

Penygawsi Family Engagement Committee



Please find below a copy of the minutes from our first Family Engagement Committee meeting. Members are happy to raise any questions and concerns you may have. Please feel free to speak to them about any topics raised in these minutes.

Minutes of meeting – 7th November 2016

Present: Tim Rose, Joanne Evans, Rebecca Coles, Carrie-Ann Williams, Becky Wallace, David Brown, James Ball (School representative)

Apologies – Jen Dyson

Agenda:

- **Introductions**
- **Successful elements of the School**
- **Questions from Parents**
- **Setting our ground rules to ensure we work as a team**
- **Our School Development Plan targets 2016 – 2017 and the new DCF**
- **Our aims as a committee**
- **Our name? Family Engagement Committee – is this suitable for us as a committee**
- **Next meeting**

Introductions: As it was our first meeting formal introductions were made between the committee members. Several parents had not met beforehand and as several parents have children with siblings in different year groups we discussed who would be representing each year group.

Class 1 – Jen Dyson

Class 2 - Tim Rose

Class 4 - Joanne Evans

Class 6 - Rebecca Coles

Class 7 - Carrie-Ann Williams

Class 8 - Becky Wallace

Class 9 - David Brown

We currently have spaces available in **Classes 3 and 5** (Mrs Dollman and Mrs Farrell / Mrs Taylor's classes) for a representative. **If you feel that the committee is something you would like to be involved in, please speak to a committee member or Mr Ball.**

Successful elements of the School

Parents discussed what they felt the school did well currently. Some of the common strengths they felt included:

- communication - via the Blog, Texts, Schoop, letters and Twitter.
- Size – not too big. They also felt that children interact well with each other across different age ranges and are familiar with a wide range
- Open door policy to speak to staff and that parents are allowed to be on the yard to drop off and collect their children as some schools do not let parents on to the site

*Although there was a consensus in the room and the parents felt that they were also relating views from other parents / friends they had spoken with but appreciated that other parents may have different views.

Questions from Parents

Part of our future sessions will be to raise questions from parents and aim to address any issues of concern. Mr Ball will aim to answer these questions on behalf of the school but where will refer some queries to Mr Davies depending on the subject.

It was agreed that ultimately the school is in a position where decisions have to be made and they agreed that the school tries to do this in the best interests of the community. They felt it important that, where possible reasons are given for decisions that may be perceived as controversial to help people understand why a decision has been made.

The committee felt it important that we help to create an environment where all parents know that their views matter, and where they feel confident and comfortable putting them forward. It is important that the committee and the school have a joint commitment to seek parents' views and ideas and to ensure that these make a real difference to the work and life of the school. Sharing parents' views with Mr Ball and when appropriate the head teacher and other staff, and making sure those views are listened to and taken into account. This will only be possible if the committee and the school have a positive working partnership.

Q: How can parents communicate with us?

We discussed the idea of a forum but felt that this would be difficult to manage. The committee felt it would be a good idea to establish a committee email account to allow parents to send in their questions – Mr Ball agreed to set up a committee email address via the school's HWB platform.– in addition we may set up an 'traditional style' post box / drop box where parents can leave written questions / correspondence for the committee.

During this discussion it was raised that social media eg Facebook has been used to vent frustrations or concerns towards the school. The committee hope that with this new communication system in place it will encourage parents to share their concerns with the committee and will give us more chance to resolve issues if we are aware of them.

Q: What questions might parents ask? We felt that gathering and sharing parents' views will be an integral part of the new committee and there is a wide range of educational issues on which parents may wish to contribute their views. We discussed what types of issues and areas parents may wish to discuss and these may include:

- How the school communicates with parents Supporting delivery of Curriculum by tapping into parents' skills, experiences and expertise
- The processes involved in preparing children for the key transitions, such as from nursery to primary, infant – junior and from primary to secondary
- Staffing - particularly having to cover classes where the teacher is away long term – eg sickness, maternity – how is this done?
- Extra support approach – how parents are approached if their child is in need of support

*The committee feel that areas directed to them should be classed as important for discussion but not urgent. As committee meetings will only be taking place once a half term parents must realise that their issue will not be discussed until that meeting. If the matter requires immediate attention please direct it to the school via the class teacher or the school office.

***Parent representatives will set a reminder the week before a committee meeting to remind parents to raise any questions before the meeting takes place.**

Setting our ground rules to ensure we work as a team

It was agreed that by setting ‘Ground Rules’ and working together our meetings will be most effective. If everyone understands what is expected and agrees to work together. After a discussion these rules were agreed:

- Set meeting dates well in advance and allocate a specific amount of time to them.
- Agree the agenda in advance and stick to it but include an opportunity for members to raise Any Other Competent Business (AOCB) which may include matters which have been raised by other parents:
- Record action points clearly in the minutes and make a note of who has agreed to undertake the action. Check progress on action points agreed at previous meetings
- Everyone’s contribution is important – support the group and work as a team
- Respect each other’s point of view – even if you think they are wrong!
- Ensure everyone can participate fairly
- Aim towards constructive discussion and decisions – **do not let it ‘get personal’**
- At times there will be disagreements. Try and resolve these in the interests of the school and the pupils, seek help if we need it from the Head teacher.
- Share our discussions – Mr Ball to publish minutes* from every meeting on the F.A.C.E blog to share with the whole school community.

***Reference to minutes** – The committee agreed that no names are to be published in the minutes with relation to questions raised. However, although the discussions will be confidential the committee felt it important that parents did give their name when asking a questions to help us address the area. If you feel the issue is too sensitive to leave your name for the committee perhaps it should be directed straight to the school.

Presence of the head teacher during meetings – It was discussed was it necessary for the head teacher to be in attendance during a meeting. The committee felt that he was not required as all undecided queries would get related to him but also that he would be welcome to join the meetings if he wished. They also reiterated an earlier point that ultimately the head teacher and governing body has to make final decisions in the interest of the school.

Our School Development Plan targets 2016 – 2017 and the new DCF

Mr B shared the schools three main targets for school improvement over the coming academic year and explain how these were linked to different areas of target setting, including post inspection action plans and forthcoming changes of the new curriculum from the Donaldson report including The Digital Competence Framework (DCF).

Mr Ball shared two clips from Learning Wales. Please follow the link to the clip if you wish to get an insight into how Welsh education will be evolving during the next five years:

The Donaldson Report and the new curriculum for Wales:

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/curriculum-for-wales-curriculum-for-life/?lang=en>

The DCF - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WKRHEUhZYY#action=share>

Watching the videos sparked lots of discussion amongst the committee including:

Homework / home learning –

Q: can we advise parents on skills we would like them to instil in their children?

This led to a further discussion of what can we do as a committee to help all parents develop greater independence of their children to aid their development in school. The idea of developing a parenting pack from Nursery to reception adding or developing a few skills to be worked on at home in each year as a guide for parents.

Ict development – The committee would like to help the school imbed the new curriculum, in particular the current inclusion of the DCF. A question was raised - how will we cope with resourcing for this new DCF with our limited budgets. Mr Ball responded that as a school we are currently undergoing a rigorous audit and self-evaluation of what equipment and resources we have and what we need to develop in order to embed our new ICT scheme and the DCF effectively. **A question was raised:** In the future could children bring in their own devices from home to maximise learning potential in the upper juniors?

Parental engagement – As children naturally develop quickly when learning concepts of ICT could we have engagement sessions with children leading parents / community members with ICT development skills?

Q: Do we have parents with particular skills that could help us embed areas of ICT within the school?

This also led to another question. Can we further develop the after school extra-curricular activities on offer to the school? The committee felt that more extra-curricular activities should be taking place at school but that it shouldn't just be down to members of staff to run and organise clubs.

Q: Can we use parents with skills, hobbies & interests to help establish clubs and build a stronger community link?

Q: Would there be barriers (DBS etc) preventing parents from helping with clubs?

The committee decided they would definitely like to explore these areas further during the next session. *If you have any comments or questions please forward them to us before the next meeting.*

Our aims as a committee

Our penultimate part of the agenda was to discuss our aims as a committee. Mr Ball explained to the members that **we want the design to be flexible – to ensure it can effectively represent our school community and interests. It is for you as parents to decide what is most important for the committee to work on. We discussed different options and this is what we have decided:**

What will our committee do?

- Support the school in its work with pupils
- Represent the views of parents and carers
- Encourage links between the school, parents and carers, pupils, pre-school groups and the wider community

Our Committee Aims 2016 – 2017

As a committee we want to provide an opportunity for parents to get involved in ways that suit them, and to support their school in getting the best education for all the pupils. Here are our aims:

- Provide a voice for parents in the school and in the local authority on issues that are important to them and their children.
- Help the school to understand how to most effectively involve parents in their children's learning and in the life of the school.
- Support the school and Head teacher in developing strong home / school partnerships.
- Support the school in its development and improvement, and in understanding and making links with the wider community.
- Capture the unique and varied skills, interests, knowledge and experience that parents can offer.

What our committee is not there to do

With reference to the decided aims above we felt it important to emphasise that the purpose of the committee is to support the school in developing for the benefit of our pupils. The committee will offer their views on school improvement initiatives and will not be able to respond to complaints.

All discussions will be based upon ways to improve Penygawsi as a learning environment. All complaints should be directed towards the school for the parents to discuss with the school directly.

Our name? Family Engagement Committee – is this suitable for us as a committee

We briefly discussed the name of the committee. Mr Ball explained that effectively the committee is a 'Parent Council.' However, when deciding to establish the group it was felt that the name 'Parent Council' may not have engaged as many parents due to the connotations associated with the word 'council.' Yet it was also mentioned that the title chosen may not be the most effective way to describe the group. We looked back at the aims and discussed that there should be a change but we couldn't agree on a suitable change.

Some key words were mentioned such as involvement or group but it was decided that each member would have a think about a possible name before the next meeting. We would also welcome suggestions from other parents.

Next meeting – Monday 9th January 2017 6pm

Agenda for next meeting

- Work on developing a (year on year) guide for parents on developing key life skills at home
- Developing extra-curricular activities – who may wish to be involved?
- Discuss the curriculum development progress of how parents can get involved with supporting the implementation of the DCF.