

Notes of Forum for Pre-Prep Parents held on Monday 19th June

David Chivers, Chairman of Governors, welcomed parents and thanked them for the questions which had been sent in advance. The aim of the forum was for parents to reacquaint themselves with Jan Hannan, Head of Pre-Prep, who has been ill for over a year, and to allow Mrs Hannan, Mrs Robinson and/or Mr Chivers to answer questions.

Jan Hannan said how good it was to be back. She has been working closely with Tessa, who has been Acting Head in Jan's absence and who has been absolutely brilliant. Jan has been spending time in classes and at lunch and playtimes in order to get to know the children. She also wants to get to know the parents and will be available in the mornings and at collection time to chat and answer any questions.

Jan outlined her vision for the school:

Children: to develop in the children a desire to be at school and to teach them all the social and academic skills they need before they move up into the Prep School environment

Parents: to work closely with parents on the development of their children; to ensure good two-way communication; to address parental concerns

Teaching: to continue to provide a team of well-qualified, motivated and dedicated staff and ensure that learning is fun, challenging and interesting; to create WOW-factor in learning

School: to continue to offer a broad curriculum which exceeds the requirements set by the National Curriculum. To maintain strong links with the Prep School form teachers and subject teachers. To install interactive whiteboards in the Year 2 classrooms. To encourage outdoor learning and extend the outdoor play area. To construct a conservatory for Nursery and Kindergarten to provide a wet/messy play area.

Jan sees her role as overseeing the running of the Pre-Prep whilst also maintaining a 50% teaching timetable, leading the PSHE and Citizenship area of the curriculum closely linked with assembly and the ethos within the school. She will continue to have regular meetings with Mrs Robinson, the Year 3 teachers and Head of Juniors as well as maintaining links with the wider community. She will teach each class and cover lunch and playtime duties and be able to release staff from their teaching timetables to offer them admin and curriculum time.

Some questions had been sent in and some were asked during the discussion.

Q: Does the Pre-Prep's environmental policy impact on strategic planning?

A: Caring for the environment is part of the curriculum and is addressed in assemblies, during PSHE and by way of "Golden Rules" in assembly. Environmental issues are a cross-curricular topic and the Pre-Prep encourages and practises recycling. The policy on the environment is currently being rewritten.

Q: Is the Special Needs department big enough?

A: Learning support requirements are assessed on an individual basis and the hours of the staff are increased or reduced accordingly. In addition, it may sometimes be necessary to have external experts, and all decisions on learning support staffing are made with the needs of each individual child in mind.

Q: When is football offered as a sport?

A: The children start ball skills in the nursery class and different sports are offered in different terms. In the Pre-Prep, P.E. is done in mixed classes and only separated into boys' and girls' sports from Year 3.

Q: Will the initiatives of the past year, such as Science Week, Arts Week, be continued?

A: Yes, that is the intention. Mrs Richardson will also continue to be heavily involved in the planning.

Q: Has the school considered having security cameras with numberplate recognition?

A: Security has been reviewed and improved recently, with the introduction of keypad entry to most external doors. Pre-Prep security is to be further enhanced in the next phase. It is important to get the right balance between risk and cost.

Q: Is it true that the school rents out its tennis courts to Mountfield Tennis Club?

A: As part of its commitment to community involvement and to support its charitable status, Vinehall has an agreement that Mountfield Tennis Club may use Vinehall tennis courts in the evenings and at weekends.

There was some discussion around the planned change to the Year 3 timetable, which is to be trialled from September. The trial will run for one whole year, since it is too complex to change a timetable mid-year even if it were decided not to continue it the next year.

- It was confirmed that there would be no reduction in fees as staffing costs and overheads remain the same, but hoped that parents would appreciate that more options are being offered.
- Core curriculum time will continue to be the first two hours of each day. On two days, games will be before lunch and carpentry has been moved from the curriculum to club time.
- It was confirmed that parents would have ample opportunity to offer feedback, but Mrs. Robinson did not promise a parents' forum for next year's Year 3 parents on the subject.
- The availability of a room and staff for children to read will be looked into, but it was stressed that reading with young children is an important part of home life.
- The possibility of an evening school bus run is being looked into and parents will be sent a letter asking for requests.