

Parent Forum Meeting Minutes
Tuesday 11th June 2024 – 9.30am to 10.30am

	Item	Action
	Attendees: Mrs Grattan, Mr Maynard, Mrs Kazzaz, Mrs Aldous, Mr Connell, Mrs Capon and Miss Colfer (minutes)	
	Apologies for Absence: Mrs Rispoli (unwell child), Miss Panayi (PTA) and Mrs Lee (due to technical issues at school meaning Mrs Lee was unable to join via TEAMS)	
	<p>Minutes:</p> <p>1. <u>Early start/Breakfast club:</u> Mrs Grattan explained to parents that we have previously changed breakfast club to a 7.30am start (summer term a few years ago, following parent requests) however the take up wasn't popular so not viable due to not being cost effective. After this was raised at parent forum last academic year this was investigated again and Staff were asked their thoughts and availability to start at 7.30am however due to their own personal family life/commitments, there were no staff able to start prior to 8am. Staff situations have not changed this year therefore this is still not an option for school at this time however, we can always relook at this next academic year.</p> <p>2. <u>School trips-parent volunteers:</u> Mrs Grattan can fully understand why parents require as much as notice as possible for helping with trips for taking time off work etc however sometimes, not often but sometimes, this isn't always possible. Most recently we have had delays with parents returning intention to pay forms which need to be returned prior to trips being booked to ensure we can afford to book and pay for the trip to ensure the trip can go ahead with no impact on the school budget. Delays in parents completing forms or making payments on time, make this process harder for us to give parents plenty of notice, Mrs Grattan has reiterated to staff to always ensure they provide plenty of notice going forward where possible.</p> <p>3. <u>Term time holidays- impact on child's education:</u> Mrs Grattan added this item to the agenda to just share with parents the impact that taking holidays in term time can have on a child's education and they way in which the curriculum is delivered to children. Mrs Grattan advised parents that the last week of Term 5 and start of Term 6 hasn't been great with parents taking time off for holidays. Whilst we understand fully the massive difference in prices and this being the main reason parents choose to take holidays during school time, it does have a big impact. Mrs Grattan shared an example which was that in one particular class, we only had 24 children in school due to absence taken in term time. This particular class then couldn't begin one of their literacy texts as it required the whole class being present to read a shared piece of text that would be a main focus of their work during the term. This then meant the full start to that terms text was delayed as teachers would need to catch up all absent pupils to ensure full understanding. The curriculum is very stretched already due to expectations of learning as part of the National Curriculum therefore pupils taking holidays during term time does not benefit children's education long term, particularly when taking regular school holidays during the school academic year. Mr Connell didn't feel it was right for other children to suffer due to some parents choosing to take holidays during term time. Instead of children being penalised by having the curriculum disrupted and pushed back, Mr Connell feels all the work they have missed during their absence period, should be sent home to be completed by the child with parents and then returned to school. Mrs Grattan advised we have tried to take this route previously, however parents/children chose not to complete the work and it was never handed back</p>	

in. Mr Connell felt strongly about this and finds it infuriating as he felt that it was the parents of the absent children who should take responsibility and not his children who are in school when they should be. As a school we are frustrated with this too as it hinders the progress the children can make. Mrs Grattan did reiterate that the pupils in school continued with learning but it is adapted so that pupils in school can make progress whilst reducing the amount of catch up work teachers have to do with absent pupils on their return. Delivering catch up work impacts on teacher time and workload. Mrs Grattan confirmed that she agreed with Mr Connell however, we are responsible for educating all pupils even if parents choose to take term time holidays, potentially impacting their child's education. Staff do understand as we see the long term affect absence can have for children.

4. Amazon Wishlists:

Amazon Wishlists were mainly successful when we did them in Summer 2023. Some classes gained a lot from the wishlist and other classes not as much. Mrs Grattan also stated that some parents ordered in the summer term but felt their children didn't benefit as classes moved up in Summer. We do appreciate and thank parents for their support with this. We would like to do it again this term, however this time, we wish to do it as a collective (whole school) so all classes can benefit and items can be equally shared out. Mrs Grattan also mentioned that the school were looking into bulk buying items so orders are more cost effective. Staff have been putting together a list to which the deadline is Friday and we aim to get this list out to parents next week if possible. We will send details out to parents as soon as we are able. This list is a wishlist so no obligation for parents to purchase items, it is a voluntary contribution from parents if you wish to purchase items as you are able and have the means to do so. We would be extremely grateful for all help and support from parents.

5. Trips/workshops:

Mrs Grattan explained that not all parents make the voluntary contribution for trip payments despite completing an intention to pay. Because of this there is a chance from next academic year that these trips/workshops may need to be stopped due to school receiving less and less payments each time from parents and the school budget cannot support a large shortfall. The PTA do provide the school with a contingency fund but this is not an infinite amount and shared across seven classes does not go far. WE are grateful to the PTA for this and it goes some way to ensure trips/workshops can take place, however where there is a large shortfall this cannot be covered in full. Our current school budget cannot sustain covering the shortfall for trips and workshops as it is desperately needed in more priority areas. We have been looking at more efficient ways of arranging trips and may decide to send out 'intention to pay' letters to parents and ask for payments to be sent in at the same time prior to booking trips and paying deposits- this will help us to ensure we can book the trip and it can go ahead. Mr Connell asked if there was any update on the 'Big day out' which was mentioned in a previous meeting. Mrs Grattan assured parents we will be looking into this however; other things have taken priority currently. Mrs Grattan is also looking at mini buses as an option and is conversing with other heads for ideas. Mr Connell feedback that the carsharing on the last trip/day out was a success and with plenty of notice, parents don't mind arranging this between themselves. Mrs Kazzaz shared how she feels the instalment option on Bromcom has been a big help as you can spread the costs and this is more manageable for all parents. Mrs Grattan explained that we do try to keep costs as low as possible either by choosing local trips so parents can drop off/collect, therefore saving money on coaches and by PTA contributing funds towards trips. Mr Connell asked that we provide as much notice to parents as possible for trips whether that is for payments or volunteers and to arrange carsharing if required.

Mr Maynard took some time to feedback following the governors meeting two weeks ago regarding the school budget.

Mr Maynard stated that the budget meeting confirmed costs have gone up increasingly - fuel, food costs, pay rises for staff which they are entitled too and it proved the government haven't provided school with as much funds as they could. There were discussions around topics such as school meals and the ways in which we can raise funds as a school to help the school. Mr Maynard expressed his gratitude for our school PTA and the fantastic work they do to help our school, we would be lost without their help. Mr Maynard would appreciate parent reps encouraging parents to support and help the PTA if they have any spare time at all as they are so valuable. Mr Maynard spoke to parent reps about an idea which was raised at the meeting however no set decision has been made. There are talks of school setting up a 'voluntary fund' whereby parents would each pay a set amount of money (which would be set and agreed whether that is £30 or £50 for example) at the start of the year, for the school year and this would be used to potentially cover costs of trips and workshops meaning fewer costs during the academic year. Obviously, this is a voluntary fund and there is no requirement or obligation for parents to contribute, we fully understand that some parents can help and others can't. Parents paying their bills or putting food on the table is the highest priority so this comes first always. We don't want parents feeling uncomfortable or pressured as this would be on a voluntary basis- we fully understand not all parents' circumstances are the same. Mr Maynard would like to gauge parents views on this idea including parent reps- once again no decision has been made, it is just an idea at the moment which is being discussed.

Parent Reps were not against the idea and would put out to their Whatsapp groups. Mrs Capon asked if doing this voluntary fund would mean parents wouldn't have to pay for trips etc separately through the school year. Mrs Grattan responded to say that we would hope this would be the case however, there may be occasions where little things come up that require additional payments. Mr Maynard assured that by doing this fund, it would mean that trips and workshops could be arranged quicker and be confirmed as the money would be there readily available to make bookings and parents could rest knowing that they have paid at the start of the year and forget about it. Mrs Kazzaz asked the reasoning behind timescales like with the PGL trip for example and why payments are asked for so early. Mrs Grattan explained that with some trips like PGL, bookings have to be made as early as January for the following year due to factors such as dates available, securing dates we want and securing the best price we possibly can. Mrs Grattan explained that the first payment for PGL was due last Friday (7-6-24) as we as a school had to pay the deposit to PGL on Tuesday (11-6-24), the payment schedule for future payments reflects the dates when the school have to pay instalments to PGL. Mrs Grattan had already arranged with PGL to have the deposit date put back to support giving parents more notice for the payment. For events like workshops parents worry and feel pressured about buying costumes- Mrs Grattan assured as we have said previously, we would rarely, if ever expect or ask parents to purchase a costume for any workshop. We always say to parents, if children have a costume already or have items they can use to put together a costume- great! There is no expectation whatsoever to purchase a costume unless there is a specific reason this is needed. As mentioned, no final decision has been made on the voluntary fund (some schools do this and some don't), there is no pressure on parents, we simply wish to find the simplest way for everyone and whatever ultimately helps benefit our school.

6. Pre-selecting lunches:

We are aware there have been discussions and comments around a message we put out asking for parents support in pre-selecting school lunches and understand some parents have expressed worries about children missing out if parents don't take the time to pre-select meals. Mrs Grattan clarified that the information we will use will be totalling all of the school meals taken that day and then taking a percentage of how many from that

	<p>total were pre-selected to give us the class average. We are aware of our regular packed lunch children so they will not loose out or be affected in any way. From September we will be able to add packed lunch as a pre-selected option on Bromcom, we are unable to make changes part way through the term as this affects the way things are set up. BY introducing this initiative it is not our intention to put pressure on parents. We now have access to a programme which allows us to complete basic tasks in the click of a button so we feel we should be all using it to its fullest potential. By parents pre-selecting their child's food choices daily, this reduces teacher admin time in the morning, so learning can start promptly, which in turn means meal selections get to the office sooner. The process at present is taking a long time for teachers with pupils making choices on the day, so speeding up this process helps everyone. Pre-selecting lunches help parents to know what their child has had to eat each day (this was mentioned as one of things parents wanted in previous parent forum meeting), it also allows the kitchen to have school meal numbers quicker which helps to ensure cooking is completed in good time for the 12pm lunchtime deadline, this also helps Miss Colfer to log school dinner numbers sooner, giving more time for other admin tasks that she needs to undertake. Mrs Grattan would be open to hearing parent's views/ideas on how we could make this job easier and other suggestions for incentives to get all parents / pupils to pre-select meals prior to coming to school.</p>	
3.	<p>Any other business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcements/messages on Bromcom- what is the difference? Which one should parents be looking at? Miss Colfer will look into this and the best way to make this as easy as possible. • Sports Day- for next academic year could parents attend the afternoon races as they have done previously? Mrs Grattan advised she would chat with Mrs Driscoll, PE Co-ordinator, and see if this is possible. Will there be a parent race this year? This is time dependent (we ran out of time last year) and previously there have been injuries due to the competitiveness during the parent races. • Sports Day (weather)- Mrs Grattan announced 10th July will be our reserved date for Sports Day if we have to postpone on 19 June due to poor weather. We cannot make a definitive decision until we are certain as it is not a decision made lightly but will let parents know what is happening as soon as we are able. • New Parent Reps Sept 2024 to July 2025- Parent reps to put a message out to class parents via their WhatsApp groups and see if any new parents wish to join as our new class parent rep from September or if agreed current member will continue. We would encourage where possible for a new member to be voted on to allow another parent the chance and provide different opinions and a different point of view. Please can names be sent in via admin@higham.kent.sch.uk by no later than 5th July so we can arrange future meeting dates prior to the summer holidays and start with our first meeting in Term 1. We will look at the best day for meetings that works for everyone, this year Tuesday has been most successful. <p>Mrs Grattan thanked all parent reps for their help and support over this academic year.</p>	

Meeting ended at 10.35am

Meeting Action Points Summary

Item	Person Actioning	Action	Action completed
4	Mrs Grattan and Miss Mills	Amazon Wishlists to be sent out to parents wc 17/6/24 if possible	
AOB	Mrs Grattan	Discuss with Mrs Driscoll, staff and school council possibility of parents attending race part of sports day.	
AOB	All parent reps	Send a message out on the WhatsApp group about voting new parent rep for academic year 2024/2025. Outgoing parent rep to let school office know of the outcome.	