

Meeting with parents – Wednesday 13th July 2016 at 9am

Staff Present: Darran Lee (DL) (Director of Primary Education – United Learning), Lesley Dolben (LD) (Executive Principal), Claire Macfie (Vice Principal), David Casey (Vice Principal), David Young (Y5 teacher- Leader of KS2), Angilee Wall (Wellbeing and Safeguarding Officer)

Apologies: Luthfa Uddin

Minute taker: Rosemary O'Connor

Introduction

Lesley Dolben (LD) welcomed the parents and thanked them for attending the meeting. She introduced the staff to parents.

DL said he had been involved with the school since January this year and had visited the school several times. He explained that he is responsible for all the primary schools within United Learning. He is working to support the children and the school on behalf of the Trust.

LD said the meeting had been called to discuss the Ofsted report and to share the issues raised within it. She confirmed that the report was challenging but is based on what was seen by the inspectors on a fixed occasion and that, without wanting to downplay the issues raised by inspectors, it is not a complete picture of the school and Wilberforce is much bigger than the report.

There has been improvement since the Ofsted visit but there is still a long way to go until we become a 'Good' school. She explained that there are two main areas that need addressing, the first of which being leadership.

Permanent leadership and ongoing support

She explained that Leadership is about a group of people and not just one person. Every member of staff has a responsibility to lead. Many issues around leadership in the report had already begun to be addressed and there is now a strong leadership in place. The restructuring that had taken place earlier in the year had enabled the school to become 'fit for purpose' with leaders at every level.

LD said she had listened very closely to parents' concerns.

Parents enquired about Mrs Dolben's replacement and wanted to know how long she was going to be at Wilberforce.

DL explained that there would be a robust selection process in appointing a new Principal and this would involve the Governing Body and United Learning. LD had recently been appointed as Regional Improvement Partner in DL's team, working, supporting and developing schools in the Trust and would therefore be involved with the school on an ongoing basis. She would remain at the school for as long as it needs her support.

A strong approach to safeguarding

There was a broad discussion concerning child protection and safeguarding referrals to Social Services. DL explained that he couldn't discuss individual cases at the meeting. Safeguarding of

children is paramount. Every school has a duty to safeguard children. Decisions that are made by social services do not sit with the school or United Learning.

LD informed the parents that she would be attending a safeguarding conference the next day and statutory guidance is an item to be discussed at the training session. The conference is being led by Fiona Lyon, Lead Safeguarding Officer within United Learning.

DL will discuss the parents' issues and concerns with the team and there will be a meeting set up in the Autumn term to talk this through further with parents. He said it is important that policies and procedures are shared.

The school has recently set up a new safeguarding computer based system to help manage child protection, safeguarding and other issues.

With regards to individual cases he said parents can write a letter and give to the school office if a parent feels they need help and support. DL would try and arrange for Fiona Lyon to visit the school.

Greater parental involvement

Going forward, there would be more regular meetings with parents such as this one, where parents could feel able to raise any issues.

LD has been working closely with Luthfa to arrange coffee mornings over the coming year. One of the first sessions would be around behaviour and the new behaviour policy. Parents will have a chance to look at the new behaviour brochure. Meetings will be scheduled for Tuesday mornings, 9 – 10.30am.

Parent teacher meetings were discussed and it was questioned why parents hadn't received an end of term appointment. LD explained that the reports were being sent to parents in the next day or so and if a parent wanted to discuss their child's report with the class teacher then they are welcome to speak to the teacher or to make an appointment with the school office.

Better access to the school for parents

LD was proposing to look at the opening times of the gates so that parents can join with family learning between 8.50 – 9am. Parents appreciated that the entrance to the school in Herries Street had now been re-opened at the start and end to the day.

LD explained that the fencing in the reception area will remain to create space for the smallest children away from the older pupils. Early Years children should have access to an outside play area at all times. The school will re-open the old gates so that parents can access classrooms and the office more easily.

Consistent and improving behaviour

LD informed parents that the Behaviour Policy had been completely revised and a brochure had been designed that set out our expectations on behaviour.

There are now clear boundaries for the children. The school needs to work in partnership with the families or the rules in school would not work. There is usually a reason for bad behaviour and it

needs to be investigated as to why a child is behaving in a certain way. Sanctions need to be imposed early and parents need to be informed. There is no excuse, however, for children ever to be shouted out. Detentions are now used for bad behaviour which are effective because the children do not like them.

Sometimes children need individual support and some may need a structure as there could be complex issues as to why a child is behaving in a certain way. There needs to be consistency in dealing with behaviour. The school does have the right to exclude a child, however, and sometimes this has to happen.

Over the past half term there has been a re-emphasis on staff building a connection with every child and this is being taken forward through behaviours such as meeting and greeting the children as they come into school. The children now line up well at the end of break and lunch times. The best class receives an extra five minutes playtime.

Parents agreed that they need to work together with the school. They believed that behaviour has improved and were happy that the blue letters were not used anymore. There needed to be communication on both sides to share information.

Strong and experienced staff

There was a discussion about staffing. Mrs Dolben said that she cannot always share confidential information but there needs to be transparency. DL informed the parents that the school will work with them through forums and meetings.

A parent expressed concerns about the amount of staff leaving throughout the year. There is confidence in the leadership under Mrs Dolben and the school needed teachers to be happy. A staff survey was carried out by United Learning and the comments in the survey would be addressed.

There are a number of reasons why teachers are moving on and the school is actively recruiting with some strong new teachers secured for September and a confidence that any vacancies will be filled by the start of the new term. The school will not be employing any more NQTs. Early Years and KS1 are fully staffed ready for September.

DL said he was meeting later today with the staff representatives, union representatives and the Chair of Governors to move forward on how to support staff. These meetings will take place on a regular basis.

Ensuring mixed classes work well

The need for mixed classes will be guided by the number of children on roll in each year group in September and parents have already been informed in detail about what is likely to be needed. It is planned to have three mixed classes in KS1 and three in KS2. These classes run on a two year rolling programme and the children will still receive the core teaching of Maths and English in single year groups.

LD outlined how mixed classes can help pupils achieve but to work well the teaching must be effective. Teachers will be monitored weekly and each teacher will have a coach to help them improve and reflect on their practice.

Quality homework that assists learning

Children will receive homework and parents will be able to see any feedback from marking in their child's exercise books.

The school subscribes to Mathletics for maths and Bug Club for reading. These are very popular, computer-based, learning programmes. Any pupils that cannot access the internet at home will have the opportunity to do so in school.

Responsibility for admissions

Admissions to the school were dealt with by the local education authority (Westminster). The school does not have a say in the selection process.

Ofsted follow up

DL informed parents that OFSTED (HMI) and United Learning will monitor the school on a regular basis. The governors will also be meeting regularly. DL would enquire if there were any vacancies for parent governors on the governing body.

There were fears from a parent that the school was going to close. DL reassured the parents that this was not going to happen and that United Learning and Westminster City Council had every confidence that the school's future was positive and that it would quickly come out of its Ofsted category.

Beginning of the new academic year

LD explained to parents that the children will be introduced to their new team of teachers in September. On the first day of term there will be an assembly where they will be told about the year ahead and their new curriculum. The children will then go with their teacher to create their classroom and be ready to invite their parents in the following week to see the beginning of their learning journeys.

On the week beginning 12th September (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday) the doors will be open after school for parents to see their child's classroom, meet teachers and view the curriculum plans. Parents will get an opportunity to ask any questions.

Eid Celebrations

A parent thanked the Mrs Dolben for arranging the recent Eid celebration held in school. A question was raised regarding absences caused by Eid. DL said he can authorise an additional closing day and this could be arranged as a flexible closing day but it would have to be arranged in advance. Staff could be in training on this day but we would need to be mindful of staff who would also want to take time off for religious observance.

A popular new uniform

As part of the drive to become a securely Good school, pupils need a uniform that they are proud to wear. We will therefore be introducing new uniform by the end of the year and parents will have until December to purchase it. Parents do not have to purchase it straight away, but can wait until

their child has grown out of their current uniform. The uniform will have a tie and the colour will be a slightly darker blue than at present. The uniform supplier will be invited into school and we would like feedback from the parents. Parents were very pleased to hear about the shirt and tie and thanked LD for this improvement.

Conclusion

LD thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She said that the day for coffee morning may change to a Tuesday and parents will be notified. A timetable will be sent out at the beginning of next term.

A parent thanked Darran Lee for attending the meeting.