

**GOVERNORS MEETING WITH PARENTS
ASH CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL
7th NOVEMBER 2012**

Attendance:

Governors:	Adam Hawkins
Niki Roberts	Sally McEachen (Chair of Governors)
Shirley Coulter	David Gent
Steve Joel	Steve Whitehead
Vicki Mock	Angela Craggs
Myriam Groessens	Barbara Gadd

Rose Gay and Richard Clements – Ash Parish Council

Governors and Parish Councillors were introduced and 20 parents were welcomed to the meeting.

PARKING

Sally McEachen explained that the car park used by parents belongs to the Parish, not to the school, and that it is the responsibility of parents to park safely. However, Ash School was anxious to do what it could to make the situation better. Ash Parish Council was in the process of organising the reinstatement of the white lines, and Richard Clements suggested 10 parent and child places at the end nearest the school, and 24 at the other end would be possible. A vote by parents indicated that they would prefer spaces to be maximised rather than have parent and child places. The Parish Council will decide what to do, including checking rules on Disabled Spaces and marked pedestrian walkways. The painting of the white lines will take place in the next few weeks [now scheduled for Friday 30 November].

It was noted that Main Street is the main route from the A303 through to the industrial estate in Martock. Traffic calming measures have been offered to the Parish Council as part of the MASH cycle route and will be in place by March 2013. Rose Gay showed the map of how this will be organised. Ideally, parents should not park on the road and the following ideas were discussed to find ways to avoid this.

- It was suggested that the smaller end of the car park should be drop off only – but difficulties were foreseen in enforcing this.
- Parents with children only in KS1 might be encouraged to leave as soon as they have collected their children. However, 40 families have more than one child at the school, and many of these will be in separate key stages. Parents appreciate the freedom to spend time talking to friends when picking up or dropping off and some felt that the social life of the school would suffer if parents were “chased away”, and staff would be unhappy to do this. However, others get quite annoyed that spaces are taken up by parents who linger longer than necessary.
- Adam Hawkins suggested extending the KS2 day to 3:30pm, giving more time for parents of younger children to leave before KS2 parents arrive. This would mean a 20 minute wait for parents with children in both. A vote was taken with 14 in favour and 0 against and so there will be a 3:30pm finish for KS2 for a trial period after Christmas for a term.
- Enquiries were made by parents about a school bus service. However, as we have a very small catchment area, no-one qualifies for one.
- Adam Hawkins has explored using the Nippy Bus service to get children to school for example from Bower Hinton. However, this would only be possible if we had a school

contract, which was too expensive. He has suggested to Nippy Bus that they re-time their scheduled service to coincide with the school day when they next revise it.

- The reasons for the number of cars used to bring children to school were explored. It was explained that only 28 children live in the village of Ash, and of these some are brought to school by car for various reasons – one being the dangers of walking along the Main Street in Ash, another being parents who are on their way to work.
- A travel plan formulated 18 months ago looked at the alternatives to car travel. However very few people are in a position not to use cars mainly because of the dangers of other forms of transport from their homes – cycling and walking – and the fact that scheduled bus timetables do not coincide well with the school day. There was funding for the travel plan from County but this was withdrawn in budget cuts.
- It was explained that both playgrounds are staffed from 8:45am after which children may be left, rather than waiting with them for school to begin. Some parents were unaware of this, so it was agreed to give it greater publicity.
- Breakfast club provision is to start in January 2013 for parents who need to drop their children before 8.45am. There will be a small charge for this service.
- Staff cars: the school car park is not big enough for all staff to park there and a number use the Parish car park. It was suggested that money could be raised to enlarge the parking area for staff within the school grounds.
- A “Park and stride” walking bus could be set up with cooperation between parents. It was suggested that children could gather at the Rec car park, be given high visibility vests, and walk from there with supervision. This could be used by any child, even from outside the village, and would provide an alternative to trying to find parking places at school. Insurance might be an issue and parents wondered if this might be covered by the Parish Council? Lynne Badley agreed to look into the scheme with a view to establishing one.
- Incentives e.g. for walking from Recreation ground, might be offered on an occasional basis to encourage children to feel pride in using a walking scheme.
- The school is lucky to have the agreement of the Bell Inn to use areas of the pub car park at the beginning and end of the school day, and the Bell would be happy to extend use into the field at the back, of which 40 yds or so could be surfaced to make it possible to use in winter months. Parents were happy to help fund this. It was considered that an agreement with the brewery as landlords would be wise so as to have some sort of security should the pub management change. The school will consider whether it would be willing to have a securely locking gate from the car park into the Infants’ Playground.
- Some form of Thank You to the pub, such as regular skittles evenings for parents, was considered appropriate.
- Jane Taylor had sent her apologies to the meeting, but said she was happy to chair a committee to raise money to improve car parking facilities.
- Parents wondered if the owners of the old school could be approached to use the old playground for parking. However planning restrictions made this a non-starter.
- Ideas to extend the current Parish car park or put in another ramp to make an in/out system were too expensive.
- A lay-by outside the school had been considered in the past, but this was found also to be prohibitively expensive.
- Could Scallywags finish earlier? Shirley Coulter explained that parents who did not have children at the school already bring them after 9am and collect them earlier at the end of the day. They are contractually obliged to have sessions of a certain length with a lunch break, so are constrained by this.
- It was thought that traffic on the Main Street will be worse once Tesco opens in Martock, however, it might also have the knock on effect of motivating parents to leave between picking up a younger child and another from a club later rather than staying at school to wait.

Rose Gay and Richard Clements were thanked for their valuable contributions and left the meeting.

EXTRA TEACHING SPACE

The Catchment Area of the school is: Ash, Highway, Milton, Durnfield, Witcombe.

County is the admissions authority, but has to agree any change to the Pupil Admission Number (PAN) with school governors. The current PAN is 21, and has been for some years. In recent years the school has taken a greater number of pupils than the PAN because a major concern has been to keep numbers above 151 because of the way schools were funded per teacher. There is also a general acknowledgment that children who move into the catchment area should be accommodated. However, the funding system is changing and we will be paid per pupil so this concern will no longer exist. There is no intention for the school to grow any bigger than it is, especially as the school site and parking don't lend themselves to greater numbers.

Although class sizes are big, children are mainly taught in year groups, which are smaller, especially for numeracy and literacy. This means that the school hall is used as a classroom for much of the week, but it is not ideal. Ideally we need another classroom to free up the hall and give the children a better environment to work in. Further discussion revealed that there was little appetite to fund raise for such an ambitious and expensive project.

A suggestion was made that an unwanted Portacabin be donated by Yeovil District Hospital. If we would like this, we need to move quickly. It was not clear what size the portacabin was.

Possible greater use of the church: the heating is better, pews have been removed and carpets fitted at the rear of the church to make the space more welcoming. There are still the problems of toilet facilities and getting the children safely to and from the church without taking up valuable staff time, but the church's willingness to cooperate with the school in this way were much appreciated.

ACADEMIES

Steve Joel gave a brief outline of what being an academy might entail for Ash School. Capital funds are available if you have academy status, but there would be very little difference in revenue from the current situation. Academies are free to plan their own curriculum, but are still constrained by teaching to the SATs tests. The school would be run as a business, and greater expertise would be required on the governing body, some of whom might become trustees. A show of hands indicated that 0 parents were in favour of academies: 5 were against: and 4 didn't know/couldn't care! Further discussion revealed that many were in favour of preparedness, in case schools were finally forced into becoming academies.

A report on academies is to go to governors on 4th December. The current culture and ethos would remain with no implications for parents such as new uniforms etc. Governors undertook to consult with parents about academies and keep them informed. One long-term issue is whether those able to cope with the increased demands would be willing or have time to serve as governors.

Parents and governors were thanked for giving their time to come to the meeting.