

Parent Forum Minutes – Wednesday 27th September 2023

After school clubs

Query:

A few parents enquired about the lengthy waiting lists for piano and guitar lessons and whether additional spaces could be used to facilitate more lessons.

I have been in touch with Charlie at Piano Fun Club and we have upped the hours of lessons being offered to every possible hour of the school day now. So parents at the top of the waiting list will hopefully hear from them soon. We would love to be able to offer more lessons but are very tight on space. Our very few smaller rooms need to be available for small group work and interventions and the hall is in nearly constant use throughout the day.

As these lessons are run by an external club, all arrangements are made by them and not through the school. If your child is still on the waiting list and you would like to know where they are on it then please contact Charlie at Piano Fun Club directly - <https://www.pianofunclub.co.uk/contact>

A reminder that if you need contact details for any of our external club providers, they are all on the 'School Clubs 23/24' list under in the Information tab of the school website.

Query:

Is it possible to start a French club?

I have added French club to our list of next clubs to offer. In the past we have had a parent who was a French teacher running a club but I will research some local facilitators to enable this to take place when we next have the capacity.

Query:

Is it possible for Active Day Camps to run until 6pm?

Mrs Paiva and I are meeting with Active next week and had already talked to them about the possibility of running the club until 6pm. We are hoping that this will be able to be put in place after half term but I will confirm this with parents once we have met with them.

Query:

Any update on when Italian Club will be starting?

Unfortunately, having been regularly told by our contact that they were sourcing a teacher for us, we have just been informed this week that they will not be able to provide us with a teacher for our Italian club. I am currently looking for an alternative provider and will inform parents once this has been confirmed.

Query:

A suggestion for an Archery Club to run in the hall after school for parents.

Unfortunately, the school wouldn't be insured to cover this sort of club.

Query:

Is there a possibility of introducing a Breakfast club from 8am?

At the moment we do not have the staffing capacity to be able to offer a breakfast club but if this becomes something that we could manage staff wise going forward then I will be in touch with parents.

Query:

A suggestion for a more inclusive classical choir.

Our current school choir is very inclusive as any child from the Juniors is welcome to join! I will be in touch with Mariko (who runs the children's choir at the Little Oratory) to enquire as to whether she could provide an early morning choir.

Query:

Is there a possibility of offering a Homework Club?

This has been added to our list of next clubs to offer.

Lunches**Query:**

Some parents had concerns over the quality and quantity of the school lunches.

The quality of the lunches did seem to be lower at the start of term. Mrs Paiva was in touch with the catering company immediately and expressed the school's concerns over this and also raised the issue of portion sizes and ensuring that the older children particularly had larger portions. They explained that they had experienced staffing issues with chefs in the first week. However, that has now been rectified and the quality has since improved. We ensure that there is always a senior leader on duty at lunch, part of which is to monitor the quality of lunches very closely. Many of the children speak positively and enjoy the lunches. I think that going forward the best solution would be for parents to come into school and sample/taste the lunches for themselves. Mrs Paiva and I are meeting with the caterers next week and so will set up a date with them for a parents' taster session. I will let parents know once this has been confirmed.

Query:

Some parents are happy with the dessert options on the lunch menus and so would like their child to receive this rather than just fruit or yoghurt.

When we meet with the catering team next week, we will ask for an option for parents to choose between either fruit and yoghurt or the set dessert.

Uniform**Query:**

Could a dedicated website be set up for second hand uniform so that parents do not have to rely solely on coffee mornings in order to purchase uniform?

The time that a second hand uniform website would involve would be a very time consuming job to manage as we receive constant donations of second hand uniform. However, I appreciate that it is challenging for some parents to be able to get to the uniform sales and so two parents have offered to manage the second hand uniform sales, for which we now have a dedicated email address so that parents can send their requests for items. I will put more information in this week's newsletter regarding this.

Fundraising**Query:**

Any possibility for a Christmas fair?

During my upcoming meetings with our newly formed School Council, I will be discussing the option of some sort of Christmas fair/sale with them in order to raise funds for the school. School council will be reporting the outcomes!

Query:

Suggestion for an annual 'year book' as a keep sake for the children and offers a potential fundraising opportunity.

Though this is a lovely idea, the work and time that goes into producing the year books for our Year 6 leavers is a feat not to be underestimated! So I think a more manageable project might be to create an 'Oratory Cook Book' for which the children can put forward their favourite recipes from all around the world which we can then sell as a fundraising opportunity.

Other:**Query:**

A question about PE and how much the children get in the Infants.

The children in the Infants have a weekly timetabled PE session which lasts for an hour. We are hugely aware of the importance of physical activity for the children and so build regular movement breaks into their day, as well as of course their three playtimes throughout the day.

Query:

A query about the effectiveness of Numbots.

The purpose of using platforms such as Numbots is to develop the children's recall and fluency which provide vital foundations to their Maths learning. As a school, we have seen real impact on the children's fluency in maths. Children in Year 2 will be moving onto Times Tables Rockstars when they start their times tables learning in the Spring term.

Query:

Some parents feel their children are given too much homework.

As stated in our homework policy, time spent following a personal interest, taking part in sports and just playing after school are vital to the children's development and something that we consider hugely important. We do not want homework to be causing a negative impact on the children's wellbeing and, if this is the case, then it is very important that parents contact their child's class teacher to discuss how we can adapt the homework for your child to make it more achievable.

We do appreciate the transition from Year 2 to Year 3 is quite a big one for the children and so Miss Urbano is going to trial giving the children their spelling words on a Friday so that the Year 3 children then have until Tuesday to complete their spellings.

Query:

A parent felt that they would like the school to consider giving more flexibility in taking the children out of school before the end of the Autumn term so that they can benefit from cheaper travel options before the holidays.

As stipulated in our attendance policy, we strongly discourage taking children out of school early towards the end of term. Absences of this nature will not be authorised and may result in fines from the LA. We break up on Thursday 21st December at 1.30pm to try and provide some flexibility for travel on that day.

Query:

Holy Communion dress for boys and whether they can wear their own outfits.

As has been mentioned before, taking their First Holy Communion as a class within school is a very unique experience and incredibly special as members of our Oratory community. It therefore seems fitting that they wear their Oratory uniform with important pride. This is something that both Father Edward and Father Michael agree with too.

Query:

Some parents were keen on the school hosting a Halloween themed party and wondered if the school would allow it.

I am sure the children will enjoy their celebrations after the school day on Halloween, however, we won't be providing a Halloween party within school. Last year, the spending on Halloween in the UK reached 687 million, money which could be much better spent on those in need. As currently typically celebrated, Halloween is a commercial festival with no acknowledgement of its Christian roots. Therefore, we will be teaching the children of the true meaning of Halloween and that it in fact means 'holy' and helps us to prepare for All Saint's Day the following day. We will also be celebrating our All Saint's Day Mass with Fr Edward on that day.

Query:

Some parents have felt excluded from the baking activities at the school as they were under the impression that only home-baked options were allowed. They were wondering if ready-made cakes would be an option and also whether chocolate cakes were allowed.

Although we do encourage home-baked where possible, we also appreciate that this isn't always possible and so ready-made cakes are fine as long as ingredients have been thoroughly checked for absolutely NO nuts! Chocolate cakes and cookies are also fine.

Query:

Some concerns about disruptive behaviour in some classes and communication with parents.

When dealing with behaviour in school, all staff members consistently follow our school behaviour policy. This means that if your child ends the day with their name on the red face then they will be sent home with a red card, which explains to parents why they have the card. Please do see our Behaviour Policy on the website for more information on behaviour systems.

Our whole approach to behaviour is based on positive reinforcement which the children respond excellently to. We have incredibly high expectations of the behaviour of every child and it is important that parents trust the school. However, if you do have a particular concern, then please do get in touch with your child's class teacher.

Query:

Concerns over climate change education and how this can be a source of anxiety, impacting the children's mental wellbeing.

Teachers are very aware of this and always keep the children's wellbeing at the forefront of everything that they do. To celebrate National Poetry Day next Thursday, the children will be taking part in poetry workshops around the theme of 'Celebrating Environment', putting a positive spin on the subject for the children.

Query:

Can the school participate in the British Science Week poster competition in 2024?

We certainly will be and will be signing up for this as soon as it is available.

Query:

Could parents see the curriculum and materials for PSHE lessons in school?

We will be holding a coffee morning on Tuesday 14th November which will provide parents with the opportunity to meet our new wellbeing practitioner from Mind. Mr Alton will also be running a parent workshop on PSHE lessons within school.

Also, just for further information and as mentioned in previous minutes:

We follow the 3D PSHE scheme of work, combined with Catholic resources from Ten:Ten (<https://www.tentenresources.co.uk/life-to-the-full-primary/>).

We also have the termly curriculum maps under the 'Learning' and 'Year Groups' tab on the school website which provides PSHE coverage too:

<https://www.oratory.rbkc.sch.uk/year-groups/#toggle-id-4-closed>

Query:

Will Year 5 start preparation for 11+ this year?

As a state school, we don't prepare the children for 11+ in school and this is something that, for those that wish to, parents need to organise outside of school.

Query:

Query about staff-pupil ratio with the Juniors at lunchtime play.

We have 4 classes (120 children) at St Luke's for Junior playtime (two classes per pitch) and 5-6 adults present. We ensure that there is always one senior leader on duty at lunchtime, both for eating and playtime.

Query:

Are the children weighed at school?

We take part in the NCMP (National Child Measurement Programme) which involves our NHS Nursing team coming to weigh and measure our Reception and Year 6 children. Parents receive notification of this and need to give permission for their child to take part. The Nursing team will not see any child that has not been given previous permission by their parent or guardian.