Civitas Academy Bulletin

12/03/18



**Welcome from Mr Wieder**

Thank you to all of the parents and carers that attended the question and answer session on Thursday 8th March. I find these sessions extremely useful when evaluating and making improvement plans for the school. As promised last week, I will give you an overview of the main themes and the action planned to address issues.

I began the meeting with a brief overview of progress since the last meeting with the issues identified. Please find a summary of what has happened since the last meeting:

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| **You Said Previously** | **Progress Since January** |
| Communication was poor. Events were given with little notice. There was no offering of alternative times to accommodate working parents. | We have followed the communication strategy that was set out in the bulletin from 22/01/18. There has been the occasional hiccup, which we have since addressed.  We have provided dates and times of the key events for the rest of the academic year. We have tried to include a variety of times for events whenever possible. |
| The clubs provision had dropped from the previous year. | A club timetable has been put together with a diverse offering of clubs for the Summer term. This will be circulated in due course. |
| Lack of events for parental and community engagement. | This term there has been a series of parent workshops in a range of areas. There have been opportunities to participate in classroom visits as well as topic information and celebration events. When parents have requested certain workshops such as how we teach mathematics in KS1, we have organised and ran sessions.  Next term we will be relaunching CAFFS and running a parent workshop on how we teach mathematics in the EYFS. These additional dates will be released at the start of the Summer term. |

After feeding back progress, I asked the audience about anything else that requires further clarification about or issues that need addressing. As like any organisation, there are always ways in which we can do things better. With this information, I make decisions in conjunction with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) about how we prioritise what we are doing. We seek feedback regularly in different ways. This could be from pupil level all the way up the external agencies. When planning what we do first, we always consider the things that will have the greatest impact on the children first.

Please find a record of the main items discussed below. Some things are quick fixes, whereas other items will take longer.

**New Issues Identified**

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| **Issue** | **Action Planned** |
| **After School Club**  It was raised again about how we could extend the opening hours beyond 5pm.  One parent suggested that parents could group together to run an extended provision on a volunteer rota basis. | As explained before half-term, currently we do not have the staffing capacity to extend beyond 5pm.  In the past, the school has attempted to outsource the provision to external companies. Due to the low numbers in the school, the companies were not interested. As a result, the school decided to take the provision in-house.  If the school was to agree for parents to extend the after school provision, it would produce additional challenges. All the parents would need to have the relevant checks. There would also need to be absence cover arrangements. It would also need another member of staff to oversee it.  At the moment we are planning our staffing structure for the 2018-19 academic year. When recruiting staff, we can make sure that arrangements are in place to either extend the opening or consider outsourcing. |
| **Websites Clarification**  What is the purpose and intended audience of the websites used in school? | The main website contains the day-to-day information about Civitas Academy. However, we also subscribe to different websites that have a particular focus. I will clarify what we use and what they are for below:  **Tapestry**  Children in Reception follow the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is also used in pre-school and nursery settings. During this stage, a profile is created for your child with evidence and notes regarding their achievements. This can be done either on paper or online. Several companies offer an online profile and as a school we have chosen to use Tapestry. Members of staff have been adding to your child’s profile and we will shortly be sending out log in details for parents to view and add information. At parents evening, we are checking that we hold up to date information regarding email addresses to ensure that we can get this set up as soon as possible.  **Class Dojo**  In the past, I am aware that this website may have been used differently. However, I want to ensure that the school uses this website in the same consistent approach from year 1 onwards. The website is used to allocate points and reasons for good behaviour in school. Parents can choose to log in and view these points.  In order to streamline information and communication processes, I have told staff that it is not to be used to communicate between staff and parents/ carers. Therefore, could I please remind parents and carers that if you wish to speak to your child’s class teacher, that you see them on playground or arrange an appointment via the school office.  **Tucasi**  This is the parent hub for online payments, text messages to parents and booking clubs. We are looking to use more of the features of this website and parent evening bookings in the future will be via this website.  As the school grows, it is inevitable that we will subscribe to further websites. When we do, I will announce these via the bulletin. Please make sure that you keep the office up to date with any changes to personal details. |
| **Parking**  This remains an issue and is likely to get worse when the new flats are built and as the school grows.  Several suggestions were offered such as lobbying the council or introducing a school bus. | As mentioned previously, it is the driver’s responsibility to ensure that they park responsibly and in designated places. Drivers also need to ensure that they consider local residents. However, I am aware that the parking situation is not ideal and extremely limited.  Introducing a school bus is not going to be possible with our budget. One parent at the meeting suggested a car sharing register. This is a great idea and if any parents are interested in taking the lead and attempting to organise this, then please come and see me.  I want to find solutions, but sometimes things are out of the school’s control. I intend on contacting the local authority this week to see if there is anything that can be done. We may need to consider lobbying the council to ensure that plans can be put in place to address the parking issues. I will keep you updated on progress in future bulletins. |
| **School Trips**  Parents asked for clarification around voluntary payments to pay for trips. | It was explained that as a school we cannot insist that payment takes place for a trip, therefore we have to use the term, voluntary contribution.  We never factor in any profit from a school trip and the amount stipulated is the total cost divided by the amount of children. If any parent doesn’t pay for the trip, then the school is losing money. The school then has to make a decision if the trip is economically viable.  At one-point last week, the Reception trip was showing a loss of around £500. As of today the projected loss is £250. It is not economically sustainable for the school to lose this sort of money on school trips. In the future we will cancel school trips if we continue to lose money.  For the rest of the academic year, I have asked staff in the future to ensure that trips do not cost above £15. Next year, I am hoping to introduce a system where all the trips and visits are announced at the start of the academic year and combined into a total cost for the year. This would then be able to be paid in instalments throughout the year if necessary. |
| **Attendance**  Information was requested about why there has been a change in policy and approach to attendance.  Clarification was also requested about how absence is authorised or not authorised. | Since the school has opened, attendance figures have been below national averages. In the Autumn term, 17% of children in the school were classified as ‘persistently absent’ from school. This is a term used by the government to describe attendance that drops below 90%. It is concerning that almost one fifth of the pupil population could be classified as persistently absent.  There is a strong correlation between attendance and academic achievement. As a result, we want children to be in school as often as they can be. Therefore, we have formulated a plan to ensure rates of attendance increase. We have reviewed our policies and introduced new systems and procedures to monitor, track and take action regarding pupil absence. To ensure that the systems are robust and fair, we sought external advice before rewriting the policy. I accept that some of the new systems may seem trivial or unpopular. However, our priority is to reduce the amount of absence taken when children are not genuinely ill or are well enough to attend.  Obviously, we understand there are occasions when children get ill or need to attend an urgent medical appointment. That is why we have set a minimum target of 97% attendance.  Just to clarify, a decision made whether or not to authorise absence is down to the school. Action taken due to absence levels is in conjunction with the Education Welfare Officer and Reading Council. Any action taken is based around the attendance percentage. In the information leaflet, we outlined what good attendance looks like. I have also included it below:   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Attendance** | **Description** | **Days Lost Per Year** | **Weeks Lost Per Year** | | 99-100% | Excellent | 0-4 | Less than 1 | | 97-98% | Good | 5-9 | 1 to 2 | | 96% | Satisfactory | 10-13 | 2 to 3 | | 90-95% | Unsatisfactory | 14-18 | 3 to 4 | | Below 90% | Persistent Absence | More than 19 | More than 4 |   When attendance falls below 95%, we begin to put a monitoring plan in place. The reason we are requesting evidence is that we can build a picture to explain the absence. For example, if a child’s absence fell below 90% due to medical issues with evidence provided, we would not suggest a fine. However, if no evidence was provided or a term time holiday taken, then the action taken would be different.  As you aware, the school cannot authorise term time holidays under any circumstances. |

**Sports Relief**

On Friday 23rd March, we will be raising funds for Sports Relief. Children are welcoming to come to school in sports clothes/ tracksuits in return for a donation of £1 to Sports Relief. The P.E. team will be organising a parent and child Just Dance session in the hall at 8:10. Everybody is welcome to attend.

**Olympic Athlete Visit**

The P.E. team have arranged for an Olympic athlete to visit the school on Wednesday 25th April. Children will have the opportunity to meet the athlete and have their photo taken. The athlete will also lead an assembly and the children will be able to take part in a sponsored circuit. Further information will be released before we break up for Easter.

**Internet Safety**

Children have been learning in school about how to keep safe online this week. They have produced posters about how to keep safe online. It would be great if you could follow this up with your children at home. I have included a link to a website that contains advice about how children can stay safe online below:

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/safer-internet-day/2018/safer-internet-day-2018-top-tips-under-11s>

**Key Dates**

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| Wednesday 14th March (3:30-6pm) | Parents Evening |
| Thursday 15th March  (3:30-6pm) | Parents Evening |
| Friday 16th March  (All day) | Reception School Trip to Odds Farm |
| Monday 19th March  (3:15-3:45pm) | Reception and Y1 Project Celebration |
| Tuesday 20th March  (3:15-3:45pm) | Y2 Project Celebration |
| Friday 23rd March  (8:10-8:40) | Sports Relief |