COLLIS PRIMARY SCHOOL
PARENT FOCUS GROUP
18 May 2023, 2pm – staff room

MINUTES

PARENT FOCUS GROUP MEMBERS

School

Kevin Hogston (KH)	Headteacher & Host
Rebecca Clake	Minutes

Parents

	Children
Karen Cooke	Yr 4 and Yr 1 (twins)
Michelle Pinnell	Yr 4 and Yr 2
Julia Parker	Yr 3 and Nursery
Chirsty MacKenzie	Nursery
Matthew Davies	Yr 4
Jenny Day	Yr 2 and 4
Jenny Gower Smith	Yr 3 and 1
Caroline McIntosh	Yr 5, Yr 2 and Yr 1
Sarah Ball	Yr 5, Yr2
Olivia Labrey	Yr 3
Rachel King	Yr 4
Anna Deakin	Yr 4
Becky Duffy	Yr 3 and Yr 2

CSA
Jenny Day, Co-Chair

Apologies
Donna Littman (governor) and Katharine Phillips

Minutes of previous meeting
Not reviewed at this meeting – to be carried forward.

Class re-organisation for September 2023
There was only one agenda item on this additional meeting of the Parent Focus Group.
This was the mixing of current year groups 2, 3 and 4.

Mr Hogston provided an overview to date:
A first letter to parents was sent out on 25th April 2023.
This was followed by a second letter 2nd May 2023 sent to parents with Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).
An assembly took place with pupils from Year 6 sharing their experiences of their classes being mixed at the end of year 4. Year 6 pupils have been linked to the classes to answer any questions they may have.

A video film recording was subsequently made for parents with input from Year 6 pupils and teachers. (There was some positive feedback from parents attending, who had seen the video – although not all had been able to do so yet).

The plan is for the transition to the next classes to start around mid-June. This is significantly earlier than previously. There will be a number of opportunities for children to spend time with their new class and class teacher. On the final occasion, parents will also be able to join to meet other parents.

It is planned that there will be experienced teachers in place to support children in their new classes.

What will the timeline be for the changes now?
After half term, (w/c 5th June) there will be a meeting held between teachers of all those nine classes affected with the Lead Assistant Head where the timelines will be confirmed. At this point, a letter will go out to parents so they are aware.

When will the children need to pick their five friends?
Parents will be updated on this during the week after half term.

There was some discussion about whether this would be something that takes place at home or in school. Mr Hogston said this would be considered and parents would be aware when the school will ask for those names – so preparation could take place at home.

The idea would be 10 pupils (third of the class) from each class would remain together (so no child would end up in a class where they did not know any of the other pupils).

Would there be an 'I don't want to be in a class with' option?
Mr Hogston said the intention was to keep the experience positive. Teachers know the children, will organise the classes, they will be aware of any history.

What if children have a very small friendship group?
This is the whole reason for mixing classes - to expand all pupils' friendship groups.
There was some discussion about the number of names the children would be asked for, and if they could put down fewer if they wanted to.
Mr Hogston said that the thinking behind asking for five, would be to ensure the school could guarantee that at least one person on that list would be in their new class. If fewer names were given, it would be harder to deliver on that promise.

What if my child has some friends who are really important?
Mr Hogston said that the school did not want to ask for a priority list. He said that where there were important friendships, teachers would be aware of this already.
Children don't need to select 'best friends' – just five others they would be happy to be in a class with.

There was some discussion about the wording that might be used when selecting the five names – friends/people you work well/learning partners etc.
Mr Hogston said that some thought would be given to this.

Reasons behind the decision to re-organise the classes.

These were discussed with the group.

Mr Hogston talked about the advantages in terms of building children's confidence and resilience and preparation for secondary school by mixing classes. Being able to deal with change is an important life-long skill.
More immediately though, was the need to act in the best interests of all the children as the classes in Year groups 2, 3 and 4 were becoming more unbalanced. This meant that in some classes a far larger amount of teacher time was being given to supporting children with emotional/behavioural issues, Special Educational Needs (SEN), dyslexia, etc, than in others. This meant children in that class were not receiving the same educational experience as those in other classes in the year group.

Are we just moving a problem to another place?
The main reason we are mixing classes is because of the social benefits to pupils (wider friendships and preparation for secondary school). The unbalanced classes is an important reason to mix classes but not the main driver. Any behaviour issues would be managed in line with the school's behaviour policy, regardless of in which class it took place.

Will there be a Collis policy on class mixing? Will this be done at certain Key stages or annually?
There would be a need to think about what is right for Collis – and once this current re-organisation is complete then this can be considered. Importantly we will make a firm decision on mixing classes going forward so there is clarity for everyone including new parents joining the school. Historically Collis has not mixed classes. As a new Head to Collis in 2015, Mr Hogston did not introduce this change, and in recent years Covid bubbles, etc, have meant conversations about class mixing have not happened. Now the time is right to review the situation and make the change.

Jenny Day from the CSA mentioned to parents present about the advantages the new Opal play project should bring to all children in terms of mixing between classes and between year groups. She also highlighted the benefits of being better equipped for secondary school if the classes were mixed.

Who will decide the new classes?
The teachers in the year group will produce the first cut of names. This will then be reviewed by the SEN team and then by the Safeguarding team. Mr Hogston and the Lead Assistant Heads will make a final review of the lists ensuring *one of the five names* has been included.

There is a lot to do in terms of the transition in a short time – if you aim to announce the classes mid-June?
Teachers will already have been giving the issue some consideration, and the activities to take place with new classes/teachers are ready to go. A timeline will be given to parents.

What would you do if a child was really unhappy as a result of the new class they were in?
The processes discussed with parents at this meeting should mean that the school gets it right. Teachers would want all children to start in their new classes in September.

Keeping parents informed
As part of the timeline, Mr Hogston said he would ensure parents are aware of:

- When children have to pick the five names
- the first day children will spend with their new class.

There was also some brief discussion about how, bearing in mind school GDPR constraints, parents might be kept updated with the new class lists.
(CSA/Class reps to potentially support with sharing this information).

DATE OF NEXT MEETING
Thursday 8 June, 2.00. This meeting will be with the school governing board.