

Questions and Answers for Parent Forum : Autumn 1 2017

Can we have feedback on spelling results, as children are not always reliable in relating the answers? (Score and Words incorrect) also can we have more indicators of success from wider homework?

From this week we have implemented the following strategies to standardise Spelling feedback (see sheet attached)

1. Rules and patterns must be taught and must be identified in all subjects across the curriculum
2. Ensure you are familiar with the NC requirements of the spelling appendix for each phase.
3. Over the course of the week pick out and pick on misconceptions and these should form your NN for the week.
4. Home spellings will be issued on a Wednesday and tested on the following Wednesday. The attached template must be used and the format followed.
5. These spellings should be a mixture of rules and patterns, common exception words, and misconceptions picked up during the course of the week.
6. Every pupil should have a spelling test book. One half for the seen spellings and one half for the unseen spellings. This must be tested every week and the scores filled in for the seen test and the unseen test on the new spelling sheet going home that night. Also on that sheet they need to write up to spelt incorrectly. If there are no errors on the test they should derive spellings from their spelling bag.

Why do labelled items of clothing get swept collectively into lost property, along with in labelled items? Could we not hand them back to the child?

It is certainly not our aim that labelled items be moved to lost property and members of staff do not do this. Unfortunately the majority of items moved to lost property are placed there by children who do not necessarily check as thoroughly as an adult the labelling of an item.

To reduce the likelihood of this occurring I have suggested that a sign be attached to the lost property containers requesting the person adding items, first checks to see if an item is labelled.

It is however worth noting that the majority of items which are lost are not labelled and this would also help us all collectively going forward.

Can we have more direction regarding what is homework and what is information? Clarification is needed for parents regarding Knowledge Organisers and their **purpose / reasoning** behind them, as well as clearer explanation of what's needed from homework.

Over the Summer Holidays we reviewed our entire curriculum, redeveloping our Medium Term Plans focus to ensure that there is a much greater emphasis on the 'powerful knowledge' that children need in order to not only truly understand concepts, but also to enable them to apply the knowledge, offer informed explanations, make links and spot patterns. Crucially, it will also provide them with the essential foundations for the next part of their educational journey and beyond.

Despite being an Academy, we follow the National Curriculum. Whilst we will continue to use this as our framework, we will not limit our curriculum content to the knowledge, skills and concepts covered within it. Rather, in order to make good on our Trust ethos of 'Limitless Learning', we will raise our expectations and not restrict the depth and breadth of children's understanding.

We have looked closely at each subject and identified the essential knowledge that we feel is the children's entitlement – and then decided how best to teach it, by considering this alongside the latest research regarding cognitive load and teaching and learning. Already this has had amazing results, with children being exposed to and accessing content which is deeper and more sophisticated than we have taught before.

Predictably, these higher expectations are throwing up a range of challenges for us; not least, ensuring that we develop the structures and systems which enable pupils to effectively retain (and then apply) the knowledge we are delivering.

To help meet this challenge, we have produced 'Knowledge Organisers' which are the 'go-to' documents outlining the essential knowledge that the teachers will be covering across a unit of work; including dates, key personnel, vocabulary, definitions, and other contextual or technical information. These 'Knowledge Organisers' will be shared with pupils, parents and carers – with the aim that everyone knows exactly what is being taught, and what the children need to learn. As parents the aim is that you use these as a reference guide for what your child is learning, and also, as an opportunity to discuss the facts about the topic and how much they have learned. It can also be used to see if they are able to start making links or offer explanations about the topics being covered.

We will continue to develop the use of Knowledge Organisers based on this starting point (sharing them with pupils and parents accordingly).

As well as supporting parents in knowing the curriculum their children will be covering and there enabling supportive discussions at home, in preparation for each term this will also enable children to commit this new knowledge to their long term memory. Research evidences that by Pre-learning (reading through this information before the topic starts) and then over-learning (Being taught this directly in class) and then completing tasks in order to use and apply their new knowledge that this is far more likely to be retained and understood.

What we ask of parents is that they talk through this information with their children, prior to the start of each term, in order that children arrive in these sessions with a starting point enabling them to make links more effectively between known and new information discussed.

Is there another way knowledge organisers, PTA coms, letters and homework could be sent home to reduce costs? Eg Black and White / Parent Mail

The concern with all of these items has been whether or not all parents receive and can print out these items when they are electronic.

When we added parentmail, this was following requests from our PTA. Looking at costs we agreed that by moving our newsletter to this format that the cost reduction (in paper) would pay for the basic costs for the additional service.

In terms of ink our current photocopier contract includes ink (within reason) and there is no difference in cost between black and white or colour, unless we go over our agreed usage (which we

generally do not). Where this was the case, we would of course move to use black and white temporarily until our usage allowance resets.

95% of parents are now on parentmail, following the drive to use this proceeding parents evenings moving to this system. Do the Parent Forum think that parents would be able to / choose to print out the Knowledge Organisers as the school is concerned that as this is curriculum learning that not sending it home might reduce some children's chances.

I will talk to the PTA and put to them the thought of using our parentmail system. This has always been available to them, however we would not want to remove paper as an option unless they were happy with this.

What is Hillsgrove Policy on School trips. Last year, Year 1 did not go on any and this is an important part of the curriculum. How can we increase these and would extra parent volunteers help?

It is our aim that every class has at least one educational visit each year. The distance travelled tends to go up as children become older due to the safety elements and additional staffing required where using public transport.

Due to the terrorist threat in Central London, quite a number of educational visits were cancelled or reviewed in 2016-17, following police advice at the time and in consultation with parents where this involved small groups.

All teachers are required to book in at least one educational visit with the school in Autumn Term 1 in advance, with the aim of giving parents advanced warning.

I do think it is important to recognise that we have had to limit our choices regarding visits due to feedback and the level of donations coming from parents. Parents have feedback following previous trips that:

- Some parents are unhappy to take children to another venue (Eg. Meeting at the station or at Hall Place)
- Some parents have flagged up that they are still concerned regarding trips in to Central London and / or using public transport
- Some parents have stated that they cannot afford or feel unwilling to donate towards the costs of Educational Visits.

Due to continued and significant real terms budget cuts, continuing cost increases and a donation level of less than 30% of visit costs for a number of visits last year we have therefore aimed wherever possible to:

- Walk to public transport points and use public transport (wherever at all possible)
- Organise trips to venues which do not charge

As a result this will make visits more complex to arrange and we will definitely benefit from parent volunteers in order to increase pupil to adult ratio

Is there any way where an individual parent is worried regarding what their child is eating that we can communicate this to them? Reference to a child going home, saying they had not eaten.

We have a large number of specifically employed Midday supervisors at Hillsgrove, ably supported by a number of our Teaching Assistants during the lunch break. Over the last year we also staggered our lunchtimes so that less children are on lunch at the same time, in doing ensuring a more relaxed

lunchtime and a higher pupil to adult ratio. Adults are in duty in the hall and children ask an adult before cleaning their plate and going to get a dessert. Adults do their best to keep an eye on whether children are not eating as some children are simply keen to get out to play and others may not eat and this could be a red flag for concern. Where there is a noticed issue, the class teacher is notified and speaks to parents to pass this on.

In the event that a parent has a concern regarding their child's dietary needs at school, if they let us know, we will of course ask the staff on duty to monitor this and feedback to us, in order that we can allay these concerns.

Could we set up a list of websites / apps that the school thinks would be beneficial for pupil use to enhance learning?

There are suggested websites attached to most of our Knowledge Organisers for Geography, History and Science. For Year 5 and 6, there is a SATs section on our website which has past papers from the last 8 years for all core subjects. The website also directs children towards the BBC Learning Zone which has work for KS1, 2 and 3 attached, including quizzes, games and video content.

We will however talk to our phase teams and ask them to provide a list of suggested websites and apps for each phase and report back on this at our next meeting.

We have had a Pupil Survey and Staff Survey in 2017 (On the website) when will the Parent Survey be?

We are in the process of compiling a parent survey, which it is aimed will to some extent mirror the OFSTED parent survey (with a few additions). This will need to be approved by Governors at our Full Governor's meeting in November. Once approved we aim for this to be sent out to all parents either at the end of November or beginning of December.

Over what period of time are the SAT Tests undertaken in May 2018? (Y2 and Y6)

Phonics Screening Check Week – Monday 11th – Friday 15th June 2018

Key Stage 1 Test Period – May 2018

Key Stage 2 Test Week – Monday 14th – Thursday 17th May 2018

Can the school provide more spaces or more clubs? These are useful for working parents.

The school currently has more clubs and extracurricular activities than any other school in the Trust and the majority of other schools we are aware of in Bexley. There are clubs the majority of mornings from 730am and clubs every night after school, using both halls.

We also have clubs every lunchtime. Whilst these are very useful to working parents, the focus of these clubs is to extend the curriculum in PE and the Arts and to provide support for homework, as well as to provide opportunities for more able pupils and pupils who have a less active lifestyle in Physical Activity.

Our Pupil Voice groups however have requested we look at offering more in terms of lunchtime clubs as some children due to needing to be picked up / dropped off promptly feedback in the pupil survey this was stopping them from attending. The issue which complicates this (as after school) is space as the hall and canteen are already in use.

In response to parent feedback following changes to homework systems we have added two homework clubs this term.

3F and 3O have a different number of swimming sessions but both have been asked to contribute £25 toward travel, Will this be made up at the end of the period?

Across Autumn and Spring Term swimming, including travel, costs £100 per child and we currently absorb 50% of the cost, hence the £25 request per term. As there are more Mondays in school than Fridays, we will change days for 3F and 3O after Christmas and this means that both classes will get equal numbers of sessions.

Are the children allowed water bottles during lesson time? Can they bring water bottles in?

Yes children can bring water bottles in to school and we encourage the drinking of water throughout the day in order to aid concentration and ensure children are hydrated. The way this is managed at a class level differs dependent on the class as some pupils respond more maturely to the availability of a water bottle being on their desk. Some classes will therefore have designated times to get water and others may have the water on the table as and when wanted.

Year 3 Parents found contact books in KS1 a vital source of communication, will these be issued in Year 3?

Contact books are used up until the end of Year 1 as the main point of contact. At this point classes have a Teaching Assistant everyday who checks these and passes on any concerns raised to the class teacher. From Year 2 the children only have a teaching assistant from 845-1145, as a result we have found that contact books are less useful as comments / concerns from parents are not accessed as readily. Where parent beyond Year 1 have any questions or concerns we ask that they talk directly to the class teacher, before or after school or send in a note if they do not drop off / collect. Teachers are always happy to arrange to meet with you and will aim to do so quickly in order to support you effectively. Where the matter is less time sensitive, parents often use the homework diary or reading record to communicate. This however can take longer to be responded to so please contact directly for more pressing matters.

Could the school implement more interactive learning through dressing up for events such as World Book Day and History Days?

This was discussed following feedback from Parents at the recent meet the teacher day and as a result we have booked in the following:

HUMANITIES TEAM:

16th-19th October Black History Week as part of Black History Month.

EYFS and KS1 LEADERS:

7th November Hug a Bear Day – Bring a bear to school / linked texts

HUMANITIES TEAM:

20th November Universal Children's Day – Rights of the Child UN - All Year groups - Dressing up to celebrate different countries.

PSHE COORDINATOR:

20th-25th November Road Safety Week – Visits from People who help us – Bike Safety sessions etc – Fire Brigade already in Mon/Tues

ENGLISH LEADER:

5th February National Libraries Day – Visits from and to the Library as well as Library special sessions in school. (See librariesweek.org.uk)

IT LEADER:

7th February Safer Internet Day

ENGLISH LEADER:

1st March World Book Day – Dressing up as a favourite Character – Can we link this to our Cannon?

SCHOOL COUNCIL:

23rd March Red Nose Day – Dressing in Red and Fund Raising event

MATHS LEADER:

April National Maths Awareness Month (Use 23rd-27th April for a Maths Week) see mathstatmonth.org

HUMANITIES TEAM:

5th June World Environment Day – Activities in all year groups – ALL DAY

PE COORDINATOR:

25th-29th June National Sports Week. Intra School Competitions PM in Years 1-6 – Sports Days Tues / Wed in Diary

+ HISTORY THEME DAYS DATES TBC

Year 1: Guy Fawkes / Bonfire Night

Year 2: Explorers

Year 3: Ancient Egyptians

Year 4: Romans

Year 5: Vikings

Year 6: WW2 – Evacuees

Can you explain the reasons a child might be placed in detention, how the process of warnings works and what occurs in this session?

Detention can occur in Years 3-6 for the following reasons:

- Bullying, Violent Behaviour, Racism, Homophobic Abuse – Without warning / following investigation
- Homework not being completed – On day of Homework
- Persistent Behaviour – 3 Warnings = 1 x Timeout, 3 Timeouts in a week = 1 detention
- Pupil who is not in uniform, following a letter home if no request for support / change.

This is a 30 minute session and children either complete their homework or are set additional work to complete. They are not told off during this session and we ensure the children eat first and have a short time to play / use the facilities afterwards.

To clarify, prior to this system being in place children who had not completed homework / behaved were kept in but in their own class by their class teacher. This led to inconsistencies as some staff

members had meetings / clubs or just needed to go out to get lunch and so two children in two rooms could have different / no response for the same issue.

Children attending these sessions are tracked so that if a child attends regularly we can address the underlying reason and contact home.

Why is their detention for uniform and how do the school ensure that this is supported where parents cannot provide this?

At Hillsgrove we believe that in order to build children's resilience and ensure outstanding behaviour, therefore enabling learning that pupils require:

- High Expectations
- Consistent Systems
- Being allowed to go through minor difficulties

If one rule is flexible, so are all rules. Therefore, if we are to have a uniform policy it must be upheld. As a school we do not believe in excluding pupils due to uniform (as some schools do) as this reduces children's learning opportunities, however we do believe in ensuring accountability regarding uniform.

In Autumn Term 2016 less than 70% of children at Hillsgrove were in full school uniform, today pupils are almost always in school uniform and where they are not this is quickly rectified. Letters home to say that children were not correctly attired had little if any impact on this, however our current policy has. As a result pupils are very rarely in detention for this reason.

We have ensured that our high expectations are balanced by love by ensuring that where the issue is a financial consideration that we have offered support, in the short and long term.

What have the school done to support pupils with Homework, where the child cannot do the work?

Homework should always be set at a level which children have already evidenced that they can achieve within the classroom, independently. Primarily homework is a consolidation tool designed to practice skills and aid retention. If your child cannot access the homework set please address this as soon as possible with your child's class teacher.

This has been added to with our approach to maths by utilising this time to rote learn number facts, as this is becoming more and more vital to academic success.

Where children struggle to have somewhere quiet to complete their homework we provide two homework clubs during the week. We also request that all teachers offer help on a Friday to any pupils who require support with their work.

Can we add parent contact details to the website for Parent Representatives?

This would require agreement from all parent representatives. We also do not(yet) have an email for all members of the group. What do parent forum think?

Positives Flagged the following positives they wished to raise:

- There has been improved communication in 2017/18
- Teachers are more approachable and happy to meet with parents.
- More Teacher / Leadership presence has been noted at the Gates / Doors.
- Office Staff are friendly and more approachable this term.