

Meet the Head ("MTH"): Minutes of meeting held on 8th January 2016, 9-10am in the Sports Hall

Main topic: School Development Plan ("SDP")

Attendees: Approximately 20 parents and a couple of pre-school children

Hosted by: Mr T Davies

Governors present: Sarah Ransome

Introduction

Mr Davies introduced the meeting; he informed parents that he aims to hold a MTH meeting every half-term and that this is a forum for discussing whole school issues. Mr Davies has now been at St Matthew's for ten years! He introduced Sarah Ransome, as parent governor, and explained she would be taking minutes of the meeting.

Feedback from action points recorded at previous MTH meeting on 25th September and 23rd October 2016

Issue eSchools logins to all parents. Now completed

Distribute eSchools information sheet to parents of children other than those in Y3. Not discussed at meeting. Carry forward

Set up online payment system for parents. The school now has a contract with SIMS Agora. Staff training is taking place this week, followed by testing. By the end of January, information will be out to parents.

Distribute Y4 activity/sleepover information to children/parents. Not mentioned at meeting on 8/1/06. Carry forward

Ask bilingual parents to come forward to assist in French lessons. It was noted that this would be talked about in the SDP. Volunteer letters were subsequently circulated to parents.

School to share SDP That is the purpose of today's meeting.

School to circulate children's questionnaire on bullying. This will be touched on in SDP. Action: school to circulate questionnaire

School to share data from reception baseline assessments. Not covered at this meeting. Carry forward as action point.

Add assessment presentations from last MTH to the website. Done

School to examine assessment data in January with a view to looking at next steps in the process of sharing class averages/year group assessment levels with parents. Mr Davies noted that complicated moderation (in reading, writing and maths assessments) needs to be undertaken so that the numbers that get attached to a particular level are consistent across classes. Staff will be able to tell you at parents' evening roughly how your child is comparing to the class. However, we are not at the stage where 3B in one class is the same as 3B in another. Action to carry forward: school to be in a position

to share class averages/year group assessment levels with parents following moderation work. Parents to be told at parents' evening "roughly" how their child is comparing to the class.

School to number assessment statements and have them available at parents' evenings so that parents can make a note of which targets children have achieved. Not mentioned at this meeting. Carry forward as action point.

School to discuss sending DART sheets home. The school is still discussing this. Carry forward as action point.

Questions on the above feedback:

Q1. What is DART?

A: Dedicated Assessment Revue Time. Every term teachers are released from the classroom to meet each child in their class for 15 minutes on a one-to-one basis. Ahead of the meeting the child sets out what they have done well, what they would like to improve etc and next steps are agreed. It has been a powerful thing for each teacher to have this time to spend time with every member of their class.

Q2. How often do you feed data into Target Tracker?

A: At the end of each term. There is the potential to do this every half-term. At pupil progress meetings, the assistant heads meet the class teachers and review the data to see who is making progress and agree where to put in extra help.

Q3: With the changes to assessment, how do current assessments link to historic data?

A: The National Curriculum has changed. Historic Y5 work might now be covered in Y4 for example. There are greater expectations in handwriting and spelling. For example, the majority of handwriting must be joined up in Y6 to meet age related expectations now.

The first set of new SATs will take place this summer. There is relatively little information about where the bar will be set/how many marks are needed to meet age related expectations. There is no sense that an old 3A is now the equivalent of a 2B.

Q4: My children and I have always loved the creative curriculum at St Matthew's: the Victorians in Y5, John Lennon in Y6 etc. Will this be preserved?

A: Yes. It contributes to children being emotionally involved in their learning.

Response from parent: Great!

SDP

Mr Davies then moved onto explain the new SDP.

This is a two or three year cycle of work. A set of objectives has been agreed by the Governing Body. The action plan will be agreed next week in more detail. This then dictates training courses, budgets etc.

The 6 key target areas are:

1. Improve outcomes in SATS in reading, writing and maths
2. Improve assessment and self-evaluation processes for science, ICT and foundation subjects
3. Improve information for parents both from a learning and governance perspective
4. Curriculum development
5. Outdoor learning environment

6. Develop “character education”

Further details relating to these areas were then described. A copy of the presentation is now on the school website.

1.Improving outcomes in SATS.

What are we doing?

- Embedding the new assessment systems, moderating assessment judgements, monitoring the impact of Big Writing and implementing new spelling and grammar resources
- Developing a volunteer programme - especially in literacy and numeracy - for delivering interventions. Next week or the week after, letters will be sent to parents asking for volunteers for reading/writing on a one-to-one basis for as little as 15 minutes per day. Training will be provided.
- Providing role models (volunteers from, for example, the local community e.g. the University)
- Targeting parents of vulnerable children for family learning activities
- Using resources from catch up programmes to support classroom learning
- Highlighting and disseminating best practice from work scrutiny and moderation

Q5: Have you thought about role models from the business world? I have visited a deprived school with links to the City where individuals from various institutions mentor children.

A: This is a great idea.

Action: school to look into setting up mentor programme with local businesses.

2. Improving assessment and self-evaluation processes for science, ICT, foundation subjects

Key success criteria:

- All curriculum leaders to have access to information showing the attainment and progress of children in their respective subjects
- Curriculum leaders to make judgements as to the quality of teaching in these subjects

3. Improve information for parents, both from a learning and governance perspective.

Actions:

- eSchools logins have now been made available to all
- Information about assessment without levels is on the school website
- We will review the homework policy and undertake a survey for parents/children to gauge whether there is too much/little homework. Homework is a strong communication tool
- Parental involvement in learning journeys in foundation stage
- Develop maths pages for the school website

Action: school to review homework policy, undertake homework survey for parents/children and develop maths pages for the school website

Q6: Regarding the homework review, will you review how children learn spellings?

A: Yes this will change with the new spelling system

Q7: Can we have general reading lists for different age groups? I have a Y5 recommended reading list from a private school which includes lots of the amazing new authors and books. It's great guidance and I would be happy to share this with the school.

A: Good idea.

Action: School to circulate recommended reading lists

Q8: My Y5 child has been tapping into Abacus but my Y2 child does not have an Abacus account. Can my Y2 child have an Abacus account? It's a good way of supplementing maths easily.

A: It was explained that Abacus is a maths scheme used across the school. There is a home learning element which is computer based.

Action: Mr Davies to double check if everyone can have logins to Abacus

Q9: Is it like Mathletics?

A: Abacus is more of a game, more reward based and more fun

Q10: As eSchools was rolled out, there was initial enthusiasm but now there is not much interest; the children's enthusiasm has fallen away. In fact we have almost forgotten about it. Can we push for the children to have to look for their homework on eSchools to inspire them to use it more? We have also looked at Abacus but unless I motivate my child to go on it, they don't. It doesn't engage my child.

A: Homework modules are being updated. It's typical to get an initial surge of interest and then a falling off. In other schools it has withered and died. E-safety and communications are an important element we'll use eSchools for.

Q11 Follow up question from Q10 above. So you will use it as a means of teaching about e-safety rather than as a tool in itself?

A: Both. How useful it is as a tool depends on teacher confidence and knowledge – some are not so used to it.

Q12: Regarding Mathletics, could this be encouraged within school e.g. by announcing in assembly regularly that child x has exceeded a certain level/reached a milestone etc. The nrich Millennium maths project is brilliant and structured. Is that available to parents?

A: Yes the nrich website is public. It would be good to have some guidance as to the most useful/appropriate elements for parents and children.

Action: school to see if there is guidance to accompany nrich

Q13: There are useful online tools. For example all Parkside homework is on line, but a homework book is more engaging. We had the initial enthusiasm for online homework. I don't know about Abacus. I wouldn't want all the learning online – it's a mixed blessing. We want to feel the personality of the teacher.

A: Thank you.

Q14: Mr Collard in Y5 is very good at getting this balance right. He sends out online resources via eSchools for homework but the child ends up with a physical product. The parent wanted to congratulate Y5 on this.

Governance information. We would like to increase the percentage of parental responses stating they receive enough information from governors.

- We have published an annual governance statement
- Policies/minutes are up-to-date on the school website
- Governor items are contained in the newsletter, before minutes are agreed (and once minutes are agreed these are added to the website)

4. Curriculum development

The local authority has issued a new PE curriculum.

The art curriculum has been reviewed and updated e.g. make use of the museums, ensure better progression of art skills: drawing, painting, sculpture.

Revise RE curriculum in accordance with Cambridgeshire agreed scheme of work for RE.

ICT – revise e-safety policy, introduce eSchools for children, continue curriculum development and staff training for different strands of the ICT curriculum.

Increase continuous provision in foundation stage garden and bike area.

Review identification of G&T children across curriculum and provide additional opportunities where relevant.

Q15: I have a question about water provision. The children have bottles in the classroom but forget to take them out at break. Can the children have outdoor access to water fountains? There seem to be issues with children not allowing others to access the indoor water fountains near the Lunch Hall.

A: There are two fountains over by the Lunch Hall. They are inside and hidden.

Action: Look into having an outdoor water fountain.

5. Improve outdoor learning environment

- We have installed new playground structures thanks to the PTA
- We are installing a growing area (early Spring term 2016)
- Areas under the canopies outside Y1/2 classrooms will be demarked
- MUD project. Bids are in with the Arts Council at the moment. Cambridge Culture have given money to the fund. If there is enough funding we can get the playground sorted. MUD is i) arts programme ii) links arts projects to playground structures. There is an idea of connection between the two.
- Muddy patch in the playground. We may cover it. A structure with astroturf underneath will cost £15-20,000.

Q16: I've heard that we can't put playground structures in as we are keeping the space for MUD creations. Can we have some sort of timetable for the MUD structure? We have been waiting for years.

A: MUD potentially accesses money we wouldn't otherwise have.

Q17: Children complain there is not enough space

A: There is more space per child now than before. In fact 1.5 times more outdoor space per square foot per child.

Q18. Can we have some painted activities on the playground surface? This would be cheap. E.g. tracks for creative games.

A: Playleaders already run games in the squares.

6. Developing Character Education

- Enhance PSHE. This has been a year of intensive research Mr Davies has been visiting schools to see what others are doing in this area. It's focused on teaching values/ways of behaving/attitudes. This is embedded across the curriculum.

- List key values. Map these onto our existing curriculum and see where we can enhance our offering e.g. integrity/perseverance. Look at how it integrates into RE/PSHE/Philosophy to have a coherent approach to teach this. Children understand the values and reflect them in their behaviour.

Q19: This is a lot to take in. You have been working hard. Can you send this presentation document to all parents?

A: The executive summary will be put on the website after the full Governing Body meeting next Thursday.

Action: add executive summary of SDP to website.

Q20: Is character education done outdoors?

A: There has been lots of research. Character education supports team sports. The two go hand-in-hand e.g. Olympic values. Intra class competitions at the end of each half term. Feed into inter-school competitions. Coaches teach sport but it is also a great way of learning about team work, winning, losing with dignity and being proud etc.

Q21: First impressions are good. Is there room for a mindfulness programme too?

A: Yes. There are various tools and practices associated with this area and mindfulness is one of them.