



Powell Corderoy Parent Council

Summer Term 2016

NEWS



We would like to thank all those who attended the meeting on 7th December 2015 and 19th April 2016 and shared their views and opinions on School Trips and Sports Events, term time holidays, Google Classroom homework system, parking at the school, Healthy Lifestyle, School Communication, School Community Spirit and the Parent Council. Details of what was discussed are shown below. We held two meetings on the 7th December, one at the school at 2pm where 8 parents attended and one at the Falkland Arms at 7.30pm where only 2 parents attended! The same happened at the meeting held on 19th April. These meetings are a way for you to share your ideas and views with the school but perhaps we need a different way of communicating this. If you have any suggestions on how the Parent Council could work better for you please email parentcouncil@pcps.uk, this is your Parent Council.

A note from Steve Peters, Chair and Louise Dawson the Vice Chair.

Dear all, after a few years on the Parent Council we feel it is time to step down and let someone else take the reins. If you are interested in becoming the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary or a Class Rep please fill in the form attached to this Newsletter, email parentcouncil@pcps.uk or let the office know. If you would like to know more of what is involved please speak to one of us on the playground. Thank you for your continued support.

SCHOOL TRIPS AND SPORTS EVENTS

Mrs McLaughlin provided background on the current situation. Parents currently make plans amongst themselves to take children to and from events when a coach is not available (this is mainly for sports events).

A change in guidance means the school can organise transport for children if parents have signed a form giving permission for their child to travel with another parent in their car. For those parents who can offer lifts to children they would have to produce the correct paperwork for the school to keep on file (MOT, Drivers Licence and Insurance). This new system should help those who don't have transport, but we do need parents to volunteers for it to work.



Parents' Comments:

It was generally felt to be a good idea and a way to formalise the existing system.

School & Governing Body Comments:

- Paperwork would need to be presented to the school to keep on record.
- DBS check is also required.
- Currently a form is sent to parents prior to the event. A new section could be added for parents to request a lift for their child, or to offer to take extra children if driving themselves.
- Parents of children who are getting a lift to events will need to provide a car booster seat if their child requires one.

Thank you! *The Parent Council Team would like to say thank you to Mrs McLaughlin, all the teachers and the governing body for their continued support. A special thank you goes to the office staff for all their help.*

TERM TIME HOLIDAYS



Mrs McLaughlin explained the school is under pressure to improve attendance figures. The biggest hit on attendance is children taking term time holidays. The school is also keen to discourage term time holidays as it is disruptive to teaching. The school is proposing to have 5 inset days together and adding to the existing school holidays to encourage parents to use this time to take their family holidays. Powell does not currently fine parents for taking children out during term time.

TERM TIME HOLIDAYS (Continued)

Parents' Comments:

- Adding Inset days to the end of the half term holiday in the summer term was a popular option.
- How about adding 2 Inset days to the end of one of the school holidays and 3 Inset days to another?
- Working parents may find it harder to get child cover with the longer holiday. Not everyone can take the time off.
- Parents with children at other schools would still have a problem as Inset days would not be in sync with other schools.
- Depending on the level of the fine not sure it will be effective. The cost of a holiday in term time is significantly cheaper than in school holidays. A fine is still the cheaper option, especially with seasonal holidays like skiing.
- Attendance awards; not directly related but these can be contentious if children have been ill or away from school because of medical appointments that can't be moved or taken at other time.

School and Governing Body Comments:

- Fining is overseen by the local authority. The school supplies names to the local authority and they follow this up directly and sort payment. School does not benefit from any funding from these fines.
- There is no alternative policy for families who have family overseas.
- Exceptional circumstances are granted as authorised absence (defined in the school attendance policy).
- The idea to introduce block Inset days will not happen in the 2016/17 academic year. Mrs Smart, the Head who is covering for Mrs McLaughlin whilst she is on maternity leave will need Inset days at the start of the Autumn Term for an effective handover.
- The idea of block Inset days was discussed at the Dorking Schools Partnership with mixed feedback.

Google Classroom (Year 4 and above)

Mrs McLaughlin reported that on the parent survey for Google Classroom



conducted at the end of October that there was overwhelming support for the system from around 90% of parents. These parents report that homework is a much more positive experience and school has been delighted with the significant increase in homework being completed. It is also a more efficient system for teachers to mark and keep track of. A paper option is always available for pupils with a preference for doing their homework that way.

Parents' Comments:

- It was agreed that Year 4 is the most appropriate year to introduce online homework, with Year 3 pupils learning in the class room IT skills in preparation for year 4.
- Online maths doesn't show workings out. Could a separate book be provided for this rather than handing in a piece of paper each week? Feedback from teacher on workings out would be beneficial.
- Would it be possible to have a refresher session on using Google Classroom for parents who missed the first one and for parents who have questions after using the system?

School and Governing Body Comments:

- Parents were reassured about concerns that online homework will impact writing skills, as children are still writing every day in school.
- School has the capacity to turn 'chat' function off but feels that it's good learning ground to introduce children to online communication in a safe environment, which is monitored by the school.
- Books have now been provided for maths homework to enable the teacher to see the workings out.

Please Remember *The Parent Council is an excellent forum for parents to come and share ideas and put forward their views to the Head Teacher and the governing body, but the Parent Council is not a decision making body – its role is consultative and advisory. Although all matters will be considered by the school and the governing body, they remain the decision-makers.*

PARKING AT SCHOOL

Mrs McLaughlin explained that the school doesn't have responsibility for the car parks – these are owned by Surrey County Council. The school can't put up any official signage as a result of this. The Council refers the school to the police and vice versa if there is a problem.

Local residents regularly contact Powell and The Priory with complaints about parking in private roads, parking on verges and driveways being blocked. It is an ongoing problem.

Parents' Comments:

- Encourage the idea of car pool/ sharing journey by including information in Reception Induction pack.
- Can car share section be added to the website?
- Walking bus – perhaps a one week focus.
- Poster competition for the children to create posters about dangerous driving/ parking and safety when crossing the roads

PARKING AT SCHOOL (Continued)

School and Governing Body Comments:

- The problem with parking has eased a little in the morning with parents dropping children from 8.55am.
- In previous years there was a 'Golden Boot' challenge to reward walking to school but this has been dropped because of lack of participation.
- We will remind parents of the Nower Car Park off the A25 as another option for drop off and pick up.
- Encourage parents to park in the surrounding roads and walk the last section of their journey to school.
- Walking bus – this would require parent volunteers as staff need to be in school.

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

The Healthy Lifestyle week after the Easter holiday was very popular.

The new tuck shop is doing well although some parents have questioned the cost of the snacks.



After school clubs are proving very popular and the increased variety in recent years is appreciated by parents, although more parent help could mean more clubs on offer.

The Government's Sugar Tax should mean more funding for healthy living and sports support.

SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Parents' Comments:

The School has many activities going on which is great but sometimes hard for parents to keep up with all the information and plans for each week as the information comes from different sources such as Headlines, Parent Mail, hard copy of letter, word of mouth.

- Could the diary dates section on the website be utilised for this as a one stop shop for all weekly updates and activities?
- Would it be possible to add a weekly schedule on the school website listing what activities are planned each week? Afterschool clubs, sports events, last day to hand in payments for class trips, special school dinners, Friends events etc.

School and Governing Body Comments:

- School is happy to look into expanding the calendar function on the website for September 2016.
- School is aware that some parents still miss information despite letters, website, blackboard, Parentmail etc.
- School plans to put a 'letters you should have received this week' section in Headlines so parents can download or request copies of letters they may have missed.

SCHOOL COMMUNITY SPIRIT

A discussion was held at the evening meeting about ways to celebrate events and people/parents who help, with the purpose of highlighting our school community for parents and prospective parents. E.g. 'Parents' section on the community tab on the school website. Celebrate activities with photos and stories i.e. Summer Festival, dress up days, cricket day, gardening day etc. This would need to be reviewed with regard to time and resources available.

PARENT COUNCIL

Although the Parent Council got off to a very strong start, the numbers of those attending meetings has dropped. We need to look at ways to get more parents engaged with the Parent Council, this could include:



- Add Parent Council Leaflet to the new reception class induction pack.
- Review ways in which parents can feel more involved and make the Parent Council more accessible. Evening meetings have not proved popular.
- Include Parent Council email address on Headlines.
- Update Parent Council section on website and make it more current.

We are always looking for ways to improve so if you have any suggestions on how the Parent Council could work better for you please contact us at parentcouncil@pcps.uk.

Suggested topics for discussion at future Parent Council Meetings

- Speciality teachers: will there be an impact on the government pulling funding for Powell's use of speciality teachers e.g. Music and PE?
- Ticket allocation for school productions: option for two performances to overcome 1 ticket allocation per family in the juniors – especially if a family has more than one child in the juniors.
- Information overload and information sources for new parents. Where can parents gain quick access to information? Parentmail, Facebook and Headline are sources for current news but aren't always a quick reference point.



The Parent Council Team

How you can get in contact with the Parent Council:



Leave your comments in the Parent Council box in the school reception.

Send us an email at: parentcouncil@pcps.co.uk

Look out for the Parent Council page on the school website.



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If you would like to join the Parent Council Team please complete the form below and hand it to a member of the team or the school office. Thank you! I would like to join the team as (please tick):

Chair	Vice Chair
Secretary	Class Representative

Name

Childs name and class

Email address (this is for use by the PC only):

Comments or suggestions, including anything you would like to discuss in the future