

## **Old Ford Academy Council Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday 16th January 2024**

Kevin began by recapping on the minutes from the previous meeting on 7th November 2023.

### **Year 6 Residential**

The meeting has happened about that with staff and parents.

### **School Uniform**

The meeting discussed that pupils should wear black trainers and black shoes to school.

### **Stephen Aravena**

Dawud met with Stephen to talk about how the school supports pupils and staff around mental health issues and the dragon breathing technique introduced to both staff and pupils.

Dawud highlighted how useful it has been for him to meet with staff, such as Stephen and resident artist Veronica, to catch up on the work they do at the school.

### **Parents Coming in for School Lunch with Their Child**

This has been quite popular and will continue again this term. It's good for parents to actually see what food the pupils have for lunch and it is a great way to engage with parents and carers.

This is the third term the school have run this and previously it has been on a Wednesday and a Friday, so they will pick a different day for this term.

### **Parents Fundraiser for Gaza**

Parents organising the event choose to host it outside of the school.

### **My Child at School App and Text Messages from the School**

The school has to pay per text message, although they have an allowance, it works out at about 3p per text message, but if it is important Kevin will text it out to make sure as many

parents and carers as possible get it. But the cost does mount up if regularly texting over 600 parent/ carers.

The school is trying to get as many parents and carers signed up to the app as possible and before Christmas the school ran a Tesco voucher draw to encourage more parents and carers to sign up to the app.

There is current about 60-70% of parents/ carers who use the app now. Kevin said that when they send out a text message those parents/ carers who have the app will get the message to there, and those who are not signed up to the app receive a text message.

Dawud mentioned that he has the app and is still receiving the text and messages in the app, but also the after school clubs did not come up on his app. Kevin said he will look at that.

### **School Academy Council Elections**

The school wanted to hold elections our announce new academy councillors but there were no parent/ carers who put their names forward. Kevin will put in a front page spread in the newsletter and explain the role and what it means to be an academy councillor for the school. Kevin will also speak to Shabina and ask her to speak to the coffee morning mums to see if anyone would like to put themselves forward to be an academy councillor.

It was suggested one way to encourage parents/ carers to be involved in the school as an academy councillor would be to ask a series of questions such as 'Do you want to help the school?' Another suggestion was that it would be good to bring parents in by asking 'Do you want to be part of your child's experience at school?' 'Do you want to positively impact your child's experience of school?'

### **Pupil Attendance**

Kevin highlighted that attendance figures have been a national issue, especially after COVID and lockdown. The school has done a number of things to help improve attendance figures, including working with a group called ImpactEd and they surveyed the children and will be looking at the results of that. But looking at the early feedback it hasn't really shown the school anything they do not already know.

The school has held a dress up day where pupils can come to school wearing their sports clothes.

Ice cream Mondays in January to help make Mondays more attractive to get the children in. At the time of the meeting the attendance was 93.6% and the school target is to get the attendance above 95%. The national average is just over 94% and the school would like to get above that but are only just behind.

When the retired HMI inspectors came in, in November pupil attendance was running at national figure of 94.2%. Kevin highlighted the school attendance is not far off from national figures, but they want to do better than the national average.

The school are trying to be as creative as they can to improve pupil attendance such as dress up days and ice cream days to encourage pupils to continue to come to school. The school realise that obviously if pupils are really ill then they will need to stay home, but if children have the sniffles they could still come to school with a dose of Calpol.

### **What are the school doing for those pupils are considered as persistent absenteeism?**

Pupils who attendance falls below 90% are classed as persistent absentees and depending on the individual reasons for absence, the school tries to work with each child and family. For example, if a pupil is very anxious about coming to school, Shabina will work with the pupil and family to identify the root cause of the anxiety.

Kevin highlighted that there are fines for families who do not bring their children to school, but they will work with the families and pupils first to try and get the child to attend school. There are some pupils who do not attend school during the term time because they are taken by their parents and carers on holiday. The school doesn't sanction these absences, but they understand the reasons why this happens often due to the much reduced cost of holidays and flights.

The school also appreciates that this time of year when it is cold and dark and the seasonal colds and illnesses are still kicking in, this will have an impact on attendance. But Kevin says he feels that if pupils enjoy school and coming to school then they will have better attendance. Kevin feels that the school is a welcoming place for pupils and they are working hard on ensuring pupils have a great experience of school, which will help maintain high attendance levels.

Kevin also highlighted that people's immune systems are still impacted by COVID and the lockdown and this is having an impact still.

Kevin was asked if the initiatives to improve pupil attendance are having an impact but he said it's hard to know as you won't know if the attendance level would have been the same,

for example, if the school did not have an ice cream day. But Kevin said that even if only a handful of children come to school that may not have come then it is worth it.

Dawud asked if these initiatives are costing the school more financially to run?

The ice cream day is part of the school dinner so it something that is provided anyway and the dress up days do not cost the school in anyway and it doesn't take up curriculum time and the pupils tend to really like them.

Kevin highlighted that Fridays and Mondays tend to have the lowest attendance figures as it is the end and beginning of the week and Mondays in particular.

David Wills mentioned that it is always better to reward and highlight good behaviour rather than punishing bad behaviour, although sanctioning is there to use. But it is about capturing those pupils who are at the margins. More likely to make a different decision about coming in where the school will have success with the initiatives they are using.

Kevin highlighted that heads across the Trust share their creative ideas about improving pupil attendance and it is an item on their meeting agenda where everyone shares their most creative ideas across the trust.

The meeting praised Kevin and the school team for all their hard work in working with pupils and families to improve attendance and also support them with any issues they may have that impacts on coming to school.