

**St Andrew's Parent Partnership Questions**

**February 2020**

**Reception**

**1. *Is there any chance of a drama club at school?***

We try to have a range of different clubs and activities available. In the recent past, we have had a drama club which unfortunately closed due to lack of uptake from the pupils. It is something the school would consider reinstating as a club should suitable provider become available.

**2. *I would like to know how much Christian education there is. How is it delivered? Are there specific sessions or is it threaded through lots of different activities?***

As a church of England school we teach from a Christian perspective with Christian values at our core. Worship occurs each day with hymns and prayers. RE is taught using the Hertfordshire agreed syllabus and 'Understanding Christianity' is a scheme of work that threads through all of the RE teaching.

**3. *Is the school planning to invest in the playground and erect a proper fence around it to protect the children from straying? I am very concerned about their health and safety, dogs and strangers that could put them in danger.***

For several years, The School's Governors have been in ongoing negotiations with Totteridge Manor Association (TMA) to establish a permanent fence at the end of the playground. There are a number of land ownership issues which complicate matters. In order for a fence to be granted by TMA, there are a number of legal points to be negotiated by the diocesan legal team and TMA's representatives. During the school day the boundary is managed by our staff who supervise the children while they are outside playing. The children are regularly reminded what our expectation of them is.

**Year 1**

**1. *I feel the kids reading book should be changed daily. I can appreciate some kids are not reading as much, but if parents want a daily reading book, teachers should allow kids to have a new book.***

During soft start mornings (doors open from 8:40am), children have the opportunity to change their books. We support the children by reminding them daily. It is helpful if all pupils bring in their reading books daily. The teaching of reading occurs throughout the day across all subjects. Teachers are continuously working to support reading. The reading books are a consolidation of the ongoing work.

**2. *We feel that the Y1 homework is not sufficient compared to what the kids used to get in reception. Speaking to parents from other schools, most homework is usually posted online with kids who have the capacity to take on more have the option to do so online. I can understand having things online can have their own advantages and disadvantages, but feel the scope and variety of homework is a lot less.***

The homework set is a continuation of their learning from class. Each week the homework will vary depending on the topics; Maths, English, Science, Topic and RE. In addition to the homework, there is a challenge/extension using \*\*\* to indicate this or 'you can also challenge yourself...' Now that the children are working in KS1 there is an expectation that they attempt the homework with increasing levels of independence which is as they do in class.

- 3. Is there an update for the parents on the higher fence in the playground/Green? I know this has been discussed at great length before, but will be good to know what, if any, progress has been made.**

Please refer to earlier answers regarding negotiations around securing a fence.

- 4. Parents evening: I feel the time of 10 mins is not quite sufficient. Especially for parents who need to cover off more aspects for their children. If possible, it will be good to have at least 15 mins with the teachers.**

We are sorry that you feel 10 minutes is insufficient time, as it is the standard time in the majority of mainstream primary schools. Many parents feel that this is sufficient time. School leaders, including school governors, and OFSTED are mindful of teacher work load, especially when they are working from early each morning.

- 5. Any update on the resurfacing of the playground?**

Most of you will know that the complications regarding the fence are also related to the fact that we do not own all of the playground. Therefore, any alterations to the surface of the playground are part of the ongoing negotiations between school governors, the diocese of St Albans and TMA. We will inform parents as soon as we have any update on this, we appreciate your patience.

- 6. Will there be a pantomime excursion this year?**

Yes, there will be a Pantomime performance in December 2020.

- 7. Why does the nativity play stop at Year 2? Most schools continue up to Year 6?**

The school nativity is a wonderful opportunity for our younger pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills while performing the story of the Nativity. Our older pupils take responsibility for leading church services at other significant points of the Christian year e.g. Harvest, St Andrew's day and Easter etc. Our Year 5 and 6 pupils have the opportunity to participate in a performance at the end of the school year.

- 8. Will there be a maths curriculum evening? It was mentioned that there was one last year for the parents to attend.**

Yes, this is scheduled for the 2<sup>nd</sup> April at 6.30pm. It will be led by a maths consultant who we have worked with previously. We are hoping for a good attendance from parents. **Please note this for parents /carers only (no pupils please)**

## **Year 2**

- 1. What are the plans for refurbishing the playground? Why is it a parking place during the weekend?**

Please see earlier answers regarding playground.

The school is leased on a Sunday morning and their cars can be seen on the playground. When we are able to resurface the playground, these cars will no longer be permitted to park there.

- 2. What's happening with the awnings for the summer/hot weather? Money was raised last year. Will they be in place for this season?**

With reduced school budgets we are grateful for the ongoing fundraising that the PTA do.

This year we have relied upon this to supplement resources in reading, music and science to address curriculum changes and OFSTED expectations. The school still hopes to install awnings as part of the playground refurbishment. Any awning will need to comply with TMA stipulations and therefore this limits the style and model and subsequent cost of any awnings. This is being built into our plans and costings for such a project.

- 3. Please explain the rationale behind parents not being allowed to take photos/ video of their own children at school, during assembly or productions? Having to pay for photos and videos does not prevent people sharing them, if that is their intention. If the school stipulated that there was to be no public use/ online sharing of pictures and video, parents should respect that. However paying for the video on a USB stick does not prevent that from happening.**

The rationale for undertaking a Nativity production is centred on the development of the pupils. The staff feel that it is an opportunity for the children to participate in a collaborative performance regardless of the size of their part. Our priority is to nurture the children and ensure they all enjoy and benefit from this experience. Unfortunately, sometimes this joyful experience for the children and their teachers is overshadowed by the behaviour of some of the audience members. From experience, when individuals use an iPad and mobile phones to record a performance, it distracts and detracts from what the children are doing. Some audience members stand up in front of others and purposely distract the children. Many pupils report to their teachers that they do not like this and is overwhelming, particularly for our youngest pupils.

While we appreciate that it is not a professional (West End!) performance, we feel that any audience in school should sit respectfully and unobtrusively enjoy the show. In addition, we have some families who have some safeguarding requirements which may vary from year to year and can change at the last minute. By having one individual with the responsibility for filming/photography we can limit the amount of exposure these particular children have.

- 4. Can you update us on the decision for next year's panto? We think it is a great experience for the children and should be continued. Can the PTA do something to assist to ensure the Panto experience goes on?**

Yes, there will be a Pantomime performance in December 2020.

### **Year 3**

- 1. Is there a possibility to provide a microwave for people who send kids in with packed lunch? This parent would like to send cooked food sometimes and is happy for the school to define any conditions such as a certain type of container or supervised usage. The parent is happy to contribute to the cost and maybe make a collection of other parents who send in a packed lunch.**

Unfortunately, we cannot facilitate this request primarily due to health and safety and staffing. Parents have the option of a cooked school meal or a lunch provided from home. Some pupils use Thermo containers that maintain a hot temperature for precooked food. The logistics of supervising pupils' use of a single microwave is not feasible.

- 2. This one is more of a feedback than a question – Year 3 seem to be getting a lot of poster homework this year and these are quite time consuming for us parents (research, then talking to the kids to decide what to include, drawings, pics etc). It would be great to have homework that the kids can complete independently as opposed to homework for parents. Maybe a fact sheet could be better?**

After speaking with Mrs Roberts she has said that there has generally been one poster homework sent out at the beginning of each of the half terms as we start a new topic. The children were asked to find out 5 facts about their new topic and present these findings on a poster. It's an opportunity for children to share with parents and carers what their new topic is for the half term and identify areas they might learn about, but is something that they should be able to do independently.

- 3. Is it possible to have a mini example of the maths questions and answers with workings on the homework sheet that's sent out to us so that we are able to help the children with their**

**homework rather than teach them a way to find the answer that may be different to how it's now taught?**

If you visit our website in the 'children's section/class learning' you will find a maths page outlining the various ways that maths is now taught. We would strongly encourage parents to attend the maths evening on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020

The homework is based upon maths work the children have completed throughout the week, so children should be familiar with the methods we have covered in class and be able to apply them to their homework learning.

**4. Are children allowed to go to the toilet when required? My child is often reluctant to raise their hand to ask to go in lessons.**

Children are of course allowed to go to the toilet when required. Now they are in the Juniors, they are reminded to go during playtimes and lunchtimes as well so as to avoid missing parts of learning time in lessons and support their growing independence.

**Year 4**

**1. Please may you ask what's happening for with Scooter/bike parking. I asked when we started and they applied for permission, I didn't hear how it ended.**

There is a cycle rack that is situated at the end of the playground where it meets the green. Pupils are able to use it if they cycle to school.

**2. Can you ask for an update re the sun canopies for the classroom windows?**

Please see previous answers.

**3. My child is still upset about the Ashlyns menu competition which the school sent out and then didn't follow up!**

We are sorry your child was upset. The school is also disappointed that Ashlyns were not able to facilitate this beyond the entry stage.

**4. Can we get a breakdown of fundraising and what this has been spent on? I am sure it goes on classroom stuff we don't see. But good to know what happened to improvements to playground and sun canopies etc. Is there also an update on fencing on playground with Totteridge Association?**

Please see earlier answers and to refer to the PTA summary of spending which was recently sent to parents by the PTA chair.

**5. In light of the fun roadworks, could you ask at your meeting if the council could inform school of roadworks that may affect us. Know it's not directly school related!**

The local council do not notify us regarding future roadworks but anyone can use the following website link to see if there is anything that may cause some delays to and from school

<http://streetworks.org.uk/live-traffic-works-map>

**6. Could you ask the commencement date of 'Project Playground revamp'?**

Please see earlier answers.

**7. Would you consider reducing (or better still, removing altogether) red meat from the school menu as a progressive commitment towards promoting healthier eating habits and sustainability?**

In the three-week menu cycle there are five occasions when red meat is a menu option.

Thus ensuring that all pupils' dietary requirements are met. We will forward your suggestion to our catering provider.

**8. Regarding the annual school Christmas pantomime trip, could you look into the feasibility of**

**raising money for this from the summer fair, christmas fair or a similar fundraising event? This could help provide financial support to families who have multiple siblings in the school as well as those who face financial difficulties.**

A pantomime has been booked, any fundraising ideas and suggestions are welcomed by the PTA.

- 9. Maths homework – it's been raised numerous times that quite a few children are struggling to understand different methods used and parents are unable to help as we also don't understand the methods (we were all taught differently). Is it possible we could have a work sheet uploaded to the school website to help us understand the new methods so we can support our children at home. According to the school calendar, there is a Maths Curriculum Session for parents on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, we feel this is too late in the school year.**

Please see previous answer regarding information on our website and how weekly homework consolidates that week's learning. We look forward to seeing you all on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April when we are fortunate to have a maths consultant delivering the information for parents. This evening is for parents/carers only.

#### **Year 5**

No questions were received

#### **Year 6**

- 1. Just wanted to say how good it is to see the children putting so much effort into maths, spelling, grammar and comprehension this year. It is a pity that some of this good work didn't start last year - these are exactly the skills they needed to build for the 11+. Perhaps the school could consider introducing these more gradually from year 5.**

Maths, spelling, grammar and comprehension is taught across all of the national curriculum not just in year 6. Each year build upon the previous year's objectives. The school has a statutory duty to deliver the National Curriculum, not the 11+ tests. Therefore, the skills that your child has been taught this academic year have built upon those taught in previous classes.

#### **Messages from the school:**

1. The Staff are really grateful for the PTA contributions and to those to give up their time to support the school. We have been able to provide resources to enrich current topics.
2. The school closes early at the end of every full term (Christmas, Easter and summer) However, we are experiencing an unprecedented number of requests both last minute and in advance at the end of each half term, for children to leave school early to commence their holidays.  
We give parents our term dates early each year (website has had 2020/21 dates for some time) We would ask that parents/carers take these dates into account when booking holidays, leaving enough time to get to the airport. Many thanks for your cooperation with this.
3. In the autumn term we ran tours for prospective reception pupils, it was lovely to meet so many new people and also to receive so many compliments about our school, our pupils and our staff.  
Our pupils often return from a class visit and their teachers remark on their exemplary behaviour.
4. As always teachers are available to talk with parents please always, come and ask us if you have any questions at the earliest opportunity. It is easy to overthink a query unless you seek an answer from us

