

Coffee and Conversation (Thursday 29th September 2022)

Reflection

Actions arising

All actions completed.

Questions raised

1) **School Calendar**

Question raised from parent asking please could dates for the school calendar be notified to parents as soon as possible?

Mrs Burnham explained that the school calendar is a balancing act of agreeing dates with other groups (parish / external speakers / support / class teacher commitments) and of giving parents as much notice as possible. School tries hard not to change dates once published to parents, to avoid inconvenience, but this can mean that dates are published later once the school is more sure of arrangements. Dates like term dates and mission week dates are set as early as possible to give parents plenty of notice. Dates such as the Carol Service which requires agreement with a venue etc often take longer. School leaders do their best to give parents as much notice as possible. Parents present appreciated this balance and felt it's usually OK – a point was raised that some dates which have been published are not yet on the website calendar. Mrs Burnham undertook to get this rectified as soon as possible.

Action: Mrs Burnham to get Partners in Learning presentations and Mission Week dates updated on school website.

2) **Lunchtime arrangements**

Question raised from a parent asking about changes at lunchtimes, specifically about a shorter lunchtime and sitting in mixed year groups.

With the newly extended hall, it was always the intention to reduce the number of sittings at lunch allowing for more learning time. Reception children eat separately in the hall, beginning lunch at 11:45 until 12:10-12:15. Y1/Y3 and Y5 eat together and Y2/Y4 and Y6 eat together, sitting in tables like "family groups" with older and younger children mixed together, supporting their independence and their sense of responsibility. It also makes closer links across our community, allowing children in different years to get to know others and also ensuring that no one is left out within our community. One parent present gave the example of his daughter with a Y6 "friend" who she had met and now enjoys saying hello to.

Mrs Burnham explained that the additional curriculum time has been helpful in supporting curriculum coverage for children in the afternoon and that all children have time to play in their key stage playground with their friends either before or after their lunch. She acknowledged that KS2 children probably have slightly less time to talk to their friends in the playground than they did previously, but that this system gives the best balance for the majority of children across the school. In response to concerns about loss of focus for learning, Mrs Burnham shared that class teachers are practised at giving movement breaks / short "brain breaks" if needed and all children also participate in the Newman Mile daily. Parents with children in younger years said that they have not noticed any difference for their children and that the system of sitting with the older children was working well for them. The school will continue to review progress with the new arrangements.

3) **Clubs**

Question raised by a parent with regard to clubs – would it be possible for there to be clubs for KS1 and KS2 which run on the same days, as it is difficult to manage a staggered pick up. The parents recognised that the days for clubs depend on a range of things including teacher commitments, availability of spaces and sometimes external elements.

Mrs Burnham recognised the concern and agree to review days for clubs for next term – it may not be possible to resolve, but should certainly be a factor to consider. It may be possible to schedule most clubs on Mondays and Thursdays for example, to give the best chance of crossover.

Action – School to review timetable for clubs to try to achieve more crossover for KS1 and KS2 clubs.

4) Uniform

School raised 2 questions about school uniform:

a) In relation to Government guidance, how affordable do parents find Cardinal Newman School Uniform and what can we do to support this further?

b) Some parents and some staff have raised the question of changing the PE uniform to a more modern (running top type breathable) material – given the current economic situation, what do parents feel about this?

Parents present felt that the current PE kit is fine. They liked the look of the modern fabric PE kits, but felt it is very expensive for something worn twice a week. We revisited the question of PE kits worn all day during PE days, but Mrs Burnham shared that school leaders feel that this isn't desirable, being less smart and also less consistent than changing during the day. We discussed that the little children also need to learn to change quickly with their peers.

In terms of cost, parents present shared different opinions. Most felt there are relatively few badged items, making this a fairly affordable school uniform. The option of second-hand uniform being available was very popular. Others felt that the badged items can turn out to be very expensive if not bought second-hand. If there is not second hand uniform available or on sale when needed, some parents wanted the option of a school badge to purchase for a low cost price which could then be sewn onto a plain navy jumper for example. Other parents were less keen on the sewing option and preferred to buy the uniform ready-made. We discussed the option of different choices for different families. Mrs Burnham felt a badged jumper / cardigan / polo shirt is important to give the children the sense of identity within our community. One parent shared that uniform is a cheaper option than no uniform – in Spain, where there is no uniform for schools, it can be expensive to buy outfits for everyday which the child is happy to wear. With uniform there is no choice about that!

Action – Mrs Burnham to follow up with AlleyKatz / other suppliers to understand whether this could be an option and what the impact might be on our single supplier agreement.

Mrs Burnham thanked parents present for sharing their views and helping the school to understand the views of parents more generally. At Cardinal Newman we value the input of families as we support them to educate their children.

Next meeting: 8:45am on Thursday 26th January 2023