foundation – Jenny Cowens

Year 1 – Pawel Kurkiewicz

Year 2 – Russell Burgess and Sam Poole

Year 3 – Pawel Kurkiewicz

Year 4 – Russell Burgess

Year 5 – Clare Lorman-Hall

Year 6 –