

Parent Forum Minutes – Wednesday 21st October 2026

Lunches

Query:

How does the school teach and encourage good table manners at lunchtime, and could a regular parent rota help support this?

Good table manners, respectful conversation and appropriate behaviour are reinforced by staff who supervise lunch each day, which nearly always also includes a senior leader. We want lunchtime to be a calm and sociable part of the school day. A regular parent rota is not something we plan to introduce, as lunchtime supervision needs to remain consistent and is part of our safeguarding and staffing arrangements. We will continue to remind children of expectations around manners and respectful mealtime behaviour.

Query:

Could the school use the forthcoming changes to the School Food Standards as an opportunity to review the quality of school meals and food education more widely?

Thank you for the very detailed suggestion and for highlighting the forthcoming changes to the School Food Standards. We are aware that the Government has published revised standards which are expected to take effect from September 2027, subject to Parliamentary approval, and schools are being encouraged to begin reviewing their current provision and discussing any required changes with their catering providers.

Food quality, nutrition and helping children to develop healthy habits are already important to us, and we will of course ensure that our provision continues to meet the statutory requirements as these develop. The governing body and school leadership will consider the updated guidance, alongside our catering arrangements, curriculum provision and the needs of our pupils, and will work directly with our catering provider as part of that process.

We are grateful for the offer of contacts and external resources. Where appropriate, the school may choose to explore organisations or initiatives that could support our work, but decisions about catering, curriculum, procurement and school policy need to remain with the school and governing body and be considered within our existing strategic and operational processes.

Food education is already addressed through areas of the curriculum including science, design and technology, PSHE and wider work around healthy lifestyles, and we will continue to look for meaningful opportunities to develop this further. We will also keep parents informed as the new national requirements become clearer and our own planning progresses.

School Calendar, Safety and Premises

Query:

Could the November INSET day be moved to the beginning of January, particularly for families who celebrate Epiphany?

INSET dates are set well in advance around staff training, school priorities and contractual arrangements, so we are not able to move dates at this point. Epiphany remains an important feast in school and is marked through prayer, RE and a Mass led by Father James.

Query:

Could the school provide an update on a zebra crossing / safer crossing arrangements and a barrier or railing near the Ixworth Road/Cale Street area?

We are pleased to confirm that, following a positive consultation, the Council made the decision on 24 September to proceed with the zebra crossings at Cale Street and Ixworth Place. Both schemes are currently

scheduled for installation during January/February. Residents and local businesses will receive further information nearer the time with the key dates and contact details.

With regard to the barriers/railings near the school entrance, we have continued to contact the local authority about this and are currently awaiting a further response. We will keep parents updated as soon as we hear more.

Query:

Could the school explore further solutions for classroom temperatures during very hot weather?

Yes. We are conscious of the challenges created by our building and will review practical measures again well before the summer term. This includes maximising ventilation and shade, using fans wherever possible, adjusting room use where possible and reviewing any feasible longer-term options within the restrictions of the building. We are also exploring the possibility of portable air-conditioning units for classrooms, although one practical consideration is finding suitable storage for them during the months when they are not in use.

PTA, Parent Communication and Involvement

Query:

Could the school explain the role and responsibilities of PTA members?

The PTA is a parent-led charitable association which works in partnership with the school to build community and raise funds. The Chair coordinates the work of the committee and liaises with school; the Treasurer oversees finances; and the Secretary supports administration and communication. Class representatives have a separate role in helping communication between families and the school, including bringing views to the Parent Forum. All parents are welcome to become involved in PTA activities whenever they are able.

Query:

Should former parents be removed from parent-created class WhatsApp groups?

Parent-created WhatsApp groups are not official school communication channels and the school does not administer them. There is therefore no school rule requiring a former parent to be removed from a private group. However, where a group is being used as the current class communication group, it is sensible and important for membership to reflect the current cohort and for everyone to respect the privacy and purpose of the group.

Query:

Could parents be reminded that concerns or problems between children should be raised with the school rather than parents contacting other families directly?

Yes. Concerns that have taken place in school should always be brought to the class teacher or school in the first instance. This allows staff to establish the facts, support the children appropriately and protect confidentiality. Direct approaches between families can easily complicate situations and are not the best way to resolve school-based concerns.

Behaviour, Pastoral Care and Attendance

Query:

Could there be a clearer escalation policy for repeated red cards, for example an automatic suspension after three red cards in a month?

Our Behaviour Policy sets out a graduated and proportionate response to behaviour. Red cards are recorded and patterns are monitored carefully, with additional consequences, support and parental involvement where needed. We would not introduce an automatic suspension threshold, as sanctions must take account of the

seriousness, context and individual circumstances of each incident. Suspension remains available for serious or persistent breaches where it is appropriate. We also cannot discuss consequences given to individual pupils with other families.

Query:

Could rewarding classes for high attendance encourage unwell children to come to school or make children with genuine illness feel guilty?

Children who are genuinely unwell should of course remain at home when necessary. We publish class attendance figures in the weekly newsletter because attendance is an important part of school life and regular attendance has a direct impact on children's learning, routines and sense of belonging. Sharing the figures helps keep attendance visible and reinforces the importance of being in school whenever children are well enough to attend. This is not intended to place pressure on children who are genuinely ill, nor to make families feel guilty about unavoidable absence. We will therefore continue to publish this data and celebrate strong attendance.

Clubs and Wraparound Care

Query:

Could the school offer an after-school Spanish club, with a longer session similar to Italian Club?

We already offer two Spanish clubs, one for Infant children and one for Juniors, and both are well attended by pupils across the school. These are run at lunchtime so that we can fit them into our already very full programme of clubs, while also working within the practical constraints of available space, staffing and timings. For that reason, we are not currently planning to move Spanish to an after-school slot, but we are pleased that children already have a regular opportunity to take part and enjoy the language and have received very positive feedback about our new provider.

Query:

Could Chelsea football be extended to younger children, and could the sessions be longer?

We previously asked Chelsea about extending the club to younger pupils. At that time, they advised that, for safety reasons, they would not be able to include younger children alongside the current range of age groups already attending the session. We are happy to check whether their position has changed, but age groups, staffing and session structure are ultimately determined by the provider and by what they consider safe and manageable. We can also raise the question of session length with them and ask whether the amount of playing time within the existing session can be maximised.

Query:

What will happen if Chelsea football clashes with First Holy Communion preparation?

First Holy Communion preparation will begin in January and will run from 3.30-4.30pm. During the period of preparation, this will need to take priority for the children involved, as it is an important part of their sacramental journey. First Holy Communion preparation will begin in January and continue through to Wednesday 9th June, the week in which the children will receive their First Holy Communion. During this period, the preparation sessions will therefore need to take priority over Chelsea football.

Query:

Could Dingo's reconsider its pricing?

We have raised this with Dingo's previously and will do so again. Dingo's sets its own fees and has significant venue and staffing costs, including hiring the St Luke's pitches and collecting children directly from school. We understand the concern about affordability and will continue to pass this feedback to the provider.

Query:

Could Active After School Club include a homework / study option?

Children are already able to complete homework during Active After School Club and staff are happy to support where they can. We are not currently able to provide a separate teacher-led homework club for each year group, as this would require significant additional staffing and space.

Query:

When will Active After School Club return to a 6pm finish?

We are hopeful that Active After School Club will return to its usual 6pm finish after half term. ADC will provide an update to all parents during the half-term break to confirm the arrangements.

Teaching, Learning and Homework**Query:**

Could Show and Tell take place more regularly across the year?

We agree that opportunities to speak confidently in front of others are extremely valuable. Oracy is threaded throughout our curriculum, with children regularly taking part in purposeful talk, discussion, explanation, presentation, drama and performance across a range of subjects. For our Reception and Year 1 children, Show and Tell is a particularly valuable first experience of this, helping them to develop confidence, organise their thoughts, listen to others and speak clearly to a group. As children move through the school, these early experiences are built upon through increasingly structured and challenging opportunities for speaking and listening. Teachers will therefore continue to include Show and Tell where it is most appropriate for the age and needs of the class, but we would not want it to displace curriculum time on a fixed weekly basis.

Query:

Could there be written feedback or corrections on homework?

Homework should support and consolidate learning, and feedback is important. This does not always need to take the form of written comments on every piece: teachers may review homework in class, give verbal feedback, address common misconceptions or mark selected tasks. We will, however, remind staff to ensure pupils know what they have done well and what they need to improve.

Query:

Could Year 4 have more homework, including more creative writing?

We do not plan to increase the volume of homework across the class. Research indicates that in primary school the quality and purpose of homework are more important than quantity, and excessive homework can have diminishing benefits. Homework should consolidate key learning while leaving children time for reading, family life, interests and rest.

Query:

Could parents receive a more detailed academic programme at the start of each year?

Parents already receive class curriculum information through our Parent Packs that were sent out as part of our Meet the Teachers evening and the school website contains year-group curriculum maps and English and maths objectives. Weekly newsletters also summarise current learning. This provides opportunity for parents to support learning at home without needing to recreate classroom teaching.

Query:

Could teachers include the reason when a child receives a Superstar award?

The reason for Superstars is often done verbally, so that the child has the opportunity to explain what they have done well themselves and take pride in their actions. There are often a number of Superstars to give out

at the end of the day and, with 30 children getting ready to go home, this can be a very busy time in the classroom. Asking staff to record or communicate an individual explanation to parents for every Superstar would not be the most effective use of staff time when they need to remain available to support and supervise the children. If a child is still unsure exactly what they received their Superstar for, parents can be reassured that it reflects consistently good choices throughout the day and living out the Oratory Way. This is the purpose of the Superstar system: to recognise children who have shown kindness, responsibility, effort and positive behaviour across the whole day.

Query:

Could there be more stretch and challenge in mathematics, including optional homework problems?

Reasoning, problem-solving and applying knowledge in increasingly sophisticated ways are already central to our maths curriculum. Every maths lesson includes an opportunity for depth, where children are encouraged to go beyond simply getting the correct answer and instead explain their reasoning, make connections, spot patterns, justify methods and apply their learning in less familiar contexts.

Homework has a different purpose: it is primarily there to consolidate learning that has already taken place in class, rather than to introduce new material or significantly extend the lesson. In the Junior classes, maths homework will often include an optional challenge at the end for children who would like to take their thinking further. We will ensure that this is provided more consistently so that pupils who enjoy additional mathematical challenge have that opportunity.

Query:

French teaching in Year 3:

French is taught once a week by the Year 3 class teacher as part of the curriculum. Lessons include vocabulary, listening, speaking, pronunciation, songs, repetition and simple conversational work, with the aim of gradually building children's confidence in hearing and using French.

We do not currently have a French-speaking teaching assistant assigned to Year 3, nor do we require language teaching at this stage to be delivered by a native speaker. The focus is on giving children a positive, structured introduction to the language and developing accurate vocabulary and confidence in speaking. We will continue to support staff with appropriate resources, including high-quality audio and pronunciation models where useful.

Reading and Books

Query:

Could the school review library and reading books to ensure they are age-appropriate and consistent with the school's Catholic ethos?

Books are selected for age-appropriateness, literary and educational value and the needs of the curriculum. Ofsted does not prescribe a list of books that schools must use. A Catholic school should help children encounter the world thoughtfully and through a clear moral framework; while this does not mean that every book will present explicitly Catholic ideas, we are careful to ensure that the texts children encounter are age-appropriate, of good literary quality and considered within the context of our Catholic ethos and values. If a parent has a concern about a particular title, we would always ask them to raise it directly with the school so it can be considered properly.

We have, however, recently placed an extensive order of Catholic and RE-focused books for our school libraries across all year groups. These will further enrich the children's reading experience, strengthen their religious literacy and give them greater access to high-quality books that reflect and deepen our Catholic faith and ethos.

Query:

Could there be more classic literature, including traditional and more substantial texts?

Yes, we are happy to continue strengthening the range of classics available. Classical literature, poetry, myths and legends are already threaded through the curriculum, alongside high-quality modern texts. We will keep this in mind when purchasing new library and class books. Not every suggested title will be suitable as a whole-class text, but many can be available for independent reading or book clubs.

Query:

Could banded reading books be more substantial and less 'watered down'?

For early readers, decodable books are deliberately controlled so that children can practise the phonics they have actually been taught; this is an important part of learning to read successfully rather than a reduction in ambition. Alongside these, children also take home reading-for-pleasure books.

As the children become more secure readers, including in Year 4, banded books are used less as a phonics tool and more as a way of matching children with texts that offer an appropriate level of fluency, vocabulary and comprehension challenge. At this stage, the aim is not simply to move through increasingly difficult words, but to ensure that children can read with understanding, infer meaning, discuss vocabulary and engage confidently with a wider range of texts. We will continue to review the quality and range of books available within the higher bands so that the older children are reading material that feels suitably rich, engaging and age-appropriate, alongside the broader class texts and reading-for-pleasure books they encounter across the curriculum. We are also going to ensure that Junior children can have a separate reading-for-pleasure book alongside their banded reading book, in a similar way to the approach used in the Infants, so that they can continue to develop choice, enjoyment and independence as readers.

Query:

Could children swap reading books in the Juniors as soon as they finish rather than waiting for a set day?

Yes. Junior children can, and should, change their reading book as soon as they have finished it. They do not need to wait for a particular day in order to choose a new book.

The once-a-week rota relates to the reading records, which are collected every Wednesday so that staff can check what children are reading, monitor their reading habits and progress, and keep an overview of the range and suitability of texts being chosen. This is separate from changing the actual reading book, which can happen whenever a child is ready.

Query:

Could the Infant book bags use clips rather than Velcro?

We can certainly raise this with Sogans as part of our next uniform review. We did, however, recently ask them to add the shoulder strap to the book bags so that children can wear them across their bodies more securely, which has also helped to reduce the Velcro opening as frequently when the bags are being carried. We will continue to monitor how well the current design works in practice and pass this feedback on to the supplier.

Catholic Life, Prayer and RSHE**Query:**

Could there be a Mass each month, or regular exposition / Benediction?

Prayer and liturgy are already a central part of school life. Children celebrate Mass regularly through class family Masses, feast days and whole-school celebrations, alongside daily prayer, weekly acts of worship and special liturgies. We also hold whole-school Benediction. Rather than introducing a fixed monthly Mass, we will continue to plan celebrations around the liturgical year and in partnership with Fr James.

Query:

Could children be more confident with the responses at Mass, perhaps using response cards?

Yes. Regular participation is the best way for children to learn the responses, and these are also reinforced through prayer and RE. Our Junior children are provided with Mass response cards whenever they attend Mass, so that they can follow the prayers and responses more confidently and take an active part in the celebration. We would also encourage families to help consolidate these responses at home and when attending Mass together at weekends. The more familiar the children become with the structure and responses of the Mass, the more confidently and prayerfully they are able to participate.

Query:

How is RSHE taught from a Catholic perspective, and can parents see the materials?

RSHE is taught in an age-appropriate way within our Catholic ethos and in line with statutory requirements. The dignity of every person, loving and respectful relationships, family life, health, safety and growing up are approached through Catholic teaching and our wider curriculum. At Oratory, the more formal RSHE content does not begin until the summer term of Year 5 and then continues into Year 6. Parents are informed in advance when this teaching is due to begin, and the resources and materials used are shared with parents so that they are fully aware of the content and approach. Our RSE Policy is also published on the school website. In primary school, parents may request withdrawal from any non-statutory sex education, but not from Relationships Education, Health Education or National Curriculum science.

Query:

Christmas activities - a nativity craft competition:

This is very much in keeping with what we already do. Each Advent, our Pupil Chaplaincy Team and RE Prefects organise a special Advent competition, which is always linked to the Nativity and the true meaning of Christmas. The competition is publicised in the school newsletter as Advent approaches and gives children the opportunity to respond creatively to the Christmas story. Families are therefore encouraged to look out for the details in the newsletter nearer the start of Advent.

Screens and Digital Technology**Query:**

Could screen use be reduced, including screen-based rewards and the use of interactive whiteboards?

We share the view that technology should support good teaching rather than replace conversation, books, handwriting, practical work and direct interaction. Screen-based activities are never used as Golden Time pom-pom rewards. Instead, Golden Time is focused on enjoyable, social and creative experiences. This might include extra playtime, games together as a class, an art or craft activity, or even a small class party or celebration. The aim is for children to enjoy their reward through positive shared experiences that encourage creativity and strengthen the sense of class community.

Interactive whiteboards in every classroom are used selectively as a teacher-led whole-class teaching tool - for example, to display images, texts, models, music notation, worked examples or visual prompts that help explain new learning clearly. They are not used as a substitute for high-quality teaching, discussion, books, practical resources or written work.

In Reception, use of the interactive whiteboard is deliberately kept brief, purposeful and adult-led. It is therefore used selectively, and only where it adds clear value to the teaching, for example through a story

image, phonics prompt, song or visual model and the overwhelming majority of children's learning in Reception remains practical, play-based, language-rich and rooted in direct interaction with adults and one another.

It is also important to be clear that individual screen-based learning for every child is not part of our classroom practice at Oratory, unlike the approach taken in some schools where pupils may routinely work on individual devices. Once the teacher input has finished and children move on to their independent work, they are then working in books, with practical resources, through discussion or on paper-based tasks rather than continuing to engage with the interactive whiteboard.

We are very aware of the recent open letter signed by more than 150 clinicians calling for greater scrutiny of screen-based learning in schools, and we agree with the central principle behind it: children's health, development, attention, communication and wellbeing must come before convenience or the unnecessary use of technology. The letter is addressing a much wider national picture, including schools where pupils may spend significant parts of the day working individually on laptops or tablets and then complete further screen-based work at home. That is not the model we use at Oratory. We take limited and purposeful screen use extremely seriously. All of our regular homework is paper-based, and children are not given individual devices to complete their classroom learning. Our starting point is always to ask whether technology genuinely improves the teaching or learning taking place. If it does not, there is no reason to use it. We want children talking, listening, reading real books, handwriting, discussing ideas, using practical resources, creating, problem-solving and interacting directly with their teachers and one another.

We are therefore confident that our current approach is already cautious, proportionate and very different from the kind of screen-dependent model that has prompted much of the concern in the clinicians' letter.

Nevertheless, we would never take the view that our practice should not be questioned or reviewed. We will continue to follow emerging research and national guidance closely, and where there is good evidence that practice should change, we will respond accordingly. Our position remains clear: technology should earn its place in the classroom by improving learning; it should never replace the human relationships, books, writing, talk and practical experiences that are at the heart of our excellent Oratory education.

Query:

Screen time and TTRS homework.

We share the view that screen use should be purposeful and limited. As outlined above, individual screen-based learning is not part of everyday classroom practice at Oratory and our maths homework remains paper-based. Times Tables Rock Stars is suggested only as a short follow-up activity of around 10 minutes, to help children build speed and fluency in recalling multiplication facts.

This is particularly relevant in Year 4, as pupils are expected to recall multiplication tables up to 12×12 fluently, and the statutory Multiplication Tables Check itself is completed digitally, with 25 timed questions. TTRS can therefore be a useful way of practising quick recall in a format similar to the check, but it is not the only way to practise. Families who prefer non-digital practice can use paper-based times tables sheets, flashcards, oral chanting, quick-fire questioning or games at home – which is also already done in school as well.

Photography, Swimming and Fundraising

Query:

Could the school raise the price of end-of-year class photographs and the option of a digital copy with the provider?

Yes. We will pass this feedback to the photographer and ask about both pricing and whether a digital option can be offered. The final packages and prices are set by the provider, but we can certainly make parents' views clear.

Query:

When will Year 4 swimming lessons begin?

We have been advised by the sports centre that the pool is scheduled to reopen in November, but they have not yet confirmed the exact reopening date with us. We are currently waiting to hear back from them and will let our Year 4 and Year 6 families know as soon as we receive a firm date. It is therefore very unlikely that swimming lessons will take place during the first week back after half term, but we are hopeful that they will be able to resume soon afterwards. We will communicate the arrangements as soon as the sports centre confirms them.

Query:

Is there an easy way to make a one-off donation to the Newman Fund, and can parents donate through corporate giving platforms?

Yes. The Newman Fund section of the school website contains the donation and Gift Aid information, and one-off donations are very welcome as well as regular giving. Parents can also use corporate giving platforms, including Percent Pledge and Just Cause, where these are available through their employer. We would encourage families to make use of any matched-giving schemes offered by their workplace, as these can increase the value of a donation to the school.