

## **Minutes of Parentlink meeting 30<sup>th</sup> March 2010, 9am.**

Parents, carers and staff present: Maggi Lydon, Lisa Horton, Beatrix Payne, Susie Graves, Harriet Gugenheim, Angela Bhardwaj, Yvonne Bennett, Michaela Field, Carine Wittenbol-Ocak; Abigail Hopkins, Julie Horten, Jenny Puddington, Caroline Russell, Alice McAllister (chair), Matt Britt, Nicky Hirsch, Annette Brinsden, Heidi Kortbaek, Aline Littlejohn, Oliver Sparks, Juliet Vuong, Tim Drury, Shu-Chi Souillard, Lizzy Currie, Siobhan O'Connell, Alexis Schwartzreich

- **Welcome** Matt Britt was welcomed to his first Parentlink meeting
- **Minutes of the last meeting, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2010**

Minutes of the previous meeting were circulated.

- **Communication** An issue had been raised about the number of letters being sent home, and the quantity of texts sent, not all of which were relevant to a particular child. Parents and carers with more than one child at Canonbury were often receiving multiple copies of letters.

Matt Britt said that it was useful to have one day to channel the week's communication, and sensible to have one child bring a letter home. He is planning to consolidate the information into the newsletter as much as possible and use colour printing to make it stand out.

A parent asked how to proceed if a message hadn't been received or passed on from the office. Matt said a new phone system should ensure messages are directed properly.

A parent raised the issue of receiving information in a clear and explained way – several parents had received a text message regarding their child and 'special needs', without any explanation. It was agreed this was inappropriate.

A parent asked if the school would call a parent or carer if a Year 6 child, who walks to school on their own, had not arrived. Following Best Practice, a call from school to home should happen by 9.30 if the school has not been notified of any absence. However, staff admitted that if there were many absences this could sometimes be delayed. A child is given a late pass if they arrive at school after 9am.

- **Homework**

A parent with a child in early KS2 felt that the homework given was less than in other schools, was marked erratically, and was not stretching for the child. Matt relayed information about government guidelines for homework – a gradual build up over the years to reflect the work done in school and to show parents what children are doing. Matt is looking at the homework policy in order to put plans in place for the next school year. He said that homework set has to be the right homework for our school, and that it is not wise to compare it to other schools. He said that expectations should build and learning patterns develop.

A parent asked about how parents and carers can communicate with teachers about homework. Parents can ask questions and make comments via the reading record book and the teacher will respond.

Matt agreed that guidance for each year group on how to support learning – in particular maths – would be beneficial. It was suggested that a year-group

meeting could be held at the start of each school year to discuss what is expected from the children in terms of homework.

### • **Further discussion**

Matt took this opportunity to give parents an overview of what would be happening at Canonbury over the next term and beyond. Following the OFSTED inspection, the draft report would be received after Easter, to be reviewed by the head and governors, and would be presented to parents around week 3 of the Summer Term. Matt said that the report would contain some things he had already highlighted in his 'Meet Matt' sessions, while other things were surprising.

Matt said that some very clear issues had arisen:

1. The remodelling of staff structure
2. Learning and the establishment of good teaching practice in classrooms.

Matt said that it was good to be in a place where expectations were high and everyone has an opinion and feels passionately about the school, but that his focus will be on key areas in the classroom.

Matt said that although he may not always appear to be listening to parents and carers, he still wants their input, even though he may not be able to follow through their ideas immediately. He said there was not enough good practice in school, but there were people who could achieve what was required of them. He said the staff restructuring process would begin after Easter, leading to changes in the classroom. This should be done by September. He felt that the OFSTED report may contain some surprising issues, but that the governors know the history of the school and will be able to follow it through.

The school needs a massive investment, for early years provision and the indoor environment, which Matt feels is unacceptable at present. A parent asked how staff will be helped to move forward. Matt said that leadership needs to be honest and fair and give feedback if there is a need to improve. The staff remodelling will be done in order to have a strong base for improvement. He intends to make some short-term improvements to the staff room to help keep staff morale up. He said that some staff will not be able to move forward, and some will, that there may be some challenges, but these are necessary to improve things for the children – the most important part of the school.

Matt spoke about the issue of asbestos in the kitchen, and the decision that had been made to close the school for three days. The asbestos was removed, with no contamination. The kitchen is being redecorated by Islington Council, to reopen after the Easter holidays.

The lunchtime systems are being reviewed for September, to make things quicker and to create a better environment. Matt felt that the lunches were currently good, with staff interacting well with the children.

Matt spoke about how, currently, different classrooms provided models of good and bad environments. Annette's Year 4 classroom, and Barry's Year 5 one, were both good, while Paul V's Year 3 classroom was in a poor state and would therefore be redecorated and refurnished over the Easter holidays.

### **AOB**

#### • **Sylvie O'Sullivan**

Sylvie is leaving Canonbury after 25 years, a collection is being made and a tea party planned for the last day of term (a request went out for parents and carers to make chocolate cake).

- **Recent local planning applications**

The development plan at 85 Canonbury Road, opposite the school, had been rejected as too big. Different plans will no doubt be resubmitted at a later date.

Many parents had voiced concern about the development at 10, Corsica Street, and how it would impact on the 'safe route to school' along the pavement there. [Since the meeting the planning approval has been given at this site, work is not yet underway due to ongoing Network Rail renovations. It was suggested at the planning meeting that a group of interested parties could meet with the developer nearer the start of the build to discuss provision of safe temporary pavements and so on].

A parent expressed concern about the narrow pavement at the Canonbury Road crossing. Matt suggested that when the School Travel Plan is reviewed issues such as this can be mentioned, and also that parents and carers can write to Islington Council to highlight problems.

**Date of next meeting: May 11<sup>th</sup> 2010, 9am**