

Parent Focus Meeting – 6th June 2019

Staff Attendees:

Mr Ord – Head of School

Mrs Bastin – Foundation Unit Leader

Parent Attendees:

Mrs Betts, Mr and Mrs Worth, Mrs Barrett, Mr Hoare, Mr and Mrs Robinson, Mrs Thorne, Mrs Prior, Mr Turner, Mr Wills, Mrs Chadwick.

Welcome by Mr Ord. The meeting started with Mr Ord thanking parents for attending.

Communication

Mr Ord explained that we work hard to keep parents informed and wanted to know whether we are missing anything. It was explained that parents of children in Foundation Stage receive a weekly newsletter as we feel it is important to have that communication in the first year of school. The rest of the school receives a newsletter at the start of each Learning Experience.

The parents enjoy receiving weekly newsletters and were thankful for the regular updates. As many children are unable to recall what has happened in their day, the weekly newsletter really helps to prompt conversations at home.

One parent mentioned that they like the inclusion of photos in the newsletter, they are a welcome insight into school life. Many parents agreed with this and it was mentioned that it would be good to include photos and details of daily tasks including lunchtimes, brushing teeth etc. Another parent supported this saying that her daughter has mentioned they play a special song when they brush their teeth and it would be good to hear more about these everyday tasks.

Mr Ord spoke to the group about how the Foundation Team work really hard to support the children to become confident, independent learners. He spoke about how we have many external visitors into school and they often comment on how the children are more independent than many other schools.

Parents were very pleased with the newsletter and app, they said it works well. A few parents mentioned that there are many different forms of communication from school and it can be quite overwhelming. There are many different platforms and apps and it is hard to remember all the passwords. Mr Ord clarified that the different forms of communication serve different purposes and he acknowledged that the school uses many different platforms. The school app is designed to be a rolling newsfeed to give a flavour of what is happening in school. Longer pieces of information will come via email. Throw away instant information will come via text.

A parent praised the online school calendar stating that events are clearly detailed which is really useful. That calendar can be accessed through the app or the website.

Mrs Bastin asked parents how they accessed the newsletter (via the website or App). The majority of people use the app and it became apparent that a few parents were unaware that school website version contained more photographs. The app only takes one photo but the website version takes many more. Mrs Bastin explained that all the newsletters are saved on the school website and many parents were keen to go back and have a look.

Curriculum

Mr Ord wanted to know how the parents felt about the curriculum, and if their child was excited by anything in particular. Which activities prompted conversations at home? Mr Ord gave a few examples of the experiences their children have had so far.

One parent mentioned that her children loved the air ambulance visit and now every time they see a helicopter they say it is the air ambulance. They also talked a lot about the police visit. Many parents agreed with this. Woodland Camp and

risky play were mentioned and how it is wonderful for children to be part of these experiences in school. Parents talked about the visit from the trainee Doctors, and how this has influenced their children. It prompted lots of talk, particularly about hand washing.

Parents see the value in children taking part in everyday experiences and thought it was great that the children were able to visit the local Post Office and post an invitation home. They felt it was important for the children to be part of the local community.

One attendee commented that it is so wonderful to see his granddaughter coming out of school so happy and that she enjoys it so much she wants to continue the learning at home. Another parent was thankful for the opportunity to come into class and read with her child – *It was amazing*.

Parents feel that their children are very lucky to experience such a rich curriculum and are pleased that they are encouraged to take risks and try new things.

A parent compared their child's curriculum experience at Preston to a friend at another school and said how impressed external people are with the opportunities and the variety of learning we have at Preston.

Mr Ord explained about the vision of Preston and why we value an innovative curriculum. The school culture is such that teachers have autonomy to design the curriculum themselves. The leaders of the school are there to support and help teachers, not dictate. This freedom generates more innovation. By taking risks, we model real life.

School Values

This year Puffins and Penguins have taken part in many more assemblies than ever before, to boost their Independence.

Parents were very impressed with the children and their confidence and liked the variety of assemblies. A few parents mentioned that it is hard to attend every event and they feel bad when they are unable to attend. Mr Ord acknowledged this and explained as a parent he has been through the same experience. One parent reflected on her first visit to Preston. She was impressed by the confidence of children across the school and can see the value of taking part in the assemblies.

Mr Ord spoke about school values and explained how they are used and recorded. Education is about developing character.

Parents were really impressed with the School Values Shop and that the children are being rewarded for their hard work. Several parents mentioned that children are using the language of school values at home, for example being determined. Parents felt that school values have a positive impact of school and home life.

One parent linked this to the enjoyment their child gets from being Special Person for the day. Parents were in agreement that their child often talks about being Special Person and they are proud and look forward to their turn. They felt it generates conversations at home and promotes their confidence and independence.

Tapestry

As a final area of discussion, Mr Ord asked the parents about Tapestry, the online observation journal. He wanted to know if future parents would benefit from online access.

Many parents had experience of using Tapestry in Pre-school and acknowledged that they were able to have a two way conversation with teachers. One parent compared it to the red home school link books saying that they are happy with the book as a form of communication.

Parents had concerns that it would be another app they would need to log onto and one parent said they felt it would be a lot of additional work for teachers when they already receive a detailed newsletter. The consensus seemed to be, do not create a huge new amount of work for teachers unnecessarily.

Mr Ord asked if there was anything else people would like to add.

One parent asked how the mixed year groups work?

Mr Ord explained that each school has an agreed number of children coming each year. Our number is 45. After Foundation Stage we organise that with 15 children in a class, with 15 older ones. That produces three parallel classes in each Unit e.g 3 classes of year 1 +2. Then the three teachers talk and share together. It encourages the sharing of ideas and solutions and promotes innovation. For children, they either have strong older role models in class, or are expected to verbalise their learning to the younger children in their class. Both these are positive experiences.

Mr Ord closed the meeting thanking everyone for having such honest discussions.