

Coffee and Conversation (Wednesday 19th January)

Reflection

Actions arising

Actions from the previous meeting (Sept) were completed apart from one - Parent Prayer Group - which had not been possible due to Covid restrictions in Autumn 2.

Action: School office to contact the Prayer Group Leader to confirm further details for Spring Term

Follow up: Prayer group beginning again Fri 28th January in the school chapel after drop off. All parents very welcome to attend.

Questions raised

1) Homework Policy

School invited comment or feedback about the current policy. One parent emailed comments as follows and other parents present also gave feedback.

Y5 child currently has her written homework on the weekend. It is given on a Friday for return the following Thursday. This is great as she is always able to do it over the weekend and give it the time and attention it requires. However Y3 child's written homework is always given on a Monday, due on a Wednesday, and then given again on a Wednesday, due on a Friday. This is really hard to juggle alongside after school clubs, dinner, reading, times table rockstars and spellings

Please can there be some kind of continuity in the homework policy, and if at all possible could the written Maths and English homework be set over days which include a weekend? Life is so busy and four out of the five week days we have after school clubs. I feel reading, spellings and times table rockstars on week days are enough of a challenge to get through.

Parents present felt that the current homework policy (agreed by Governors October 2021) was working well for their children (Year groups represented were: YR, Y1, Y2, Y3, Y4 and Y6). Classes are back in their routines after the holidays and homework is set appropriately for each class, in line with the agreed policy. The current policy contains a table setting out broadly what might be set in each year group. The policy can be found on the school website here: https://www.cardinal-newman.surrey.sch.uk/_site/data/files/FA3315B76CB354D5346A32FF7B9BECB0.pdf

Parents discussed strategies they use for homework, including increasing independence as children go through the school and setting a limit for time, so that if work takes longer than the agreed time, parents can sign that their child has done what they can in 30 minutes etc. Parents present felt that the work set could usually be done within the specified time, although it was acknowledged that every child and every family context is different. After-school commitments or busy weekends can impact on ability to complete homework and it was felt that a structured routine for homework can help with this. It was agreed there is no easy answer, as different families have different needs and wants. Parents are advised to approach their class teacher about individual homework concerns. Children who find homework challenging at home do have the option of Homework Club, which is free for Pupil Premium children and Vulnerable Learners.

One parent present specified that there had been a piece of homework set one day for the next day and this might be challenging for some families. It was agreed that it is reasonable where possible to have at least two nights to complete any piece of homework to allow parents to fit homework into the family routine.

Action: Mrs Burnham to discuss with school staff. Homework could be set with at least two days to complete it and to consider setting homework with a longer period including a weekend, where this is appropriate.

2) Clubs

Is there any chance the children could leave their bags and coats inside while doing after school activities such as football? Last week it was throwing it down with rain and all their bags, coats and books got very wet.

Also with the park now closing at 4.30 is there anyway the finish times could be staggered? It was absolute carnage down Arch Road because there wasn't anywhere to park and all the clubs came out at the same time.

We discussed the current policy of leaving belongings under the canopy, close to where the children are doing activities - this makes pick up safer and more straightforward at the end of the session and means that children's belongings are not lost around the school. Parents present understood the reasons for this policy. It was felt that the canopy does provide some protection overhead and to the hedge side, but perhaps a tarpaulin (borrowed from the nearby environmental area) might provide additional protection in particularly heavy downpours.

Finish times for clubs are already staggered, with most finishing at 4:15, but the biggest numbers finishing at 4:30 (e.g. football) and external providers setting their own timings which generally differ from the school ones. Staggering club finish times has a limited effect as it means that those with siblings in different clubs are parked for longer and have to wait around. It was felt that parking in the surrounding streets and station car park is generally adequate - it may have been that more people than usual chose to drive down Arch Road on one particularly wet evening. Parents are reminded that it is school policy not to drive down Arch Road at busy pick up and drop off times.

Action: Outdoor club leaders to be reminded to make use of the shelter of the canopy and to cover belongings with a tarpaulin if the weather is especially bad.

AOB

Parents present had no further questions and expressed that school life seemed to be running smoothly. Mrs Burnham shared that some schools seem to have had a difficult time with Covid this week, but that Cardinal Newman has had very few cases since our peak before Christmas. We are hopeful that this will continue until the guidance is further relaxed.

Will there be productions as normal this term?

Mrs Burnham confirmed that there would be forthcoming Mission Week assemblies as normal and that Y2 (Florence Nightingale) and Y4 (Rocking Romans) songs to parents would go ahead, subject to guidance and cases in school. The school's focus remains on ensuring sufficient curriculum time to provide a solid foundation for future learning.

Are there parent consultations this term?

Yes, parent consultations will be Tuesday 8th and Thursday 10th February in the hall as usual. In the Autumn Term, all parent feedback received was very positive about face to face consultations. Parents present welcomed the opportunity to look at children's books and to talk to teachers about any gaps becoming evident in children's learning.

What trips do different year groups do?

Mrs Burnham explained that year group trips can change from year to year, although some, such as Reception going to Brooklands Museum, are often the same. Residential trips are: Year 4 to Hooke Court (Dorset) for 2 nights; Year 5 to High Ashurst (Dorking) for 2 nights of Outdoor Adventurous Activity and Year 6 to France (4 nights). It is hoped that these trips will go ahead as planned this year, national guidance permitting.

Next meeting: 8:45am on Wednesday 27th April