



PARENTS' FORUM

12TH JANUARY 2018

14 parents attended.

School sport

We discussed the approach HJS wishes to take towards participation in sports fixtures and events, and the plans to deliver PE and sport following Mr Dash's retirement.

Mr Barber described how some schools have withdrawn from participation in offsite sporting fixtures because of concern over the risk assessment and safeguarding of children, particularly when relying on parents to transport children to events. HJS has continued to sign up for competitions and events, but with more rigorous procedures which have made it harder to participate.

The school has always participated in many events, trying to strike a balance between giving every child a chance to represent the school and providing an appropriate challenge for our most able athletes to compete at a high level. We monitor participation and Mr Dash uses our data to arrange events specifically to engage children who would not otherwise take part.

Parents present felt strongly that the school should not reduce the amount of sporting opportunity available. For some children, who find academic work challenging, sport is the area where they can excel. Even when they find sport difficult, or less enjoyable than others, they can experience pride when representing the school which improves self esteem. There is research which proves that physical activity not only contributes to good health and fitness but also enhances academic performance. There was a strong message from parents in the meeting that participation in extra-curricular sport should not detract from the quality of PE delivered in lessons.

One of the problems arising from children going out to many events during the school day has been that sometimes Mr Dash has therefore had to hand over his PE teaching responsibility to cover staff. The school is very keen to make sure that all children have access to high quality PE teaching. During Mr Dash's illness last term, his PE lessons were taught by an experienced coach from Shine, who is now continuing to teach all the classes. She is following Mr Dash's scheme of work and we are confident that the children are getting that good quality PE, while we take care to reflect on our requirements for recruiting Mr Dash's successor.

One of the parents present, a school sports specialist, works with the School Sports Partnership in South Bristol, and offered to advise on best practice, staff training opportunities and sporting opportunities both within the curriculum and beyond.

Sugar

Arising from the discussion about physical fitness, a parent raised a concern about sugar consumption, and asked whether the school's message was consistent: teaching about healthy balanced diet on the one hand, and having class treats and cake sales on the other, when children consume sweets and cakes.

A variety of views were aired, and this is clearly an important issue. It touches on school dinners (where there are strict controls on the amount of sugar and other ingredients), cake sales (which raise money for HENSA and are held 4 times per year), class treats (where some classes specify more stringent restrictions on what can be brought in than others) and the School Shop (where the children sell Fair Trade snacks). We didn't mention, but it also affects, birthdays (when parents often send in bags of sweets for children to hand out at the end of the day). Mr Barber suggested that it might be worth establishing a "think tank" to clarify the school food policy.

Site development matters

Mr Barber informed parents about priorities for site improvements.

We have had to remove some elements of the Adventure Playground as they failed the latest safety inspection. The timber elements of the equipment, which is ten years old, are rotting, so more will no doubt fail in the near future. HENSA are working with us to look at options for replacing the equipment. We are looking in a broader sense at the whole area behind the school, considering the possibility of replacing the grass with an all-weather surface, and possibly levelling it to make more room for year-round games. This would obviously be much more expensive than simply replacing equipment like for like, so we would like to consider how HENSA and School Council fundraising, combined with school investment and possible grant funding might enable us to enhance our outdoor play provision for the long term.

A bid has been submitted (again) for funds to replace the top hut. We have scaled down our request, on the advice of our surveyors, in the hope that we will be successful this year. If we are not, we will commit money from the school's reserves to a refurbishment of the top hut, which is over forty years old and in very poor condition.

We are planning to widen the exit from the Dining Hall to improve fire evacuation from the Hall area. This will also involve work to the retaining wall outside the Dining Hall to increase the width of the path and improve access to the playground.

We have obtained quotations for a new fence which would enclose the playground at the willow tree end in order to improve site security and safety of the children. Timing of the installation of this fence would depend on whether we are successful in our bid to replace the top hut.

Results

This bit gets a bit wordy – it is a hugely complex topic, and I've attempted to capture here, as simply as I can, some of the key points we touched on in the 20 minutes we had to discuss it.

National league tables have just been published of last summer's Key Stage 2 results. A parent asked for an explanation of the progress figures, expressing concern that the published data indicates progress at HJS as being average for Reading and Maths but below average for Writing.

Mr Barber gave a brief explanation of how the progress figures are calculated, and how they relate to attainment figures. Whilst the attainment of children at HJS last summer was above local and national averages, and within the expected and targeted range for that group of children, the average progress of the group from Key Stage 1 (Year 2) to Key Stage 2 (Year 6) results was not as good as the statistical formulae used by DfE predicted.

The methodology used to calculate these statistics is complex, and the reliability of the data is questionable, particularly for writing, and particularly for junior schools. Whilst Maths and Reading results are based on Key Stage 2 test scores compared with Key Stage 1 teacher assessments, the writing progress is based entirely on teacher assessment at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The National Curriculum changed during the years that these children were in the junior school, and the teacher assessment framework changed two years ago. Teachers nationally have been trying to keep up with the changes, but as a result there is a huge discrepancy between schools and between local authorities in the percentage of children "meeting the required standard," and the percentage "working at greater depth than the required standard."

The assessment of writing is particularly controversial. The DfE themselves have advised OFSTED not to judge a school's performance on the basis of its Writing outcomes, as the quality of teacher assessments is too unreliable. At HJS we are confident that our teacher assessments are accurate as far as Bristol is concerned, because last year we were "moderated". This means the local authority sent someone to look at our children's writing and validate the scores our teachers gave them. Our teachers are pretty "tough" and will not award a grade unless they have seen convincing evidence that the child is meeting the required standard.

Junior schools are widely acknowledged to face a particular challenge when it comes to progress scores. ([Link to report by DataLab](#)) Since Key Stage 1 data is not published in league tables, but progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 is, it is in the interests of primary schools to err on the side of caution at Year 2. However, infant schools have no way to demonstrate their performance other than progress from Foundation Stage (reception) to end of Key Stage 1. Therefore, nationally, infant schools tend to show higher percentages in their teacher assessments in Year 2. This is in no way intended to be a comment on the quality of assessment by our colleagues in our partner infant school or in any other infant school. Indeed, the evidence suggests it is more likely that Key Stage 1 assessments in primary schools are over-cautious, which then skews the figures for average progress which are used to set the targets for Key Stage 2.

Whilst HJS would obviously like the published data to convey a more glowing endorsement of the school's work, the most important question we ask ourselves is: did each child receive the best teaching, the most appropriate support, and make the best

progress they could whilst here. In response to a parent's question, Mr Barber reported that we get very positive feedback from secondary schools – including selective independent schools – about our children's readiness for the next stage of education. They are praised for being independent thinkers, articulate and confident speakers, and highly motivated to participate in all aspects of school life.

The school works closely with neighbouring schools in the NW24 Teaching and Learning Partnership. Data is shared and compared, and we are working collaboratively with colleagues in other schools, learning from them about strategies they have found successful in improving progress scores. Whilst we have no control over the Key Stage 1 data that we inherit, we have insisted that all of our teachers in all year groups be aware of the KS1 results for each child, as that is the baseline against which their progress will ultimately be measured, and that is the data which will be used to judge the school.

Other

We covered so much it is impossible to capture it all! We also talked about growth mindsets, pupil conferencing, children taking responsibility for their own learning rather than waiting to be spoonfed, helicopter parenting, and building resilience (both for children and for parents).