



**PARENT FORUM MEETING
TUESDAY 28TH FEBRUARY 2017
MINUTES**

Present: Rachel Callaghan
Julie Puxley
Sharon Bear
Deb Pawson
Kate Horrey
Madi Wilkie

Gemma Bauer
Catherine Kelly
Karen Whiter
Katie Millar
Mia Smith

1.	<p><u>Apologies</u> Apologies were received from Amanda Weetch, Anna Davies, Pam Lochhead and Claire Haddock</p>
2.	<p><u>School Dinners</u> One parent had asked if puddings were the best option for children at dinner time and whether fruit was a better choice and if nutrition (e.g. calories/fat) guidelines could be given on school dinners.</p> <p>Julie replied that fruit is always an option as a dessert. We do pay for consultancy from Essex County Council Catering Services who give catering management and menu advice and Julie had asked them for their comments. The following is from the Essex Catering Manager</p> <p>“in my view it would be for the parent to decide if they wanted their child to choose fruit from the menu offer available, Menus are balanced and meet the governments statutory requirements for school food including portions. We have made the decision in Essex to support the reduction in desserts and sugars by offering schools menu’s whereby across a week there are no desserts other than fruit 2 days per week – extended to 3 days on some weeks.</p> <p>In Autumn 2016 the desserts on our menus had recipes developed with 10% reduced sugars and going further than that in 2017, our new summer menus coming into effect at Easter supported by our public health team we have reduced portion size by 12% for home-made desserts further reducing fats, sugars and calorie intake – despite there being no requirement to do so from government and we are one of only a handful of councils to do this.</p> <p>It is for schools to decide what decisions are made regarding their menu, as schools have delegated responsibility in this area, but I am pleased that your school like many others in Essex choose to follow the ECC menus and offer a compliant menu with a varied choice of fresh, local and homemade food, available for all pupils.</p> <p>Should your school decide to remove desserts other than fruit or yoghurt, we would of course respect and support your decision to do so but would be highlighting that this may affect your uptake and as such may transfer pupils to packed lunches which are proven to be more unhealthy – we prefer the recommendation of maintaining the “status quo”, linking your menu offer as you always have with your food policy and the work you do on health and well-being and healthy eating, educating pupils in making their own informed decisions – we know this is working as since the introduction of UIFSM our KS2 uptake in Essex has grown by 6%.</p> <p>There is no data on calories available as each school cook making desserts from scratch the product will vary, that said should your parent want to seek guidance on portion size I would recommend that you refer them to the school food plan set by government in 2014 where contained within they will find details.</p> <p>I hope this answers your question – I had a similar query recently at a 2 form entry primary in Colchester, I was asked to meet with governors and parents who had concerns about the amount of desserts on schools menu’s and wanted to remove all desserts apart from fruit, as it turned out when canvassed only 2 parents attended the meeting with the majority of parents happy to have choice.</p> <p>We are working in collaboration with our public health team and the work we are doing on recipe and menu development on behalf of schools supports some key national issues in reducing obesity and I hope that my outline above offers some re-assurance to go back to your parents with confidence.”</p>

	<p>Rachel then discussed how we would like to add more variety to our dishes provided and gave out copies of suggested menus from Essex CC. Parent representatives then highlighted those they felt would be popular, for us to consider.</p> <p>A parent had commented on the menus asking why on one day there was only pasta dishes for both choices. Julie replied that this is a common style of choice for school menus (although many schools do not provide any choice).</p>
3.	<p><u>Reading</u></p> <p>Julie presented findings the school had made regarding children reading at home. Following comparison of reading diaries between three/four years ago and now, there has been a significant fall in the number of children regularly reading at home. This is causing concern for the school and we are looking at different ways to get across the message to parents how valuable this home reading time is. The school is hoping the reading workshop, which has proved popular, will be a start with this.</p> <p>Parent reps thought that giving the children incentives to read at home would be a good way to encourage them (the paper chain initiative in the Infant school seems to be working well).</p> <p>There was a discussion about reading journals as sometimes children did not find these useful and made reading a chore. Other children did find them useful and motivated them to read and write more. They will be looked at in the summer term for a refresh. There was also some confusion over the system for Year Threes which will be improved next year.</p> <p>RAGE awards are popular with some children to earn house points. In response to feedback, more RAGE awards have been put in place for younger children to access. Again better communication may be needed about this for new children to Junior school.</p> <p>WORLD BOOK DAY: Some parents were unhappy that the Juniors were not dressing up for World Book Day this year. Julie commented that on previous years this had not been popular with many Junior parents and we had taken on board the feedback. It is difficult if as a school we only received negative feedback therefore do not get a balanced view of what it is parents want.</p> <p>Rachel commented that it was never publicised that the Juniors would be dressing up this year, their WBD activities vary from year to year and this year they were having Shakespeare workshops in school for all year groups as well as wrapping up books for reviews.</p>
4.	<p><u>Fund Raising</u></p> <p>Julie started by thanking representatives of the Fund Raising Team for all their hard work and fantastic ideas they introduce for raising money.</p> <p>Parents have said it is really nice when we let them know what projects we have in mind for the funds. Julie and Rachel replied that currently we are looking at shelters for the Infant school field, outdoor play equipment for the Juniors and a joint school project to replace the kiln. The school will keep parents updated of projects in the newsletters.</p>

	The possibility of asking parents to make regular fund raising donations, rather than taking part in activities, was raised and is something the school could consider in the future.
5.	<p><u>INSPIRE</u></p> <p>Julie asked if parents were happy with the school's INSPIRE curriculum that had now been in place for two years and if they felt it was meaningful to have topic 'launches', 'lands' and associated school trips. All felt this was working really well and had had many comments on how great the school trips were.</p>
6.	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>SWIMMING: Again parents had raised the issue of advanced swimmers in the Infants only having the opportunity to swim in the small pool at LBLC. It remains the same situation with LBLC (as it has for many years), we are on the waiting list for a slot for the large pool, but they just do not have room in their timetable.</p> <p>Julie said that for parents of strong swimmers in Year 2 there will be opportunities in the summer term to join the Junior school for lessons with the gala squad.</p> <p>SNACKS: Julie asked parent reps for their views on the guidelines for snacks brought into school. It was generally felt that for Infants there should be more flexibility than just allowing fruit/veg, so we will keep the policy the same and repeat our current guidelines in the newsletter.</p> <p>PAPER BASED COMMUNICATION: It was suggested that the Infant school should send out all communications electronically, rather than paper copies. This has been discussed before and it was previously felt that 'new' parents preferred having the option of either, whilst they were getting used to school systems and procedures and were then happy to go to just ParentMail as the children went over to the Junior School. We will reconsider this.</p> <p>PE KIT: It was reported that there was some confusion over what is needed as PE Kit for Infant children. We will clarify this point in the newsletter for all Infant parents.</p> <p>ONLINE PAYMENTS – ACE: We are currently investigating online payment systems for the school, together with SWCHS, and this would also cover payments for ACE accounts.</p> <p>SPELLINGS: Parents are not convinced of the benefits of half termly, rather than weekly, spelling tests. We feel that weekly testing takes a lot of valuable teaching time in the infants. It is better that parents do the weekly test at home– if they feel their children respond to them. Parents then should develop an interleaved approach where the words are added to each week and parents return to any that the children are struggling with more often so they become confident spellers rather than good at passing weekly tests. Research clearly shows that testing young children does not help them to retain spellings.</p>
7.	<p><u>Next Meeting</u></p> <p>The date of the next meeting will be 23rd May 2017 at 2.15 p.m.</p>