

Coffee and Conversation – Parent Zoom Q and A

Thursday 8th October 2020 9am

Up to 35 participants took part in the Zoom session which focussed on two main issues:

- 1) Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) – second consultation (First consultation at Coffee and Conversation in November 2019)
- 2) COVID-related scenarios

Opening Prayer: Focus on St John Henry Newman's Feast Day

Minutes of Last Meeting:

Outstanding Actions:

1) Children to produce posters about keeping our pavements safe (dogs being tied safely) – this was planned for Spring 2020 but has been postponed. Mrs Burnham suggested that this was not a high priority with the current one-way system but could be reviewed again in Spring 2021.

2) Black History Week – Mrs Burnham reported that this would take place as planned in school from Monday to Friday next week. However, parents who had previously taken on this project had been unable to participate due to COVID restrictions, but it is hoped that the exciting visitors and activities planned for this year might be picked up in October 2021.

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)

Mrs Burnham presented information about RSHE and then answered questions which had been raised beforehand. There was some discussion about RSHE and the resources used. Mrs Burnham recognised that some parents are new to the school since the previous consultation and all information will be sent out with the newsletter on Friday. Parents with specific questions about the resources are invited to approach Mrs Burnham and a further opportunity to ask general questions will be offered at **the next Coffee and Conversation on Thursday 19th November at 9am.**

National guidance on RSHE has changed and some new statutory responsibilities have fallen on schools. In Primary Schools this means that Relationships Education is now a core subject (like English and Maths), that Health Education (e.g. First Aid and taking care of your body) is now compulsory. Children can no longer be withdrawn from the Science Lifecycles element of RSHE. The Cardinal Newman RSHE Policy is based on the diocesan template and contains all the new statutory information from the DfE. Staff have been trained in the new guidance not only by the diocese but also accessed Surrey Healthy Schools and DfE training.

The new programme being used in school is called "Life to the Full." It is one of two resources recommended by the diocese – the other being "Journey in Love" which we have used in school before and will continue to dip into to supplement any additional information. The school have chosen "Life to the Full" because it is a very child-friendly and well produced resource which also presents the Catholic teaching on Relationships, Sex and Health

Education in a realistic and non-judgemental way. There are modules for all Primary year groups and Mrs Burnham reassured parents that teaching will be age-appropriate.

The presentation Mrs Burnham shared can be accessed here:

<https://www.tentenresources.co.uk/relationship-education/>

(scroll to bottom of webpage)

Parent questions raised included:

Do Reception children learn about sex education?

Reception children will learn about the Relationships and Health part of RHSE, at an age-appropriate level. For example, they will learn about having kind hands and about sharing with others. They will learn about families and about each one of them being special. Reception children learn about lifecycles from observation (e.g. chicks hatching from eggs). These things are part of our RE curriculum, our PSHE curriculum and our RSHE curriculum – there is a lot of overlap.

Are we able to see the exact content before the lessons?

Parents are always given an overview of what their children will be learning. With the new "Life to the Full" resource, this will include an online Parent Portal where parents will be able to access the resources their children are using. Schools are always keen to work with parents – Catholic schools recognise that parents are the first educators of their children and the home-school-parish triangle is important to support parents to teach their children.

What will school do about missing content e.g. last year's Y6 missed their final term's teaching about RSHE and this would have been important for them to cover.

With regard to last year's Y6, we reported to Salesian and other secondaries that the final term of RSHE had been missed (in common with most primary schools) due to COVID. The children had learned about "Body Changes" in Y5, but had not completed the statutory curriculum for Y6. The secondaries plan to cover this content in Y7 so that the children are appropriately informed. It had been discussed in school about whether to send this content home as "Home Learning" last term, but staff felt that it would be difficult to add value to anything which parents would already do at home with their children. In school, the teaching is largely about sharing worries and answering children's questions / concerns – it was felt this would not be effective remotely.

Going forward, the online portal will mean that parents do have access to these resources if there should be a shut down again.

Are there any books or resources you would recommend for this?

The school has a range of books which it is proposed will go into the library and into class book corners to support children's understanding around these more challenging areas. A list will be sent out to allow parents to have consultation and all feedback will be welcomed. The books suggested for use in school are all agreed as appropriate by the diocese.

Parents shared that there are many books available about body changes and growing up. Some are for boys and girls separately e.g. Usborne range

What is taught about LGBT – the Catholic Church teaching is against this so what will you say in school?

Mrs Burnham shared that this is something which staff have discussed in training sessions as it is important to strike the right balance, to respect and not to judge. Our children live in a world where they see and (some) have experience of LGBT relationships within their own community. As a Catholic school, we teach children that every person is special, uniquely created and loved by God. They are not defined by their life choices. Children will be taught that the Catholic Church defines marriage as between a man and a woman, but they will also be told that in wider society in England, it is legal for marriage to be between any two people. Mrs Burnham referred to the clip of Pope Francis talking to a gay man who asked, "What would God say to me as a gay man?" Pope Francis replied, "Remove the adjective, it's not important. You are a man and God loves you."

ACTION:

School to send out the RHSE Policy and list of suggested books for further consultation

Parents to raise any questions about books, policy or other information to Mrs Burnham directly or at future Q and A sessions

COVID Related Scenarios

On PE days, please could children wear their PE kits all day rather than doing PE in their uniform?

This has been discussed several times by staff. Over the summer, the children wore T-shirt and shorts only in school and this was no problem because the weather was so good. Now that the weather is cold and wet, there are concerns about the children who don't have full PE kit getting too cold in only T-shirt and shorts. Mrs Burnham explained that around half the children in school don't use the sweatshirt and joggers and that staff feel it is not the right time to insist that all families purchase these items. In order to keep everyone the same in school, we will wear uniform for PE during the winter, only removing ties, changing shoes for trainers and with children who are wearing skirts/dresses able to wear shorts underneath if they would like to. The school does not think it is a perfect solution, but it is important that the children are warm enough, especially as the doors and windows in school have to be open for good ventilation according to the COVID risk assessment.

ACTION: School to review PE uniform policy in the Spring Term with warmer weather

During the lockdown, lots of digital tools became available for schooling. Is Cardinal Newman looking into bringing some innovation e.g. tools for e-homework?

Mrs Burnham explained that the school is in ongoing discussion with the Computing Team at the MAT about the best set up for e-learning (Google Classroom v Microsoft Teams) and that it would be important for the children to begin using it in school before sending it home. Mrs Burnham shared that there are a significant number of children who don't have access to their own device and this would be a limiting factor, so homework is unlikely to be set on an e-learning platform at the moment while the school is running as normal, but it is good to have options if there were to be a full closure again.

What is the school's plan for potential lockdown? Would it be different from last year?

Mrs Burnham was keen to emphasize that the Government guidance on school closure has changed significantly with regard to Primary schools and that the situation would have to be extremely serious for Primary schools to be closed again. The Government is keen to do all it can to keep schools open. There are 4 tiers of possible lockdown and in Tier 1 and Tier 2 Primary schools will continue to operate completely as normal although there would be additional restrictions for secondaries. Tier 4 would be similar to the situation in March, when all children were at home apart from those who could not be safely cared for at home. Mrs Burnham felt this was unlikely to occur again given the Government's intention to keep schools running.

Mrs Burnham praised the school community for their support in keeping the school running smoothly through the challenges we have faced. She explained that some parents who have a school DBS have volunteered to help cover in school so that staffing is not the reason for our school to close. At the moment, there are at least 2 adults in every room to facilitate separate class bubbles and the toileting and hand washing rotas; it would be possible (though difficult) for the school to operate with 3 adults per year group, but it is reassuring to know that if staffing were short, parent volunteers would be able to help with keeping the children safe and the school running a full timetable.

There are two different scenarios for closure:

- 1) A "class bubble" or group of children is sent home due to a positive test by one of their close contacts (adult / child)
In this situation, work would be set for the children from core subjects: English, Maths, RE, Science, Computing and linked to the learning in school. Teachers are preparing weekly links to match their Maths and English teaching in class, in case the scenario could happen. There is further access to broader curriculum resources from the MAT Teaching and Learning team.
- 2) The whole school closes (This would be due to a severe outbreak in school OR to national lockdown)
This is felt a highly unlikely scenario, but there are plans in place to make use of the e-learning portal for submission and feedback of work as previously discussed. Access to devices for e-learning would be facilitated as soon as possible from the DfE (KS2 only). Teachers have some curriculum resources ready to go for all subjects and as much as possible this will follow the planned-for curriculum in school, making use of Oak Academy video resources.

ACTION: Any parents with a school DBS who would be willing to volunteer to cover at short notice in case of staff shortages to make themselves known to the office who are compiling a list of volunteers

After a long period of home schooling, there must be increased differences in children's knowledge. Is there anything that can be done this year to allow learning to be more differentiated / tailored to each child's needs?

Primary schools already deliver a highly differentiated curriculum, with a difference of between 2 and 5 years between the top and bottom attaining children in our classes.

Teachers are very skilled at encouraging all children and at filling gaps in knowledge where these may have crept in. These are mainly in class groups at present, as we are fortunate to have sufficient staffing to have at least 2 adults in each classroom. Classes are focussing on key skills – spelling, number bonds, reading – to ensure consolidation and familiarity.

Mrs Burnham was keen to praise our children for coming back into school so confidently and settling so happily. There have been no evident long-lasting effects of lockdown on the mental health of children at Cardinal Newman. In terms of academic impact, the situation is slightly different across the school. In KS1, the greatest impact has been seen in Phonics, where children are not fully remembering all they have been previously taught, but they are returning quickly to rapid recall of their Phonics as time (and practice!) go on. On the other hand, in KS2, the impact has principally been in stamina, especially for writing. Some children did a lot of work over lockdown and others relatively little – this is not showing in knowledge gaps in KS2 so much as in children's concentration and writing stamina over a longer period. This too is improving as the regular school structure and school expectations become more familiar once again.

Mrs Burnham reported that overall staff were very pleased with the way children have come back into school and that parents will be able to hear more about their individual children at Parent Consultations in the coming weeks.

The meeting closed with thanks from Mrs Burnham to all parents for their support and for giving up their time to attend the meeting.

Next Meeting: Thursday 19th November at 9am

All are welcome and those who cannot attend are also welcome to submit questions in advance.