

Old Ford Primary Academy School Council Meeting

Tuesday 25th April 2023

Kevin recapped on the previous meeting highlighting:

Residential moved from yr 5 to yr 4.

Yr 4 have taken over the year 5 residential to Suffolk

There are about 42 pupils out of a cohort of 88 going on the yr 4 residential

The rest of that year will remain in school. Ideally the school would like everyone to go, but it is understandable that parents will be anxious about sending their children onto a residential.

The school encourage parent/ carers to allow pupils go on the residential, having individual meetings and explaining what the residential will look like and reassuring everyone. But there is still some residual impact from COVID that may have an affect on the number of pupils going away on school residential this year.

The current year 5 will have a big residential in yr 6 possibly to Scotland or Wales.

The current year 5 will not get a residential this year as part of the hand over where the residential planning has changed, so they will unfortunately miss out this year.

Multi Faith Space

Multi faith and reflection room for pupils is still going strong and pupils of different faiths and beliefs are using the space for reflection or just sitting with other pupils, and the impact it has had on pupil behaviour is very positive.

Art Sessions

Parent art sessions by Veronica was set up for Wednesday afternoons but the uptake was slow despite Veronica visiting Shabina's coffee morning for parents. The art club is now ended.

Veronica is now planning an intergenerational arts project which the school is trying to get funding for. The plan is to make a huge quilt together where each person who takes part creates their own square for a larger quilt. The plan is for parents and children to come together to talk about their experiences of living in East London and of their family histories, such as those who migrated here from other parts of the world. Veronica has a couple of artists who will come in to run workshops on different techniques and the project will use recycled materials, such as old t-shirts etc and weave materials together to create a design that incorporates all these individual stories together. It was felt that the project would be a good way of engaging parents who will then want to get involved in other art based projects. Veronica will hold weekly drop in sessions and parents/ carers can come and take resources to do work on their designs at home as well as in the sessions. It was suggested that the artists who come in to run one off sessions could also do videos that parents and carers can access online to help them.

Parent/ Carer Summer Fair Committee

There seems to be quite a bit of enthusiasm from parents to get involved in school events. Kevin was

suggesting having a parent/ carer committee for the summer fair and Shabina was going to raise this at the Thursday coffee mornings because there is quite an active group of mums who attend this each week. The summer fair will be after school on Friday 14th July.

In March £3,085 was raised for the earthquake in Turkey/ Syria and the parents/ carers did their own fundraiser as well and the total is now over £5,000, which is really good, especially because it was led by parent/ carers.

Pupils Class Work Highlighted Across the Trust

Kevin highlighted that Dawud mentioned about the Paradigm Trust newsletter where work by Old Ford pupils is often highlighted for their writing skills.

Parent/ Carer Teacher Consultations

There was a discussion last meeting about parent/ teacher consultations and the dates have now been set.

SATs

There was a question at the last meeting about year 6 revision for the SATs which is coming up very soon.

Mental Health

Mental health was raised given that it's in the news where there is a need for more resources and support for young people. The school has 3 learning mentors Shabina, Carly and Ferdousie and they work with pupils on a one to one basis in the afternoons and they liaise with parents and carers as well to provide support as often there are issues at home that may impact on pupils and parent/ carer wellbeing.

Stephen Aravena is a psychotherapist who comes in once a week and takes groups of children to work on social skills and how to get on with each other. Stephen also supports mental health needs across the trust and liaises with Emma, from year 4 who is the Old Ford Primary designated mental health lead now. Every school in the trust has a designated mental health lead who supports the general mental health work across each school.

The school also partners with Tower Hamlets Educational Welfare Service and the school can refer low level anxiety stuff to them such as parent/ carers needing support to help get their child ready for school or for those who don't want to come to school. Anything needing more specific interventions is referred to CAMHS. The school also is able to buy in professional psychotherapists if it is thought this is more appropriate and this has been used before for those who have needed it. David Willis mentioned that the board felt it was needed to help support those pupils who are unable to wait for CAMHS or other services given that there are not enough resources for demand needed. Dawud will arrange to meet with Stephen Aravena to look further into the work the school does to support pupils and staff mental health and welfare. Stephen has also done some excellent work within the leadership to raise awareness of mental health and well-being across the Trust.

Dawud suggested finding some accessible resources to put in the newsletter to help generate

awareness within the parent/ carer community that would be useful prompts to be mindful of mental health. Emma also has mental health Green Day with the aim of getting people to go outside in the open and get some fresh air and being mindful of your surroundings and how this can have benefits for mental and physical wellbeing. This is going to be part of a week of activities that will happen in June.

The school has mental and physical health awareness as part of the PSHE curriculum and it is something that the school reminds pupils of regularly and this is seen with the wear yellow days.

Pupil Attendance

Kevin talked about attendance as being an issue not just locally but across the country. Figures have shown that in the first term of this academic year the number of pupils persistently absent was up to 25% nationally, which means their attendance is 90% or less and is equivalent to 1 in 4 pupils losing half a day a week of school. At Old Ford this figure is 30% of pupils having the equivalent of half a day off each week so there is a real drive to get pupils in to school.

There are a handful of pupils who do have medical issues but there is a significant number of pupils who miss school and this could be due to COVID hangover where pupils have anxiety about being back at school, the Winter flu in December caused a big dip in attendance then. Also the teacher strikes have impact on attendance when pupils have had a 3 day weekend, especially at half term where pupils have got used to being at home. Added to this is the cost of living crisis that is impacting family and parents and carers are obviously very worried about this as well.

At the end of the day getting pupils into school means they can be learning and happy and have a routine and be safe and it cannot be underestimated the importance and value of having pupils physically in class and spending time with their friends. Trust staff have all had training from Suffolk MIND that helps to remind everyone of what to do if you are feeling stressed and how you can look after your mental health. The Trust are planning to roll out a pupils version of this as well.

Teacher strikes

Thursday 27th April and Tuesday 2nd May

Teachers are not obliged to tell the school if they are striking or not, but most people who strike do tell the school in advance so the school has been able to send out notices in advance to say which classes will be open or closed. As there is only a small proportion of staff who do strike the school remained open and staff aim to keep as many classes running as possible. Kevin does try to send out information as soon as he is sure of what the arrangements are for strike days. The strikes are causing some disruption and the school does provide work for those who will be at home, but it's not the same of having a teacher.

School dinner parent/ carers days

Planning to have parents to come in and have their lunch with the children and there will be limited places for each day where they can sit with the pupils for lunch.

There was a question about nursery dinners. Kevin said it is exactly the same as the whole school dinner except pupils will eat their lunch in the class. It was also asked if there is fruit for snacks and Kevin said there is fresh fruit each day, such as watermelon, pineapple grapes orange apples, berries and there is quite a nice mix.

Date of next Academy Council Meeting:

Tuesday 13th June 2023