

## Academy Council Minutes 27/02/24

Kevin started the meeting to outline how the academy council works and when we meet and that parents and carers can join both online or in person.

Kevin also outlined the role of academy council members, saying that the only real requirement is to attend meetings, but the school often bring items to the meeting for feedback from the academy council members, such as when the school were changing the school dinner providers.

One parent said they have put themselves down for the academy council.

Kevin then went through items that were discussed at the previous meeting.

Year 6 are going on a residential to the Isle of Wight and the planning for this is underway and parents/ carers have all been contacted with costs etc explained.

There was another item about the school uniform, which is a standing item in the Old Ford weekly newsletter.

Dawud spoke previously about meeting with Steven Aravena to talk about the dragon breathing technique the school is using with pupils.

The school usually invite parents in to have school lunches with the pupils, but as there is an issue with the dishwasher, this hasn't started back this term as yet.

The school is using disposable paper plates.

Dawud raised that the industrial dishwasher was out of action before, when it was repaired, but Kevin highlighted that the cost of a new dishwasher is about £37k which is very expensive.

Kevin said the school feels that the dishwasher is not damaged, but as it is used every school day it's just something that can happen.

The dishwasher should be repaired within the week as the quote has been seen by Kevin and agreed.

Dawud asked about the numbers of pupils attending the Isle of Wight residential and although Kevin did not have the exact figures, he said he knows that there is quite a good take up from the year group.

Another item from the previous meeting was the role out of the MyChildAtSchool app and the use of text by the school.

Dawud asked what the uptake was from parent/ carers in registering and using the app.

Kevin said the he believes most of the parent/ carers have now signed up to use the app. Kevin reminded the meeting that every time he sends out text from the school to parents/carers it cost the school 3p, so multiply that across all the year groups it adds up to being expensive, where as using the app there is no additional cost for sending out messages.

It was suggested at the meeting to use a QR code in the newsletter or around the school such as on classroom windows so that parents/ carers can use that to go to the app and download it.

Kevin said there used to be a link that parents and carers can click on to go to the app. Within the meeting everyone uses the app and reported that it was very useful with lots of information on it about their children and the school.

It was asked at the meeting whether staff check messages sent via the app or whether it is best to use the school email address?

Kevin said that the best way to contact the school via email is through [info@oldfordacademy.org](mailto:info@oldfordacademy.org) and he was not sure if the message to the school function in the app was up and running, but he will check on this.

Dawud raised the he was still getting the text messages from the school and MyChildAtSchool app messages as well.

Another parent mentioned they also get the text messages and they have the app. Kevin said that as far as he knows if you have the app all text messages should go via the app and not to your text message.

Kevin reminded the meeting about the academy council members elections and asked that we sign up if interested in becoming a member and one parent at the meeting has already put her name down. Kevin said that signing up for the academy council is easily done through a Google form and if there are 5 or less applications then everyone is automatically

appointment, but if there are more than 5 parents/ carers applying then there is an election to select 5 people.

Kevin highlighted the item from the previous meeting regarding attendance and reminded us that it is a national issue across the whole country. Kevin said that they realise there are lots of reasons why pupils do not attend school, such as post COVID impact, anxiety about returning to school, more parents working from home etc and not sending pupils to school every day.

From the 26th January the national figure was 94.7% attendance from all Primary schools across the country and Old Ford were 93.5%.

Kevin said that the school is doing the best it can to encourage pupils in to school, such as ice cream Mondays and most of the dressing up days are on Fridays as these are the days where pupils numbers can drop. The school is doing work with a company called ImpactEd as well, who have surveyed the pupils to see if there is anything else the school can do to get pupils to come in. Kevin also highlighted the issue of families taking holidays during term time and one class currently has 4 pupils away.

It was suggested that the school could do a competition and Kevin said that they already do best class attendance and most punctual where the classes get a teddy bear and a stuffed Early Bird owl in their room for the week.

Kevin says that staff try their best to make school fun and the lessons engaging so pupils want to come in. Kevin feels that all the awards, rewards, cake with Kevin on Fridays, giving out Old Ford pens and everything the school can think of makes a difference, although the school are open to any ideas that parents have to help improve attendance.

It was raised that families choose to go away during the term time because it is often much cheaper than going during the school holidays and the difference in prices for holidays abroad is hard to argue with, even when parents are fined £60. The issues, Kevin feels, is that travel companies are able to bump up their prices for the holidays making it harder for families who then choose to go during the term time. There are provisions for families who need to go away during the term time, but often when pupils are taken from school for a few weeks it is because they are going on holiday.

It was asked whether Kevin had done any comparisons with local schools regarding attendance figures, but Kevin said that it is a national issue and when he goes to the head teachers meetings from Tower Hamlets, it is a Tower Hamlets problem as well. Bill, the Trust CEO, sends attendance figures across the Trust so each day they can compare attendance figures from across the Trust. Colluden has a similar issue regarding attendance.

It was asked whether there were any figures on whether pupils are not coming to school through their own choice or whether parents are not taking their children to school, outside of the issue of families going away for a holiday. The school has tried to see it from both sides and recently did a survey of the pupils and parent/ carers and although all of the year 4, 5 and 6 pupils completed the survey, only 11 parent/ carers did. Kevin feels it is a bit of both where the child wakes up on a Monday morning and if it's cold and raining, they may say they have a bad stomach or maybe the parent/ carer decides not to take their child into school.

It was said in the meeting that the school is doing a great job around tackling pupil attendance.

It was highlighted that it would be really good to have more parents coming to the academy council meetings, but it was felt that maybe it shows that there are not many issues that need discussing.

The parents who attended the meeting introduced themselves to the meeting.

It was suggested that the school network with an organisation Inspiring the Future who run a program called Primary Futures to get volunteers from the world of work to come into schools, which could be centred around themes in the curriculum, such as World Book Day or Science Week or International Women's Day.

Kevin said they have had people from work have previously come into the school to talk about how the learning they did at school is used in their own job. Kevin highlighted that the school is in an area where a lot of parents do not work and this means children sometimes don't always see the connection between what they learn at school and getting a job. So the school seek to raise aspirations within the pupils and help them to think about careers for the future, such as in science the pupils will also learn what jobs people do that are related to what they learn in the classroom.

One of the parents at the meeting offered herself to support the school to sign up to the Primary Futures program and help to network and it was highlighted that this is a great way to enrich the curriculum for pupils and how using people's own stories from their careers is a powerful resource. It will be a way to engaging parents and carers with the school who could come in to the school to speak about their own work.

Dawud highlighted the value of having parents and carers being involved in the school especially as an academy council member to raise concerns, share ideas and support the work of the school and provide a link between the school and the community.

Parents at the meeting offered some positive comments about the school and how much they also wanted to be more involved.

It was suggested that the school could provide a way for parents/ carers could donate their child's school uniform for other pupils to use to help reduce the cost of buying uniform each year.

It was also suggested that the school could support healthy eating within the pupils and Kevin highlighted how the school dinners offer healthy choices for the children and this is reinforced throughout the school as part of the curriculum and Kevin models the schools ethos around healthy eating by having school dinners himself.

**The next meeting will be on Tuesday 23rd April.**