



Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pontybrenin

Heol Casllwchwr, Gorseinon, Abertawe, SA4 6AU

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Parent Focus Groups 2021/22

Summary of issues raised by Parent Focus Group members – Autumn term 2021

Foundation Phase meeting date - 2/12/21

Parents Present: Michelle Burchell, Catrin Pugh, Abi Hobson, Ceri Metcalfe, Chris Pinnington

Apologies (but contributed via e-mail): Helen Gibbons

Staff Present: Mrs Dando, Mrs Fewings, Miss White, Mrs Parkhouse & Mr Scourfield

1. A number of parents have asked if the school can give more notice of events when pupils are invited to dress up?
Response: Whilst the school always attempts to give at least 2 weeks notice of events, with the majority being listed in the 'termly overview' which is shared at the beginning of every term, there have been occasions recently where this has not been the case. We will try our best to ensure that this minimum notice period is adhered to at all times.
2. There have been comments from pupils this term that some school meals items are not as nice as they have been in the past.
Response: As this is a matter for the Catering Department, I can only speculate by saying that the Local Authority do change suppliers occasionally and this may be the reason for the variation in taste.
3. A concerned parent asked how long do pupils have to eat their lunch and why do some pupils seem to be eating alone at lunchtime?
Response: Pupils with packed lunches have up to an hour, if needed, to eat their lunch, but with their friends possibly eating quicker and going out to play, some children may occasionally be left to eat without their friends. Those having school dinners may be served their lunch later, as a result of 300+ children having to take turns to eat in the school hall. However, all our pupils are given ample time to eat their lunch, even if this means that, on occasion, some pupils are still eating when afternoon lessons begin. Once again, with friends sometimes eating quicker in order to maximise their playtime, some children may occasionally be left to eat without their friends.
4. Whilst pupils can access their water bottles at a designated area of the class (usually on a worktop or by the sink), at any time during the day, why can't they keep them at their desks or on the carpet so that they're prompted to drink more often?
Response: In order to prevent pupils from becoming distracted and playing with their bottles during lessons and to prevent spillages, pupils keep their

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water bottles in a designated area of the classroom and have open access to them whenever they want. Staff regularly encourage pupils to drink and keep hydrated during the day as this also aids concentration. With our older pupils, they also have a degree of personal responsibility to ensure that they drink regularly during the day and this cannot be left solely to the staff to remind them.

5. A parent has questioned why the school continues to use visual behaviour charts in each class, with negative sides to them in addition to positives. Shouldn't the school promote positive behaviour and eliminate the negative side of the chart?

Response: Whilst the school actively promotes, encourages and rewards positive behaviour, there are occasions where pupils do make poor choices and break school rules. When this happens, moving a pupil down the chart to the red face (unhappy) often results in them making a concerted effort to move back up the chart before the end of the end. Each day represents a fresh start, with all pupils beginning the day on the green face (happy!) A holistic approach is essential when managing behaviour within a classroom and the school will continue to employ a variety of strategies to ensure that our pupils behave in a manner that allows every member of the school community to thrive.

6. The recent Parents Evenings that were held on MS Teams once again this year, were well received, with many parents stating their preference for these over face to face meetings and asking whether these will continue in future?

Response: Whilst the teaching staff agree that the Parents Evenings went very well, with appointments running like clockwork, both parents being able to attend etc, there are still some parents who have expressed a preference for face to face meetings. A blended approach is likely to be adopted in future, with parents being offered both options and separate evenings being arranged that could accommodate everyone's needs.

7. When will the various discos and Christmas / summer fairs that are organised by 'The Friends of YGG Pontybrenin' resume?

Response: With the current situation as it is and the predicted increase in Covid-19 cases over the winter and possibly spring, I don't foresee a situation where these will be held in the near future. As soon as it is safe and practical to do so, they will be organised.

8. Can Breakfast Club start earlier than 8.10am? This would be of great support to working parents, many of whom would be prepared to pay for the additional provision.

Response: The staff who are employed to work in the breakfast club are also employed as Teaching Assistants at the school. Many of them have young families themselves and they cannot commit to starting work any earlier. We will of course keep this under review and should the situation change, parents will be informed.

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9. With Reception pupils having studied weddings recently, does the school celebrate same sex marriages in addition to heterosexual marriages and what does the school do to celebrate diversity in this respect?
Response: The topic of weddings was chosen as a result of the Reception classes' reading 'Priodas y Ddau Fwgan Brain' (The Scarecrows Wedding). Whilst the central characters in the book were male and female, the activities that pupils completed were not based on a gender specific wedding, i.e pupils studied wedding invitations, party food menus, decorations etc. However, the school does teach an inclusive curriculum that celebrates diversity and encourages all our pupils to respect everyone, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation.
10. With restrictions being eased in some aspects of school life, are there plans to reintroduce the provision of milk for Foundation Phase pupils?
Response: The local authority took the decision to stop the provision of free milk at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. However, at the time of writing, milk has now been reintroduced to Foundation Phase pupils.

Key Stage 2 meeting date - 30/11/21

Parents Present: Abi Hobson, Ceri Metcalfe & Chris Pinnington

Apologies (but contributed via e-mail): Kate Jones

Staff Present: Miss Dark, Mrs Sartori, Mrs Parkhouse, Miss Gwenter & Mr Scourfield

1. A request has been made for the pedestrian gate at the back of the school (at the turning circle) to be opened for pupils attending Breakfast Club.
Response: This can be actioned immediately, with the gate being opened between 8.10am and 8.20am from Monday, December 6th.
2. The recent Parents Evenings that were held on MS Teams once again this year, were well received, with many parents stating their preference for these over face to face meetings and asking whether these will continue in future?
Response: Whilst the teaching staff agree that the Parents Evenings went very well, with appointments running like clockwork, both parents being able to attend etc, there are still some parents who have expressed a preference for face to face meetings. A blended approach is likely to be adopted in future, with parents being offered both options and separate evenings being arranged that could accommodate everyone's needs.
3. The issue of homework has been raised once again, with parents asking if this is likely to be revisited anytime soon?
Response: Parents / carers views were last sought on this issue in 2018. Another questionnaire will be shared with parents before the end of the autumn term in order to get a current view.
4. A concerned parent asked how long do pupils have to eat their lunch as her

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child often comes home with a number of uneaten items in the lunchbox?

Response: Pupils with packed lunches have up to an hour, if needed, to eat their lunch, but with their friends possibly eating quicker and going out to play, some children often leave their food in order to join their friends on the yard. Those having school dinners may be served their lunch later, as a result of 300+ children having to take turns to eat in the school hall. However, all our pupils are given ample time to eat their lunch, even if this means that, on occasion, some pupils are still eating when afternoon lessons begin.

5. The use of inappropriate language by a minority of pupils was raised, with parents asking what is being done to tackle this?

Response: The use of inappropriate language by pupils is unacceptable and is not tolerated by the school. At Ysgol Gymraeg Pontybrenin, we actively promote a happy and safe learning environment and expect every member of the school community to behave in a considerate way towards others. Pupils who use inappropriate language are sanctioned in accordance with the school's behaviour policy and if this continues, the child's parents are contacted, with a view to improving the behaviour.

6. Many parents wanted to express their thanks to the school for the excellent standard of communication that continues to be provided and for keeping parents apprised of what's going on under difficult circumstances.
7. After so much home learning as a result of Covid-19, everyone is thrilled that their children are once again learning in the school setting with their friends.
8. Some parents have expressed concerns over racism and diversity at the school. Does the school have a clear plan on tackling this issue and what protocols are in place when acts of racism occur?

Response: Thankfully, very few incidents of racism occur at Ysgol Gymraeg Pontybrenin. However, one incident is too many and the school will not tolerate any form of racism or discrimination against anyone on the basis of their race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation. We are committed to the development of an anti-racist ethos and will promptly deal with any racist incidents when they occur, promote diversity and identify and challenge bias and stereotyping through an inclusive curriculum. This curriculum is supported by external partners such as the charity 'Show Racism the Red Card' who deliver workshops to pupils. The school's updated anti-racism policy has been ratified by the Governing Body and published on the school's website.

9. A number of parents have said that they're unhappy with the school meals menu. The general feeling is that chips appear far too often and that the menu is neither balanced nor healthy enough.

Response: School dinner menus are drawn up by the local authority's catering department and consist of freshly cooked two course meals. These meals meet the nutritional guidelines as required by the Welsh Government's Appetite for Life scheme and include a choice of vegetables and salads every day. Chips are only offered on Fridays, with sautéed, oven or mashed potatoes being offered on other days. Pupils do have a choice of meals and are offered vegetables, salad and fruit as an accompaniment, but it's a matter

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of choice as to whether they eat these. These concerns have been noted and I will share them with the catering department.

10. Some parents would like their children to be given the opportunity to change their books when required, rather than on a set day.

Response: With over 600 pupils on roll, the school must have a structure for changing reading books rather than an open ended system where pupils can come and go from class to do this. Other than some of our older pupils who read independently, staff listen to pupils reading and assess them on their ability and readiness to move to a new book.

Thank you to everyone who contributed comments to these Parent Forums. We will try our best to address the concerns you've raised and hope that you'll notice improvements in these areas soon. If however, you continue to have concerns or have any further comments or suggestions to make, then please do contact me at the school to discuss these.

The next round of Parent Focus Group meetings will be held in the second half of the spring term.

Thank you as always for your continued support.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Ceri Scourfield
Headteacher

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