

PARENT FORUM FEEDBACK



Dear parents and carers,

Thank you to those of you who responded to our first Parent Forum. Parent governors have met with Mrs Smith to go through all of your responses and ensure we understand how these issues are being addressed in school. We were all reassured, and we are sure that you will be, to find that all of the issues raised by parents have already been considered by the school team. We have grouped parents' concerns, questions and comments into common 'themes'. These are summarised below and we have tried hard to make sure we have addressed all of the issues you raised.

It is not too late to feed your ideas in. Don't forget the family learning task set by school (this is for children and parents to work on together) or you can contact parent governors by emailing the school (admin@swansfield.northumberland.sch.uk) and including 'Parent Forum' in the subject line.

We are hoping to arrange further opportunities for parents and carers to get involved in decision making and we are committed to ensuring that parent views are listened to during a time when we will inevitably see many changes and new opportunities. Look out for further activities in future newsletters and on the school website. We really do value the thoughts and ideas of our parents so thank you again to those of you who took the time to voice yours.

Ayman, Dave, Rachel and Katherine

Age Appropriate Learning

A number of parents raised questions about teaching in Years 5 and 6. We are pleased to say that not a day goes by when staff are not also thinking about age-appropriate learning and how best to deliver the curriculum to all year groups. The staff team are committed to providing a balanced and holistic learning experience which will prepare our pupils for secondary school and give them positive learning experiences that will support all areas of their development.

Of course, all our staff already have experience of delivering the Primary Curriculum but they have also visited and taken advice from other primary schools during the last few months to enable us to develop the best approach to learning across the whole school. This has been a very positive experience for everyone and the staff are really looking forward to the new opportunities that being a primary school will bring. Above all, we strongly believe that inspirational teachers and support staff are the most important resource in any school (see below for an update on staffing). Our inspirational staff will be supported by appropriate and well-equipped learning environments for primary-aged children.

We can reassure all parents and carers that all of our classrooms are already appropriate for the primary curriculum. We are fortunate that we already have a specialist food teacher in school and a fully equipped cooking and nutrition area. Our outdoor environment is a huge asset and has the potential to provide a range of curriculum and play opportunities. We will be continuing to stretch and challenge all pupils by providing new experiences which will extend their learning and enable all our children to reach their full potential.

Parents have asked about support for both the more able pupils and those with special educational needs. The school will continue to provide appropriate support and challenge to all pupils. We are particularly aware of the needs to challenge and stretch those more able pupils who will be at the top of the school for three years (current Year 4 pupils) and our new Year 5 and 6 staff team will be tasked with developing additional learning opportunities for these children. We will have the same access to Special Education Needs (SEN) funding as we do currently. Swansfield Park School has an outstanding Ofsted grading for SEN and a recent parent governor report has highlighted the continuing quality of provision. Our capacity in this area will be enhanced by the appointment of a new SEN Co-ordinator role to work alongside Mrs Smith to maintain our excellent standards in SEN support. The primary setting is a very supportive environment to nurture children and support their development up to age 11.



A number of parents have asked, in particular, about the lack of specialist science teaching areas. None of the primary schools we visited have specialist laboratories or classrooms for science teaching. In fact, the Key Stage 2 curriculum is not designed to be taught in such facilities. Our flexible classrooms with easy access to the outdoors are, however, perfectly suited to the primary science curriculum. New equipment will be purchased as needed and, as governors, we are satisfied that the school budget allows for this.

There is no requirement for specialist language teachers in a primary school. All our Key Stage 2 teachers already teach the Modern Foreign Languages curriculum and this will continue into Years 5 and 6.

Changing Rooms

We have received comments both requesting new changing facilities and in support of our current arrangements (changing in the classroom). The new PE curriculum will bring some exciting opportunities for Years 3-6. We are pleased to be able to tell you that Mrs Smith has negotiated an enhanced contract with Willowburn and a significant amount of the Key Stage 2 PE curriculum will be delivered there (including use of the Willowburn changing facilities). When children need to get changed in school, staff will ensure there are separate changing areas for boys and girls in Years 5 and 6.

Music And Performance Opportunities

Swansfield Park School already has an excellent reputation for music and we are very proud of our choir, recorder groups and pianists. We are looking forward to building on this next year. Mrs Grimes is already talking to the music service about opportunities for our Year 5 and 6 children. Our new studio will be an acoustic room which will be an ideal space for music teaching and learning.

Children in Year 5 and 6 will be leading our Christingle Service at Christmas from next year (this will be instead of a Y5/6 Christmas Performance). In the summer term, these children will put on a summer performance, hopefully at a venue outside school (next year, we hope to be able to deliver a smaller performance for Year 5 only).

We would welcome support from any parents who could volunteer their time or skills to help with our new music and performance opportunities.



Extra Responsibilities for Year 5 and 6 Pupils

School staff have been talking to the children about opportunities for Year 5 and 6 pupils to take on new roles and responsibilities. These roles could include a Head Boy and Head Girl (Y6 pupils), sports leaders and opportunities for older pupils to help with younger classes. In particular, it will be important that our older pupils still feel very much part of the school and we hope we can develop them as role models for the younger children. Rather than separating the older year groups, we plan to work with them to find ways that they can engage positively with other children and make a contribution to our school. We have plans to develop the outdoor area over the next 2-3 years and this includes providing more challenging opportunities which will support older children's play and non-curriculum time.

Lunches And School Food

We are expanding our kitchen staff team and they will be looking at new menu opportunities to cater for the larger number of children in school and the dietary needs (including portion size) and tastes of older children. We are still thinking about how to structure lunch times to make best use of the school day and space available.

Mobile Phones

Children are not permitted to bring mobile phones into school and this will continue when we become a primary school. School staff feel that the issues around children's safety and security/storage of phones make it inappropriate for children to have mobile phones in school, particularly as children will not be travelling to school on buses (which is one of the main reasons the Middle Schools allow mobile phones).

Communication

A number of parents have asked about school planners. These are already in progress and will be provided for children in Year 5 and 6. We intend to continue to develop School 360 as a learning platform which will, in the future, enable communication between parents and teachers and provide a reward system for pupils. School 360 includes most of the functions provided by the 'Dojo' system used at some of the Middle Schools.

We have received a lot of positive feedback from parents, pupils and staff about the current dropping off arrangements at the start of the school day. Next year, Key Stage



2 pupils will be dropped off in the school yard. We do recognise that this provides fewer opportunities for parents to communicate, informally, with teachers and we are continuing to discuss ways to enable this. Key Stage 1 and nursery pupils will be dropped off in their classrooms from September.

A New Parent Payment System

Parents have suggested that a new payment system that allows online payments and co-ordinates payments for clubs, lunches, swimming, trips etc would be helpful. The school is already looking into this and we are hoping to bring you further information in the near future.

Uniform

There will be no change to the school uniform. The school logo will change very slightly to say 'PRIMARY SCHOOL' instead of 'FIRST SCHOOL'. Uniform with the old school logo on will be permitted until children grow out of it. We are selling the current stock of 'First School' uniform at a reduced price – please speak to the office if you are interested in purchasing this.

Buses and Parking

There will be no bus provision for pupils attending Swansfield Park Primary School and with no buses at all on Swansfield Park Road from 2017 we expect to see less congestion in the area. There will be no additional parking but the total number of children coming into Alnwick will reduce once the Middle Schools close so, in the longer term, we do not envisage this being a significant problem.

Staff Recruitment

We have been through a rigorous recruitment process which has followed the staffing protocol put in place to support the restructure across all Alnwick Partnership schools. We are very pleased with the appointments made so far and we are continuing the recruitment process to fill the remaining vacancies. We are looking forward to introducing our new staff to you soon – an update will be included in the next newsletter.

As mentioned above, our staff are our strongest asset and we are very excited about expanding our team and welcoming new colleagues to Swansfield Park Primary School.

