

SEN Forum – 31st January 2017

Present – Lindsey Hudson (Headteacher), Bill Gratwick (SENCo), Tanya Fitzgerald (Bursar) + 4 parents

Mrs Hudson welcomed everyone to the Forum and introduced Bill Gratwick (SENCo). She explained the forum was about transition, gave the parents present a copy of the schools transition policy and also made them aware it is on the website.

Mrs Hudson referred to the policy and advised that as it is laid out at the moment there is no section specific to children with special needs. She confirmed we are always looking to parents, staff and children for their views so it would be good to hear the views of the parents at the forum.

Parent comment – the policy is very clear.

Mrs Hudson referred to pages 1 and 2 of the policy and confirmed that as a small school there are many advantages when it comes to transition as the children know all the staff well and the staff know the children well. She advised that staff are always talking about the children and their wellbeing.

Mrs Hudson also stressed that good transition practice is beneficial for all children, regardless of whether they have additional needs, as it has the potential to effect anyone. She also said that putting things in place for transition is happening all the time, long before the children officially move to their next class/teacher/setting. For example in the conversations that the staff have about the children and how they are doing, preparing the children without them knowing for example giving them a 'note' to take to another teacher or giving them a responsibility whereby they have to go to a different part of the school.

Parent comment – using a 'note' idea worked really well for my child.

Bill also said that in a small school the children know the whole school building well and confirmed that we are lucky at Alfriston as we have a low staff turnover.

Parent comment – when the building work was done to the early years/KS1 area the school dealt with the changes well and involved the children.

Bill commented that it can be a big jump for some children from year 6 to secondary school. Mrs Hudson added that the feedback she has received from secondary schools is that our children are well prepared and settle quickly.

Parent comment – it is amazing that the children have the confidence to stand up in assembly and talk. They also added that if a child is struggling with what to say it is lovely that other children or staff step in to help them.

Mrs Hudson advised parents there are 5 aspects of transition laid out in the policy, and all 5 need to come together to make it successful. She confirmed when it comes to transition she considers where the staff, especially TAs would be best placed to support children both academically and socially.

Mrs Hudson confirmed the Governor responsible for transition is Linda Young which would be added to the policy.

Mrs Hudson drew parent's attention to an ESCC self-review checklist which is very useful in ensuring we are doing everything required. She mentioned that as a school we do a lot of 'mixing' of the classes with things like, decoration day, science day and sports day.

Referring back to the policy Mrs Hudson explained it goes through each type of transition both within the school or if joining us from elsewhere or moving on.

Parent question – is it normal for schools to do home visits from children coming in to reception?

Lindsey said yes, most schools do it.

Parent comment – one parent commented that the information received when their child was in reception a couple of years ago was not as detailed as when they had been at pre-school. Another parent said that Mrs Ottaway, the current reception class teacher provides parents with very useful information, that keeps them informed of what is happening in class.

Mrs Hudson said this appears to no longer be a problem.

Parent comment – although their child did not go to pre-school they still settled in well. She said that as her child had additional needs she has a contact book which was suggested by the school. She has found this really useful.

Mrs Hudson confirmed that a contact book is not for everyone but can be put in place if needed for a particular child. Bill advised it is general practice in schools to provide a contact book if needed.

Parent question – can reception parents still pop in and see their child's work on a Tuesday and Friday?

Mrs Hudson confirmed that although we have an 'open door' policy where parents are able to approach any member of staff when they are genuinely available, Reception staff have two planned times for parents so that we can get to know each other during your first year at primary school (Tuesdays after school and Fridays before school) and this is communicated in the class termly letter.

Parent question – do the school use something like tapestry to share pictures of work with parents?

Mrs Hudson confirmed we don't use IT assessment and prefer learning journey books and although this is quite time consuming we are able to do this with just 15 children.

Parent comment – when starting at the school it was difficult to understand house system or what 'show and tell' was.

Mrs Hudson confirmed the termly reception class letter now contains information about 'show and tell'. She advised that in school the children have a lot to do with the houses such as assemblies and the system feeds throughout the school. She suggested that perhaps the House Leaders could find out the significance of our

house names and how the houses are used, and relay this to parents and children. She also confirmed she will ask Sharon in the office to send a note to new parents informing them of which house their child is in.

Parent comment – it would be good to receive general information about what the house system is.

Mrs Hudson handed around a list of suggested items to add to the policy.

Mrs Hudson confirmed that it is important to get the balance right with transition. Currently we run 2 transition days at the end of the academic year where all the children go in to their new classes, parents get to meet the teacher and on the second day the children get to line up in their new classes on the playground at the start of the day. Before these days any children who need extra transition will have already been planned in and started, children may also be given a buddy in their new class. She confirmed a parent meeting will also be arranged if necessary and teachers and TAs will go into the children's current class to see them working in their familiar environment.

Parent question – does the school support parents with the decision on secondary schools?

Mrs Hudson confirmed we can give parents any information we have about secondary schools although things change all the time and we can't see to be bias. She advised it is important for parents to visit the schools and they will often get a feeling of what is right for their child. In year 6 the class TA sets up a transition programme and works with the children to prepare them for secondary school.

Parent comment – it is useful to start looking at secondary schools when your child is in year 5 rather than wait until year 6.

Mrs Hudson said that the school informs year 5 and 6 parents of meetings happening at local secondary schools. She said that the school would remind year 5 parents at the beginning of the academic year to visit secondary schools (although best at this stage not with their child as it might be too early for them) rather than wait until year 6. Mrs Hudson confirmed for children with additional needs we can arrange a meeting with a member of staff, including the SENCo if necessary from the chosen secondary school.

Parent question – if your child doesn't attend a pre-school are they still encouraged to come for visits before starting in reception?

Mrs Hudson confirmed all children are invited.

Mrs Hudson recapped the points raised from the meeting;

Contact book

Informing parents what house their child is in and providing information about show and tell.

House Captains to look in to reason for house names and communicate this and the system.

Suggestion made to year 5 parents to start looking at secondary schools.

Parent comment – it would be useful to have the opportunity to speak to current parents before making a choice about whether to send children to Alfriston School.

Mrs Hudson advised she would start to use testimonials received from parents and visitors to share.