

Old Ford Academy Council Meeting
Tuesday 17th January 2023

When are we meeting the teachers?

Year six are putting theirs out now

The school used to have three assessment points in October, February and June.

The school has reduced that to twice a year so that the first assessment is later in November and December and they do last one in June. It was felt that when the children return back to school after the summer holidays it was too soon to test them as they have not been in class long enough to be tested.

Because there are only two assessment points the school now waits until they have all the results in and they have been analysed before doing the parent meetings.

Therefore the parent meetings coming out in the next week or so.

Year 5 Residential changed to France trip in Year 6?

Yes. The school is going through a change over period and they used to do a night over in year 4 at another school. The school did Suffolk residential in year 5 and year 6 was at the scouts centre.

From next year, Year 6 are going to do an overseas trip so they are going to France to visit some World War 1 battlefields. Year 4 are now going to do what was previously in year 5 so they are going to do the Suffolk residential. Therefore due to the changeover year 5 will not be doing their residential as they will be getting prepared for the overseas trip next year. It's a bit of an organisational challenge as the pupils need to have their passports so that's why they are starting now to be ready for next year. The information has gone out to the year groups.

My Child At School app: is the school still using this as there is nothing open it at the moment?

The school hasn't got it going yet and is still using the old fashioned text.

Ideally the school wants to start using the app because sending text to remind parents/ carers about what's going on at school costs money but the transfer is taking time. My Child At School is a school app that is used by other schools to track your child's progress but also the school can send messages to parents/ carers as well as all the newsletters and there can be information about after school clubs etc.

The school is concerned about using the app as a lot of parents don't have it and even when it gets up and running there will be parents and carers won't have access to it. So the school is trying to think how they can run the app because when it is up and running the school will still use text at the same time for a short period of time. Those parents who use it already for older children in senior school will use the same app but have different accounts. The app is easy to use and has information about attendance, behaviour, notices from the school, timetables, homework, clubs, events such as parents evenings, academic calendar and parent consent. You can just switch accounts for each child.

Will teachers be striking at Old Ford and when is this planned to happen?

The news is very fresh, but the NEU, which is the teachers union only, have voted to strike and it's up to teachers if they want to strike or not. Teaching assistant union, most of them are in GMB/ Unison and they haven't voted to strike and the headteachers union didn't have enough response for the ballot to strike so if anyone goes out to strike it will just be the teachers.

It will be a case of looking at whether the school can be safely opened. If all the teachers go on strike then it will be very difficult to open the school for the children, but if it is only a few, say 5 teachers went on strike, then the school can manage this and make sure classes are running. The next step is to find out who will be taking strike action and taking it from there. But as long as it is safe, the school will remain open on strike day.

Strike days proposed are Wednesday February 1st, Wednesday 15th March and Thursday 16th March. Other strike days are proposed that affect other parts of the UK.

The school will give as much notice as possible either via a letter or a text.

Kevin's Update to the meeting

Last meeting was 17th November and it was a bit of a short meeting with not many people coming and not many agenda items. Kevin said that maybe one of the reasons people are not coming to the meeting is maybe there are no issues to discuss which is fine. But it is good to have as many parents/ carers coming to the meetings to chat and find out what is going on in the school.

At the last meeting Kevin mentioned about the school's 1st aid procedure, and that has been a standing item in the newsletter since then to say how the school logs incidents and follow up with contacting parents and carers.

At the last meeting there was an item about the parent's survey. There is a letter on the website about the survey results. The website is a useful place to find lots of information about the school and the Trust as well as all the newsletters. The survey results were put up in December.

You can find the survey results here: <https://oldfordacademy.paradigmtrust.org/parent-survey-results/>

The survey was done in May across the whole Trust so all 7 schools with just over 600 responses across the Trust with over 200 from Old Ford. Kevin said he is really proud with the high number of responses from Old Ford and feels it is a really good response from the schools parents and carers, a third of the overall responses from across the Trust is from Old Ford, which is great.

Kevin did a summary of the key areas that were strong and key areas that were weaker.

The first thing to note is that all the areas are above the national benchmark, because the company that does the survey also surveys hundreds of schools and academy trusts across the country, so where it says benchmark it relates to all the other schools who did the survey.

Strong areas are mutual respect, communication and parental confidence. Kevin has then broken down the each area into the top three questions, which are all very strong with high 80 scores. But even the low areas are not comparatively that low as they are still mid to high 70s.

It is the weaker areas that Kevin is aiming to address, so the Paradigm bespoke, such as the music programme, is more about how parents/ carers didn't understand how the programme worked. The relationship with the trust again Kevin feels that parents/ carers not understanding what it means to be part of Paradigm and school accessibility, which is strange as it kind of contradicts the results for communication with the school.

Kevin then broke these areas down and the Paradigm bespoke was about the music tuition and when Kevin looked in to it, there were 32% of parent/ carers didn't know about it. Kevin has tried to address this in the newsletter explaining how it works for pupils who want to study a musical instrument.

Kevin mentioned that 79% of parent/ carers are satisfied with the educational visits of the school, so that meant 20% not satisfied . Regarding the relationship with the Trust and understanding what it means to be part of the Trust and how it is beneficial for the pupils and there are 19/20% of parent/ carers not aware that Old Ford is part of the Paradigm Trust.

The lowest score was about feedback from the school and part of the reason for the survey was to give parent/ carers the chance to give feedback to the school and make suggestions and comments. The school is very keen to get this number higher and the school is looking into ways of doing that.

Kevin highlighted action from the survey such as explaining about the tuition for musical instruments, at the moment the school has tutors teaching several different instruments, such as guitar, flute, clarinet, drums, ukulele and violin. This was offered out to all year 3 and year 6 pupils about a year ago and the school took on everybody who responded to say they wanted to do these lessons. At the moment the lessons are full and they take place every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday where children come out of their class and they do 1 to 1 teaching. As pupils drop out because they think maybe it is not for them, then they can replace with another pupil - but it is better explained in the newsletter. The idea behind the lessons was that initially they are free and then then school asks the parents/ carers to pay what they can afford for the lessons. The school loans out the instruments so that the pupils get to take home the guitar or violin home with them. Kevin wanted to make sure that everyone understands how the system works. That will be in the newsletter for the next few weeks.

Regarding the educational visits Kevin will hold a parent event and sit in the hall and look at some photos and videos of the different visits they have had as Kevin feels that people are not aware of the amount of trips and visits the school does.

With regards to the relationship with the trust, Kevin said that although it is not hugely important he still wanted people to know what it means to be part of the Trust and how it benefits the pupils. Kevin is going to put together a leaflet that explains what it means to be part of the Trust and how it benefits the pupils and the school, such as sharing resources and ideas and teaching across the Trust. It helps

financially, especially during this difficult time as it helps to be part of a strong group of schools because they can buy things together through the economy of scale.

Regarding school accessibility the academy council is a big part of that and if the academy council suggest something or the school makes changes based on the academy councils ideas then Kevin makes sure he puts that in the newsletter so everyone is aware of that. Kevin would like more people to come to the academy council so they can share their thoughts and ideas and any ideas or suggestions we have to publicise the academy council and the meetings would be very useful. Kevin went to the parents coffee morning last Thursday and had a chat with the parents there - Dawud was there too - and it would be nice to get some of those parents to come along to the meetings as well.

Kevin says that he will take on board what parents have said about using the app, but at the moment the school will continue to use text and newsletter as the main source of information for parents and carers. Kevin says that he wants to share key information with parents and carers via text so they can click on a link and go straight to website pages.

Kevin talked about how the newsletter is put together with all key information at the beginning, Kevin also included the coffee morning update, a parent/ carer art workshop that the school resident artist Veronica is taking. Kevin showed us the different pages of the newsletter with information about the academy council and after school clubs. Kevin also highlighted information given to the school from a parent who is also a paediatrician about STREP A. Kevin highlighted standing items as well as the reflection room for pupils, which is currently being discussed with parents and carers. Kevin also highlighted that the pupils are having a Chinese New Year meal on Friday. There is lots of useful information about vaccines, but also lunch menu, term dates, applying for a place at the nursery and uniforms. The school feels that although the app isn't up and running fully, there is still a lot of information for parents and carers in the newsletter each week.

Kevin said that after visiting the parent/ carer coffee morning with Dawud, the school is keen to engage with parents and carers more, so promoting the coffee morning, workshops, school academy council meetings as well as parents and carers are looking to do other workshops such as ESOL classes and ups killing themselves in different ways at the school wants to support this as much as possible. Kevin is looking at different ways to do this and encourage more involvement going forward.

It was noted the effort that the school is making to inform and engage with parents and carers particularly around the artworks and ESOL and listening to parents around their interests in up-skilling themselves. It was felt that it is a good way to engage with parents and this will give parents and carers more ways to be part of the school.

It was raised that the link to the academy council meeting is public online and other people who are not part of the school can try to join in the meeting. Kevin says he decides who is able to enter the meeting and can filter out anyone he doesn't recognise.

Parents at the meeting said it was easy to click on the link and join the meeting. But Kevin said that if he doesn't recognise the name of the person asking to join he will not let them in. Parents also said that they felt it was good to attend the meeting as they feel they are doing something. Kevin said that

the online meetings were started during the pandemic and continued after lockdown to make the meeting more accessible.

It was raised that the school are doing a great job making the website so informative and having so much useful information in the newsletter. Some parents and carers feel it is an interesting read to find out about key information.

It was felt that it would be nice to have male carers and dads come along to the coffee morning as well as mums. There is a 'Supermums' WhatsApp group reminding people about key dates and events and it was felt that we don't want to miss out on the contribution of fathers and male carers.

It was mentioned that it is useful to have pictures in the newsletter as it helps many parents and carers understand more about what the school and their child is doing - having a visual record really helps and give parents and carers a better feel about what is happening in the school. It was also mentioned that it's useful to have reminders and prompts about what is coming up, such as trips especially if there is a cost, so that parents and carers can be ready for these as there are many pupils who really enjoy these trips and enjoy their time at school as well.

It was suggested by Dawud Marsh, one of the parent directors of Paradigm Trust, who is also parent rep on the academy council, he may be able to raise awareness of being part of the Trust by sharing information about Trust meetings and his experience of visiting other schools within the Trust. Kevin says there are 6 other schools in the Trust and feels for him there is strength in numbers, so whenever he has a problem or issue, there is the expertise of the other principals to draw on. The curriculum is shared across all the schools and resources, such as the Spanish teacher Christina works in Old Ford 2 days per week, Culloden 2 days per week and Solebay 1 day per week. The specialist computer teacher also works across schools as well. Old Ford on its own would not be able to afford this by themselves.

It was mentioned that the Trust also has a special school as well, which will be similar to Phoenix School in Tower Hamlets.

It was also mentioned that the meeting proposed by Kevin to show parent carers photos and videos of the different trips will be a great way of engaging parents and carers, similar to the event Kevin had to highlight the excellent recent Ofsted inspection, where lots of parents and carers came and wanted to stay afterwards and speak to Kevin about different things.

Catering

The school dishwasher is still broken so the children are using paper plates and plastic knives and forks, which is not ideal. The repair company ordered the wrong part so it is going to be another couple of weeks before the dishwasher is repaired so that the pupils can go back to using the trays.

Wednesday 8th February at 2.15pm

The caterers will run a dinner service as the pupils experience it and they will have the same food and service as the children have so that parents and carers can see what their children have for lunch at

the school. It was mentioned that last time this happened with the previous caterers it was very well attended and parents said they feel better knowing what their children are having for lunch. Kevin raised the point that despite having the nutritional food nicely displayed for the pupils to choose from, they still don't choose to eat it. The salads are nicely presented and served in really nice bowls and the pupils can choose what salads to eat. There was a suggestion to help encourage the pupils to eat healthy options by getting them to build their own pizza and eating what they have created themselves.

The next Academy Council Meeting will be on Tuesday February 28th