

Ethos Committee Meeting | MINUTES

Meeting date | time 05/11/19 | Meeting location Lydford Primary School

Meeting called by	Deirdre Petersen	Phil Whittle (Executive Head)
Type of meeting	Ethos Committee Meeting	Deirdre Petersen (Acting Head of School) Jo Luxford (staff, parent Y4)
Note taker	Jo Luxford	Roseanne Waddington (staff) Tania Skeaping (Chair of LGB) Ali Williams (parent Y5) Jane Easterbrook (parent YR) Jo Evans (parent YR) Karen Snell (parent Y2) Jonathon Gilpin (parent Y1) Apologies (parents): Jade Deacon (Y1), Klara and Tomas Hruska (Y3 and Y6), Louise Watts (Y1 and Y6), Katie Lenton (Y1), Kelly and Josh Harmer (YR and Y2).

1. REMINDER OF COOPERATIVE VALUES.

DP did a brief introduction, reminding the committee of our cooperative values that underpin everything we do as a Trust school. We are a cross phase Trust embedding values from 4 yrs -post 16 and are underpinned by the Dartmoor Teaching School. DP referred to the last ethos meeting when we discussed the values and aims in more detail. She also reminded the group that the Trust enshrines the individual values of Lydford School and the school vision and aims: Nurture, Inspire Achieve, a small school learning together in the local community. It is important that we maintain the individual distinctiveness of each school whilst working collaboratively under the umbrella of the Trust. RW added that she saw it as very important to keep these small rural schools open and thriving at the heart of our community. TS added that we were lucky to have the backing of the Trust to support the school. PW added that it was for the committee to think about whether the direction of the school was in line with these visions and values so that if there was any feedback it is the role of the committee to use this forum. PW also added that the minutes of this committee would be shared with Trustees and that parent and community views are valued.

2. SCHOOL COUNCIL

A parent had raised the issue of inclusion in the school council for all on the slip sent home to parents. DP explained that we now have a more inclusive school council, incorporating all year groups and all significant groups. JL outlined the council selection process and the way the children were able to support a recent recruitment process and some of the other items we have recently discussed including fundraising, school lunchtimes etc. DP mentioned that she would be looking to use the school council in the monitoring process - conducting learning walks with the pupils so that pupil voice is more prevalent in our school improvement.

3. LANGUAGE AND TONE USED IN FORMAL COMMUNICATIONS

KS clarified from a parent point of view that this was about the strongly worded attendance letters. AW added that it seemed unfair that you could get an attendance letter after only one or two absences in the early part of the term because the percentage is based on so few sessions. PW explained that the Devon guidelines set a very

aspirational target. JG raised the issue that genuine sicknesses are included which can trigger a letter. The threshold is so tight. He feels that the policy should be that every day it is possible for a child to be here they are here but if they are actually sick it should not be included in the data. PW explained that the letters are numbers generated and were sent out up and down the country. JG said 'if they are off it doesn't really matter why' I do understand that, 'it's just that it's difficult to receive the letter'. PW explained that every parent in this room is a conscientious parent and makes sure their child is in school- the letters aren't really designed for those who are already making every effort to get their children into school and that the letters should be handed out in person not just put in book bags. JG said as a parent he'd prefer not to be taken to one side, especially if the absences are at the top end of the percentages and would rather the letters WAS just popped in a book bag. DP explained the duty of care we have towards our pupils and how essential it is that we do everything we can to make sure they are in school. AW mentioned that inclusion of the 'Early Help' leaflet seemed a little severe. TS reiterated that it is all about prevention and our duty of care. PW informed the group that on average a person experiences 35 incidents of domestic violence before asking for help, and children of families where domestic violence occurs are more likely to miss school so it makes sense to include the leaflet to reach out to all families.

On another note, RT asked that green highlighting not be used on newsletters as it was extremely difficult to read black on green. DP suggested that perhaps bold text would be easier as a tool for highlighting.

4. FUTURE PLANS FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

DP made a statement, in summary: "I have been in post as Acting Head of School since February 2019 and am happy to continue in the role of Head of School." DP asked PW to make further comment.

PW made a statement summed up his point of view as 1. Budget: Management have to consider what the school can afford, not necessarily the cheapest option but the most cost-effective. 2: Impact on children: Managers wanted to give DP long enough to show evidence that she was having a positive impact on standards. He explained that the MAT employs experts to scrutinize and challenge leadership and this will inform a final decision about long term plans. TS reminded everyone that DP has been at Lydford since the end of Feb. PW continued that once DP has completed a year as acting head then trustees will decide whether the shared model works.

PW then went on to explain that our Head of School is dedicated to strategic leadership-focusing on guiding the school and not also teaching in class, which has a positive impact on consistency for children on a day to day basis. Also with the shared model we get 0.5 time rather than 0.3 head teacher time. He went on to say how we benefit from opportunities to share good practice, share staff meetings, planning and moderation. JL concurred.

TS introduced herself as both chair of governors for the 6 schools and an ex parent. She was happy that our school was both educationally and financially viable. She asked for feedback about how parents felt, and reminded them that they could give feedback on the leadership model of the school via email.

RW gave a staff point of view. She felt it was much less disruptive to class 2 having a consistent teacher in full time.

RT gave a parent's point of view. She felt it worked well because although DP was not in school every day she is very efficient at answering emails. She felt that the separation between the demands of teaching and the demands of leadership was a good thing as it takes the pressure off the teachers.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS- FOREST SCHOOL

RW asked to speak about forest school. She gave an update about how well it has taken off, how much the children are enjoying their weekly sessions and how they have risen to the challenges of the unique forest school approach. She explained that the ethos of the forest school was very much about providing a space where the children's wellbeing and mental good health were a priority. She has noticed that the children react very differently to being outdoors- they have been making links and applying their learning from across the curriculum thought play and exploration as well as structured activities which fits perfectly with our school ethos. She gave an update about the erection of a permanent shelter for forest school. She has secured about £350 funding from Waitrose, £500 from the Rotary and £100 from a private donation. TS suggested applying for match funding from a fund available within the village.

Jo E gave a parent's point of view. She stated "I think it's brilliant! We went down there with Stay and Play. It was amazing, such a wonderful environment."

DP thanked RW for all she had done to get the forest school set up and for her hard work in developing it, planning and running the sessions each week. RW also thanked her daughter Jane E for supplying the trees from her farm. DP alerted the group to the Forest School official opening which is on the 3rd December after school. Everyone is welcome!

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS: SCHOOL GAMES GOLD AWARD

DP brought good news that we were awarded the School Games Gold Award for last academic year which is evidence that we are providing 'gold standard' school sports and games for our children.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS: TRAFFIC OUTSIDE SCHOOL

RT reported that the parish council are going back to highways about what the options might be about implementing a 20 mph zone outside school, possible just at the start and end of the school day. It seems the rules may have changed and there may be scope for a speed-activated flashing sign or a temporary speed limit. The council will keep us informed.

JG gave some background from Lifton, where a similar attempt was made to impose a 20mph limit near to the village school but it did not happen because the rules did not allow for this unless a serious accident had been recorded.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS: SITE SECURITY

Jo E raised a parental concern about the security of the school site. She has some concerns about the 15 min in the morning when children are brought into school, because the door is unlocked and it would be relatively easy for a child who has been dropped off to exit the building again before the door is secured. JL spoke to say that the staff had actually been looking at reviewing arrangements for school drop-off and were composing a note for the newsletter about tightening the security at drop off time. Jo E also related an incident when she had popped up to school on a Friday during the afternoon session to collect her son's PE kit and had been able to enter the school, retrieve the PE kit and leave without being challenged. RW explained to the group that this was during a class 2 PE sessions outdoors the door is left unlocked in case the children need to use the toilet. DP stated that the door should be locked and the children should buzz to enter. On this occasion our admin was not at school so this wasn't possible. PW updated us on the prospect of a mag-lock system being installed so the site was more secure but stated that this was an extremely expensive option so we continued to look for ways to make sure the site was safe. DP agreed that the site security is an issue and one that has been raised in our recent safeguarding audit with Jane Lake. DP has been pro-active in flagging the issue up to the central team and that some investment needs to be made in this area – both on the entrance gate and the main entrance door.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS: ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

JG expressed a parent's point of view that the enrichments activities offered, such as the recent 'Bat Walk' and 'School Camp' were fantastic opportunities for families to engage with the school positively. He asked that we continue to provide these opportunities as they were greatly valued. DP linked these to our school vision and values and assured the group that as a school we would continue to look to provide experiences such as these.

DP thanked everyone who attended.

Meeting closed at 5.00pm.