

Old Ford Academy School Council Meeting

Tuesday 13th September

Welcome to the first school academy council meeting of the new academic year.

Music Instrument Sessions

Kevin said then school started the extra music instrument tuition sessions last year and allocated them to different year groups. Anybody who wanted to could take up an instrument initially. There was a limited only on the one to one instruments, such as violin, but there were no limits on numbers. After a year of no charge for tuition, this year the school is introducing a small charge.

The letters about the lessons will be going out soon. The lessons haven't started as yet, except for guitar which is carrying over from last year's sessions.

The sessions are run by the school's music providers and Kevin will check the exact details and put something in the newsletter about it.

School Communication with Parents

Is information going through the new app?

The school is switching over to a new system and SIMS, which is the pupil data management system which holds all the attendance data and information and parent numbers and assessment information, is being switched over and is a major task and they are unable to send text message out from the school during this process. The school is working hard to get this up and running as soon as possible but this explains why communication between the school and parents has not been that great over the last 2 weeks.

Kevin said he got a hard copy letter out to let parents know what's going on, but they are trying to get it set up as soon as possible.

But the school can still email, so notices for the academic council meeting would have gone out and the information about the after school clubs would have gone out as normal via email.

Ideally the school would like everything to go through the app, such as the newsletter and there is a free texting and messaging service, so basically everything will go through the app.

Emailing everything out or putting it on the website, so the website is always there and the current newsletter from last week is there. Unless parents are told it is on the website via text people often don't check.

When does the newsletter get uploaded onto the website?

It should be either Friday evening or Monday morning at the latest.

The school no longer does hard copies of the newsletter because it runs to about 20 pages, so they try to get all the information in there.

How long will it take to get the app up and running?

Hopefully in the next week but the school is focusing on the attendance information and parent details and then the school will be rolling out the other features.

Why change the system now?

It was to do with contracts from the old system being up during the summer, so it was the only time the school could change it and it's not ideal and has been a real headache but the school is getting messages out and the school are trying to get it up and running as fast as they can.

Kevin is not sure if it will be an app or different texting system but the school want to be able to use the text facility in some way as this is a free feature of the system.

Is it called the expression parent app?

That was the old system. The new system is called

The new system is called Broncon and Kevin said don't download anything as yet as they do not know what it will look like and they are hoping to have detailed update for Friday.

Dates for the Year 6 Residential Trip

Residential trip for Year 6 October 17/18/19th but there will be a letter - hard copy letter.

Letters about secondary school

What does the bandings mean?

ABCD - what do the bandings mean in terms of pupils being accepted in a secondary school?

At the end of year 5 all pupils are banded into four groups based on their reading ability and every school has to take equal number from each band - schools can't take from just one band and this is to ensure pupils are evenly distributed across the banding. It is designed to prevent schools from taking pupils from just one band.

The bandings are based on pupils reading ability.

There used to be a maths, English and reading test, but they decided it was too much. But basically now they look at reading results that are banded into four groups A, B C and D and every school takes an even spread across the bands.

How would parents know which is the highest and lowest?

Kevin will add a note in the newsletter.

The band will not affect whether a pupil will get a place at a secondary school.

Parent Consultations

It has been noticed there are no parent consultations at the end of the year as it seems as if there are less consultations throughout the year, with the first consultation not until February/ March, which is a long time to wait. Parents would like to have information about their child's progress earlier in the year. Is it possible to go back to the old system?

Kevin said that the school has one main consultation and then you can book an appointment to see the teacher. There are meet your teacher sessions now where you can meet the teacher as a group of parents. But parents can also make appointments to meet the teacher if they need to.

It was highlighted that some parents were not aware of this last year and missed out on seeing the teacher about their child.

It was suggested that consultations should be fixed so that parents know about it and have 3 consultations per year.

Kevin said you can make appointments for the teacher and the school does want to make three compulsory consultations in the year as it takes a lot to organise.

The school went down to 2 consultations as they only test the pupils twice a year and the consultations are based around the testing. The school felt three tests a year was too much for the pupils.

The end assessment was moved to earlier and the first assessment later but any parent can arrange to see their child's teacher whenever they want to.

It was noted that parents want to be able to sit down and talk to the teacher for 10 mins to get more detailed feedback.

Kevin said the school can arrange for the first consultation to be earlier in the year as waiting until March seems a long time and make it clear to parents they can come and meet the teacher whenever they need to.

New School Dinner Provider

For the last 3 years Chartwells were doing the school dinner contract and they ended their contract and didn't want to take it on again.

The school now has a new company called Lunchtime Co. and they have set out a salad bar and the children come and help themselves. The pupils seem to be choosing to eat the salad and Kevin hasn't seen this before. There is a new menu that is in the newsletter and Last week the pupils had tacos - meat and vegetable options, yesterday they had quesadillas and the pupils are eating more of a variety of food. Kevin says he has been eating the food at lunch time and says it is really nice. The salad bar has bread, cous cous, tuna and pasta salad and there is a three week rotating menu which is hosted in the newsletter.

The pupils do get a vote on which dessert they want on Fridays. The company get £2.30 per child per meal and it's not a lot of money to prove healthy, nutritious, good looking and tasty food but it is going well at the moment. It's a small company and seem to do really well with getting pupils to eat different foods.

It was asked how is the lunch menu encouraged?

It can be a battle and in reception all the teachers go down with the pupils slightly earlier than other years and the lunch time staff encourage pupils to eat the different food. Kevin goes down there to role model and say this is delicious etc. The school cannot force the pupils to eat some foods but the school try to encourage in every which way they can and there are assemblies on healthy eating.

The newsletter has the latest menu and Kevin shared photos of the spread of food.

What about pupils who get distracted and need more time to choose?

Staff are there to encourage the pupils and support them to try different foods and the pupils are given enough time to choose what to eat.

Parent Survey

The school will be launching this shortly and it will be translated in Bengali and Somali and any other support and language people need - parents need to let the school know. This will come out in October in the next few weeks.

Year 6 Tests

SATs - will be in May next year. The school doesn't spend a huge amount of time on practice tests and they deliver a full curriculum but they do a lot more question work than other year groups so they get used to looking at test papers. They don't want the pupils to be scared of the test paper and although it's important the pupils do well in the tests it's more important they are given a balanced curriculum. The school does a lot of work in earlier years so that by the time pupils get to year 6 they are in a strong position regarding tests.

Kevin will:

Check with staff about the texting system

Put information about banding in the newsletter

Information about parent consultation and meeting teachers one to one and changing the date of the first consultation to earlier in the year.

Is it possible to have personalised report on our pupils?

Looking for information about what the pupils are doing, it was noted that there is very little correspondence from the teachers which is different from nursery.

For example know that there is going to be PE in reception but parents not aware of when it will be starting.

There are letters from each year group with details of staffing and dates and PE etc. It is normally texted out with a link but this has not happened this time so apologies for that, but curriculum letters in the newsletter and will give information about what your child will be learning and key dates etc.

The next academy school council meeting will be Tuesday 8th November at 9.15am and it will remain online as well as face to face as it works well.