



MINUTES OF ST JOHN'S COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION MEETING HELD ON Friday 9th February 2018

Staff Present: Curtis Sweetingham (HT) Catherine Mitri (DHT)
Community representatives present: See separate register

Minutes: CM

Points discussed at the meeting:

- Action points:** The action points from the previous meeting were addressed. Mr. Sweetingham stated that he would continue to promote the SJCA in the school newsletter and that the amalgamation of the previously titled PTA/Parent Council would be discussed at this meeting this morning. As requested at the previous meeting, the planned agenda for this meeting was emailed out the previous week. Mr. Sweetingham requested that, in future, all attendees inform the school office of their intention to be at any meetings as this aided the school in the preparation of a room for any meetings depending on number of people. Mr. Sweetingham also asked if attendees could inform the office of any points/topics they wished to be added to future agendas.
- Renaming of PTA/Parent Council:** Mr. Sweetingham informed the attendees that the two options suggested were 'Friends of St John's' OR 'St John's Community Association (SJCA)'. The latter title was unanimously agreed. The constitution – 5 people made up of HT/DHT, two parents and the Treasurer, the latter who also represented the voice of the church. This group will make the majority of decisions, but Mr. Sweetingham reassured the group attending that contributions by all would continue to be very welcome. The Treasurer informed the SJCA that the new name would need to be changed with the charity commission and the bank.
- Book Fair:** Mr. Sweetingham informed the SJCA that this was scheduled to arrive on Monday 26th February and would be in school until the following Monday. The BF company had telephoned Mr. Sweetingham very recently to try and change the date but he had refused. Help would be needed for approximately 30 minutes each day at the end of the school day from 27/2/18 until 5/3/18. (A rota has been created by those attending the meeting). Mr. Sweetingham continued by informing the SJCA that the Scholastic Book Fair would provide the books one year, and the following year it would be provided by the Book People. The latter offers slightly less commission to the school, but the books are cheaper to buy. A parent attending

the meeting stated that, at her school, they purchased a large amount of books from the £1.00 Book Store and sold them to parents at a profit for school funds. It was agreed that this could be something the school could potentially consider in the future.

4. **Attendance:** Mr. Sweetingham informed the SJCA that the draft Attendance & Punctuality Policy had been emailed out to members last week along with the agenda for this meeting. For those members who did not receive this document, could they please check that the school has been provided with an up-to-date email address so that all future correspondence reaches all members. In relation to the policy, Mr. Sweetingham informed the SJCA that he had consulted with the Governing Body, staff and children. He continued by informing members that, historically, Barnet has been one of the worst boroughs for attendance – now in the 30s but had been as low as 70s. St John’s, however, is in the top 20 schools in the borough for attendance and that this policy has been recommended as good practice, but has been amended to fit our school. Mr. Sweetingham was asked by a member of the SJCA if he could summarise the key changes to this new policy. They are:

- Leave will not be granted around holiday times e.g. extended holidays;
- Policy is evidenced-based;
- Leave will not be granted during periods near to KS1/KS2 SATS or during Y1 phonics screening, unless in extreme circumstances;
- Where children give a different reason for the absence to parents (Disneyland) this will be investigated by the school;
- No holidays will be granted during term time;
- Monitoring of children who are late for school – legal guidelines is 6 maximum in a 4 week period. Parents could be fined.

Mr. Sweetingham continued by expressing his anxieties around writing and sending out attendance letters to parents. A selection of parents raised some points with Mr. Sweetingham in relation to the policy and the letters. They were:

- Good attendance should be recognised;
- Medical conditions, especially those that are potentially a lifelong condition, should be taken into consideration;
- In some circumstances it would be more appropriate to invite parents in to have an informal chat before a letter is sent out;
- Children/parents with personal issues are given consideration;
- Children who have had an operation and are advised by medical professionals to remain at home should not receive a letter;
- Do not send the attendance leaflet out with the letter as a little patronising’.

Mr. Sweetingham responded to some of the above concerns by stating that he has a legal responsibility to inform parents about their child’s attendance, particularly when it falls below targets set by local government. However, he also acknowledged that there are always situations that can be ‘tricky’ and that, although he had softened

significantly the wording of the letters in comparison to those sent out by the Barnet Educational Welfare Officer, Mr. Sweetingham agreed that he would continue to look at the wording of this school/parent correspondence. One parent suggested that a line such as, 'As parents, I would like to thank you for following the school attendance guidelines by'. This could be to recognise parents who always call the school, always send in absence letters to the class teacher etc. A parent also asked if there was clear evidence to suggest these policies and procedures had an impact. Mr. Sweetingham replied, 'Absolutely yes.' To bring this item on the agenda to a close, parents asked if the procedures in relation to the letter could be a little more balanced to meet the needs of all children and parents, and Mr. Sweetingham agreed to continue to investigate how the letters could be made 'friendlier'.

5. **Easter Sponsored Event:** The success of previous events were discussed at the meeting e.g. Bounce last year. Suggestions such as a run/walk/dance were put forward by the members. One parent proposed an Easter Egg Hunt as this had been extremely successful at her school. The children go in to the playground in house teams/classes to search for hidden eggs. Each house/class is given a set amount of time to find as many eggs as possible. The children would be sponsored for each egg found. The members agreed that this would be an exciting event for the children. Parents attending asked if the event could be scheduled for a Friday as more parents are available to help on this day. Date to be agreed.
6. **KS2 Playground:** Mr. Sweetingham informed the members that he had recently met with different companies who had provided plans for a proposed climbing frame for the KS2 playground (examples of plans were distributed around the table). Funding for this exciting initiative would be made up of £5000 approximately from the school with the possibility of some sports premium money being used to increase this amount. The SJCA could also contribute approximately £4500. The cost of this project could vary from £13,000 - £20,000 depending on the company/design. Mr. Sweetingham informed the members that, as the school was a Voluntary Aided school that VAT would need to be paid on any amount over £7,000. This obviously had a huge impact on the funding of this project. Mrs. Good suggested that Just Giving could have a significant impact on this fundraising initiative as parents, grandparents, families, friends and work colleagues could be encouraged to contribute. A parent asked how much the school had raised so far using Shop and Give (about £300). Mr. Sweetingham also informed the SJCA that he had sought the views of the children via the School Council and that these had varied according to the age of the children e.g. some children chose the smaller model as this design could be constructed the quickest.
7. **Secretary:** Sadly, Mr. Sweetingham informed the members that Mrs. Good was standing down as the secretary and thanked her hugely for all her hard work and commitment (round of applause from members). He continued by announcing that Mrs. Goumal also intended to step down in September 2018 and that one or two people would need to be found to continue their excellent work. Mr. Sweetingham said that he

would advertise these important positions in the school newsletter, but in the meantime, if anyone was interested then to contact him directly.

8. **School Lunches:** A parent stated that this was a massive issue with parents throughout the school, but particularly in Year 6. Some of the issues raised by the parents at the meeting were:

- Insufficient amount/quantity of food served;
- Final 1 or 2 groups of children have a lack of choice due to food running out;
- Children only allowed 1 vegetable choice;
- Waiting times/queues for lunch;
- Rotation of groups to ensure fairness;
- Lack of choice on menu.

Mr. Sweetingham responded by stating that Barnet have out-sourced their school lunch provision to a company called ISS. The school decided to use this supplier based on discussions with other schools. Mr. Clark is a very good kitchen manager and has made significant improvements to the kitchen since taking over. He is also assisted by a very experienced assistant. ISS menus are created from a balanced/healthy meal perspective. The choices have not changed – 2 options daily with Monday being a vegetarian day. Mr. Sweetingham said he would investigate further the situation raised regarding the vegetable choices, but that he has limited say in the kitchen provision. However, he continued by informing members that he had scheduled a meeting with one of the Operational Director at ISS and he would raise the issues put forward today. He also stated that he would look into sending out questionnaires to parents/children, but that he was mindful that Mr. Clark has to work within a very restrictive budget (£2.20 per meal). A parent at the meeting stated at their school there is always leftovers and that the children at her school are always offered second helpings, and sometimes thirds – her school uses the same company. It was suggested that perhaps Mr. Clark is being too precise with his measurements/portion sizes.

Action Points HT/DHT:

- **CS to continue to investigate how the wording of attendance letters to parents can be made 'friendlier'.**
- **CS to liaise with SJCA to agree a date for the Easter Egg Hunt.**
- **CS to investigate sending out school meal questionnaire to parents and children.**

Action Points Parents:

- **Mrs. Good to finalise the rotas for the Book Fair and the Easter Egg Hunt.**

How has today's meeting moved the school forward?

- Parents' views sought in relation to the draft attendance policy.
- Parent voice sought in relation to KS2 playground development.
- Parent voice sought in relation to school lunch provision.
- Spring term sponsored event agreed by the SJCA.

Next meeting: Wednesday 14th March at 6.30pm.