

## **Meet the Head ("MTH"): Minutes of meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2015, 9-10am in the Sports Hall**

Main topic: Assessment systems

Attendees: Approximately 26 parents and a few pre-school children

Hosted by: Mr T Davies, Ms E Steel, Mrs K Spencer-Allen

Governors present: Sarah Ransome

### **Introduction**

Mr Davies introduced the meeting and noted that Sarah Ransome, as parent governor, would be writing notes of the meeting; there were no objections to this.

### **Feedback from action points recorded at previous MTH meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2015 (which was primarily a presentation on eSchools)**

**Action: When giving advice to children not to share passwords, school to distinguish between friends/siblings and parents.**

Response: The school is advising children not to share their passwords, other than with parents

**Action: School to consider access issues [to eSchools] for dyslexic children.**

Response: Mr Davies acknowledged that this was a great point and noted that parents can help their children in this respect.

**Action: Schools to send out login details to Y3 parents w/c Monday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2015 and to everyone else in w/c 2 November 2015.**

Response: All Y3 parents have logins. However, ePay has been suspended due to technical issues and the school has another online payment system lined up. The website is fine and unaffected by such issues. **Action point to carry forward: issue of logins to all parents. New action point: set up online payment system for parents.**

**Action: Mr Davies to share Y4 residential trip information.**

Response: We haven't told the children yet, but there will be a day trip to Mepal Outdoor Centre on May 19<sup>th</sup> 2016, followed by a sleepover at school and another Cambridge based activity the following day. Full information to follow. **Action point: issue Y4 activity/sleepover information to children/parents.**

**Action: Regarding bilingual children and French lessons at school - Mr Davies to speak to French teacher and if appropriate, put her in touch with bilingual parents.**

Mr Davies has had an initial discussion with the Parkside French teacher. She is differentiating as well as she can. She is aware of bilingual children. Writing is an area to move onto. She will be looking for bilingual volunteers amongst parents and if none come forward the school will look elsewhere for volunteers. Watch this space.

**Action point to carry forward: school to ask bilingual parents to come forward to assist in French lessons.**

**Action: Action on feedback from parent questionnaires re: homework policy and sharing more information of the work of the governors.**

Response: These will be incorporated into the School Development Plan ("SDP")

Action: school to share SDP

**Action: School to carry out more analysis/work on bullying and report back, following feedback in parental questionnaire.**

Response: A children's questionnaire to dig into this will be circulated in the second half of the autumn term 2015. We have also reviewed all the bullying cases we looked at last year. In virtually all cases, reports from the children involved are that these issues have been resolved. We know issues will crop up and sometimes they are complex friendship issues. There is no magic wand. We are successfully resolving the issues that crop up.

Action point to carry forward: School to circulate children's questionnaire on bullying.

Action point not addressed from previous meeting and therefore carried forward: School to distribute eSchools information sheet to parents.

Questions on the above feedback:

**Q1. Children in Y4 will be disappointed at the residential proposals. Couldn't this year group have a proper residential trip organised for Y5?**

A: It is a cost issue. We take Y6 to Minehead and it is cheap. Prices for a 2/3 day trip are expensive. We will try to make it an exciting experience.

**Q2. Why do the three classes have to go at the same time? Couldn't you send two groups to Burwell?**

A: How would we split them up? Two classes, then one class on its own? Split one class in half? There would be staffing issues. We have probably come up with the best solution and will take feedback after the event.

### **Reception baseline assessment**

Mrs Spencer-Allen then presented on the Reception baseline. Her presentation is available on the school website.

In short, the Department for Education ("DfE") has introduced this assessment for children at the start of reception to given a baseline assessment against which to judge future progress. It will be compulsory from September 2016 but St Matthew's has introduced it this September. The school has chosen to use a product called "Early Excellence ("EE") Baseline Assessment."

Questions on reception baseline:

**Q3: The yes/no feature of the assessment is alarming; it doesn't take into account a child's curiosity.**

A: Yes it is; I completely agree. The DfE has strict criteria. EE has devised yes/no in order to give a score at the end of the assessment. However, the school will use the assessment to improve teaching (by using the outcomes to arrive at the next steps for the child etc.)

Q4: For some statements, the child is awarded either zero or two points?

A: Yes, we will feedback on this to our cluster group and EE. It is a transition year and there is some trial and error. EE may tweak this before next year.

Q5: It doesn't take into account the age of the child?

A: No. It uses the Leuven scales as a key indicator of how settled and involved the child is. If the Leuven scales indicate the child is settled, then the assessment is undertaken.

Q6: What's the reason for this? Are the government doing it to assess the school?

A: Yes – it's about accountability in assessing children's progress.

Q7. How will you share the results of the assessments?

A: At parent consultations. The key thing for us is to use the assessment to arrive at the next steps for the child.

Q8. What will the actual data look like?

A: Mrs Spencer-Allen will tell us when she has seen it. Mr Davies added that there will be a national average and you will know where children sit within this. It may be difficult to moderate in the first year.

Action: School to share data from reception baseline assessments.

Q9. Can you distribute the presentation for parents who are not at the meeting?

A: Yes a version thereof will be on the website.

Action: School to add assessment presentations to the website.

### Target Tracker ("TT") Assessment

Ms Steel then made a presentation on "Target Tracker", the product that will be used throughout the school to assess the levels that children are working at now that government has decided to move away from using national curriculum levels.

A copy of the presentation is on the school's website.

In summary, a child in year 1 will be in one of three bands: 1B (Beginning) 1W (Working within) or 1S (Secure). Similarly a child in year 6 will usually be in band 6B, 6W or 6S.

### Questions on Target Tracker

Q10. Can you go up to a higher level than the one indicated for children generally for a particular year group? E.g. can a child in year 5 be assessed at level 6B/6W/6S?

A: If a child in year one is at level 1B, they can move to year two without achieving 1S.

Q11. So can a year one child get a 2B?

A: Yes, but the bands are broader and more challenging than the old national curriculum levels. We do have children working in bands above the typical bands for their year group. There is more emphasis now on making a child's understanding more secure before moving up to the next level

(rather than being accelerated through the old national curriculum levels). In addition, items that were in the curriculum previously in year five are now in the year four curriculum for example.

Mr Davies added that we are at the very early stages of understanding what these levels mean. So a 3B may shift in meaning over time.

Q12. Wouldn't it be a good idea to share the class/year group average?

A: It might be. We need to look at the data and see where we are at. We don't want to give you misleading information.

Q13. Follow up question to Q12...A 3B is different year on year, so if you see that all the children in the class/year group are roughly the same then you will know your child is near the average for that class/year group.

A: There has been a bit of a shift in the assessments e.g. literacy has moved away from composition and more towards 'secretarial' skills like editing.

Q14. Also as a follow up to Q12 and Q13...It's not about using the information to judge the teacher. If the calibration changes we need to see it. So we may be expecting a 3W, but are given a 3B and we would like to know we are in line with the class/year group. If a lot of children are 3B that will reassure the parent.

A: Yes, we can ask teachers to say Charlie is 3B, which is the same as most of the rest of the year group and attach some numbers.

Q15. Also connected with the last 3 questions...When will we see this information on the class/year group?

A: Moderation goes on all year.

Q16. Also connected with the last 4 questions...When will the decision be made to share the information on the whole school/year group?

A: By January when we will be in a better position

Action: School to share levels for the school across year groups in January 2016.

Q17 It's a bit worrying to hear that there is a shift to secretarial work. I saw one of the TT statements on the presentation that asks if you can use an apostrophe. I'm not bothered about this, so how will you ensure that you don't focus too much on the targets?

A: Composition is important. Y6 teaching has added secretarial skills because you need this to get to certain levels. But we could have done it earlier.

Q18. So it won't change what you are teaching too much?

A: We are doing "Big Writing" and being creative. But we are also teaching drafting/redrafting/editing as well.

Q19. Are the statements available?

A: They will be. These slides and the statements and the bands will be on the website (and we will take down the national curriculum levels). They will be included in the children's learning journals for reading, writing and maths. Not for other subjects at the moment. We are still using national curriculum levels for these other subjects. We share some of your concerns about this process but

we think we can improve teaching and learning for all children whatever the government's objectives are.

Action: School to add presentation slides, the statement banks and the bands to the website and remove national curriculum levels

Q20. Will the gaps in a child's knowledge at a particular level be shared at parents' evening? How can parents see this? There isn't enough time to cover this at parents' evening.

A: At the DART meeting, the next steps are the key focus. Copies of the DART sheets can go to parents. Some staff were concerned that DART meetings are meant to be informal and that they just jot down the next steps (rather than typing them up) but this is ok. Parents could write down the targets and then look up the statements on the website. Perhaps we could number the statements making it easier to tie up with the next steps.

Q21. What is DART?

A: Dedicated Assessment Review Type, which starts in reception. Summarises what a child does well/can't do well. It is recorded on a piece of paper.

Actions: School to number statements and have them available at parents' evenings so parents can make a note of which targets children have. School to share DART sheets.

Q22. Should maths homework be set at different levels?

A: Should be.

Q23. If a teacher refuses to provide homework of a different level, what do you do?

A: Raise it with the class teacher first.

Q24. Should a teacher mark homework every week?

A: Yes they should mark it every week.

Q25. What if a teacher asks the children to mark their own homework?

A: Sometimes it is appropriate but a teacher should check it as well.

Q26. What if it is not marked?

A: Raise it with the teacher, assistant headteacher, headteacher.

Mr Davies noted that scale scores will be reported to parents at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2. Maths and SPAG (Spelling Punctuation and Grammar) test results are a snapshot of how the pupil performs on the day. There is no teacher assessment as part of the statutory assessment results for these areas, just the test result. Writing is teacher assessed.