

Parent Council

Tuesday 11 February 2025

Present: Abby Denton, Rachel Fleetwood, Rachael Helanor, Emma Parish, Caireen Reed

Apologies: Jo Aitken, Jen Andersen, James Appleton, Will Badger, Sophie Chesters, Rachel Costello, Gabrielle McEwan, Jo Pereira-Ford

Footpath

Several parents had asked for an update regarding public the footpath that runs through the school as discussed at various previous meetings. EP updated to say despite regular emails to the contact at West Berkshire Council there has been no progress regarding a fence being installed from Lemurs to the gate to the footpath to secure the school grounds. EP has asked West Berks for details of who parents can contact to register their concerns. RF and RH will also look into this, as well as RH contacting the parish council to find out their position on it. It is clear that the parent body are keen to get involved. EP also mentioned that she has a meeting planned with the school's health and safety advisor after half term and will raise the issue then.

The issue of the muddiness and dog mess on the path to and from Emery Acres to the school playground was also raised through feedback, as well as the mud on the playground.

Regarding the public footpath, the school is not able to put down woodchip or make any adjustments to it as it cannot maintain such work. It was suggested that any parents concerned should contact the parish council or West Berkshire to follow up on this.

The school does not have any budget at present for any works to be carried out to improve the drainage in the playground. If any parents are able to volunteer to do so this would be appreciated, please contact the office if so. Children are encouraged to wipe their feet when entering school to remove as much mud/dirt as possible. It was also suggested that children could wear wellies to walk to school then change into school shoes in the playground ready to come into school.

Teaching changes

Several parents had asked questions about the changes to teaching in Lemurs, Bears and Tigers. It was asked why the TA role in Tigers isn't being replaced – EP explained this was in part because of the budget but also because there was enough staff to provide the cover needed even after one TA had left. EP explained that she is moving into Bears after half term until the end of this school year at least. Having a fully qualified teacher in Bears increases the ratio of children that can attend. Miss Hutchinson is returning from maternity leave and the days covered meant it was the best solution for her to go into Lemurs.

Smartphone policy

A number of parents had asked about whether the school would consider introducing a no smartfree phone policy or consider a parent survey on the topic (such as <https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/>). EP explained that in general the school is phone free and therefore didn't think a specific policy would be needed. This has only changed this year when a few Year 6 children have started walking to school by themselves and have a phone for safety reasons whilst walking. Children have to turn them off and hand their phones to their teacher straight away and then these are returned to them at the end of the day.

Sensor flood light on external wall outside Lemurs

It was suggested that a sensor flood light should be attached to the outside of the building by Lemurs classroom to help with visibility when walking round to drop off or pick up from Basildon Extra. EP agreed, has raised the issue with the health and safety governor and hopes that this will be installed by next autumn.

Star of the week

One parent had given feedback on star of the week, stating that despite always getting good comments from their teacher, their child had only received star of the week for the first time recently and was disappointed that all her work had only just been recognised. Another parent had asked if a log was kept to ensure that each child got it once every long term. EP explained that teachers do keep track of who gets these each week but it was also important that they were given for the right reasons to keep them meaningful. There was therefore a balance between giving them out evenly whilst ensuring that they were suitably awarded.

Raised beds

One parent asked if there were plans to plant in the raised beds in the playground and offered to help with these if needed. EP to follow up with SC who has previously done a huge amount of work in the grounds of the school. This then led to a discussion about a parent volunteer day to carry out various tasks to maintain the school, this has been previously discussed at past parent council meetings and EP was going to work on a list of tasks that parents could help with. Now the weather is (hopefully) improving as we get into spring, a date will be fixed for this to take place (RF to follow up).

Lunches

There were a few questions about school lunches, asking about whether portion sizes were the same for nursery, KS1 and KS2 (with regard to all children getting one slice of pizza), whether the fishfingers had changed and whether there had been a change in provider. EP explained that the provider had not changed but the catering contract was currently up for tender with West Berkshire and it was likely that there would be a new provider by the end of the school year. EP further explained that all children do get one slice of pizza but that older children would get a slightly larger amount of vegetables. The type of fishfingers had changed to cod fishfingers.

Teacher feedback

There was positive feedback for Mrs Loader and the team in Tigers and for Miss Saas. There was also appreciation for all staff who had been on the residential.

Lost property/keeping areas tidy

It was asked if more could be done to help with lost property and keeping areas tidy. It was again stressed how important it is for everything to be named, including all uniform as well as lunch boxes, snack pots and water bottles. Named items can be returned straight to the child. EP suggested school could explore using the eco warriors to help with tidying up. Lost property would be put out at the end of the week and EP would also include a reminder about naming all items in the newsletter.

Forest school

An update on the forest school area was asked for. EP confirmed that all classes are still using the forest school once a week on a rota at break times, although it has been slippery in the very wet weather over the winter which had limited use on some occasions. It will be used more for other lessons as the weather improves. A storage crate has been ordered to keep books outside for children who want to use the space as a quiet area. EP also updated that a trained forest school teacher at Beedon would be coming to Basildon for a training session to share best practices on how to use the space.

Uniform

One parent had suggested that the new uniform policy from the Downland Federation should include a reference to headscarves to show inclusivity. This would be fed back. Clarification was sought on whether children could wear brighter colour coats to improve visibility when walking to and from school, especially in the winter months when it is darker in the mornings and afternoon. EP confirmed that whilst the uniform policy would not be changed, children could wear other colour coats for visibility.

Video

The video summarising the last meeting had both positive and negative feedback, with people liking it as a new way of communicating but others concerned about the tone and style not being appropriate which had stopped it being widely circulated. Given the low turn out at the meeting it was decided to discuss further next time. Trying to improve engagement with parent council is definitely a good aim and should be looked into more, with the approval of the school.

Playground equipment

One parent had enquired about the possibility of the school putting in a sandpit in the playground for long/high jump as well as getting more equipment. EP explained that the school

did not have the budget to put in and maintain a sandpit but would consider purchasing more equipment. It was also suggested that children wear coloured sashes for sports day. This would also be considered.

Follow up between Parent Council meetings

One rep asked if there could be an update on progress on the next steps at the midway point between each meeting. It was suggested that this could be done via WhatsApp in the group where relevant.

Future meetings

Wednesday 21 May 2.30pm

Monday 7 July 9am

It was suggested that the meeting time for May could be moved to 9am to encourage turn out. RF to follow up with the reps and will confirm.