

Parent Feedback from Parents' Forum – November 2017

Bengeworth's Plans to build a 60 place Nursery

The school has pursued parent wishes for a nursery and now have plans for a 60 place nursery with community facilities which can also be used by other agencies. The staff car park will move to the side of the school and the nursery will be built on present car park. The school now needs to get planning permission and put a bid in to DFE to access funding. The nursery would be for children aged 3 to 4.

- If the nursery is built on the existing Reception outdoor area, what will happen to this provision for children?
The Reception outdoor classroom would be relocated to the rear of the school (outside Mrs Packer's current classroom) and would be redeveloped. This would allow the children to use the whole environment at the back of the school more safely instead of one area.
- Why are the school opting for 3+ age group for the nursery?
This is due to legalities, as if children are below 3 years, there are different rules and restrictions which have to be adhered to. The school may consider childcare for younger children in the future.
- What is the proposed development time?
If everything goes according to the plan, the project would start in the summer of 2018 and be completed by Easter 2019.
- What will be the admissions policy? If children came to the nursery, would it give them automatic entry to the school?
The admissions policy would have to be reviewed in line with the school's policy but would be similar to the admissions' criteria currently in place. However, there would be spaces for pupils who were not at the nursery as the Reception intake is 90 places.
- Would the nursery provide wraparound care (i.e. from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm)?
This would be a consideration when the nursery is set up.
- Would the nursery be term-time only?
This may well be the initial plan, although if the nursery was successful, the provision at nursery may well be extended beyond term time.
- Would children start to learn pre-cursive writing at nursery?
Miss O'Neill heads up a cluster group in the Evesham area and is working to establish a consistent approach to early letter formation. This would enable all nurseries to fully understand what children need to be able to do when they get to school. Letter formation would be discussed as part of this.
- Would there be preferential admission for children whose siblings already attend the school?
The admissions policy will have to be agreed, but a common sense approach would be taken and the policy would follow a similar to the admissions' criteria currently used at the school. This would form part of the consultation process.
- Would parking for staff be safe? Where would the staff car park be?
The staff car park would be relocated to the side of the school where the small orchard is now. It would be accessed through the same gate, which may need a code or key fob to access for security, and would ensure that pupils at the school and children at the nursery would not have contact with vehicles at any time during the day.
- Would the construction of a nursery on site during term time affect children's learning?
The children's learning would not be affected; measures would be put in place to ensure that children were safe at all times and that their learning in the classrooms is not disturbed.

Further comments:

- A nursery on site would be beneficial, as it would allow the school to identify and address additional learning needs earlier than entry to Reception.
- Parents may have already organised childcare for their children before the nursery has been completed.
- Parking for parents may well be an issue – the school needs to ensure that they have a viable way of explaining how they will cope with the extra traffic in a residential area in order to gain planning permission.

Year 6

Worcestershire has a unique model of children moving in Year 5 and Year 6 which leads, particularly when children move at the end of Year 5, to a dip in standards when they take their Year 6 SATs tests. It is obviously a controversial step to take as it means the loss of Year 6 to Middle Schools which, in turn, would have a funding implication for Middle Schools. Whatever decision is made, the school recognises the need to work very closely with High Schools and Middle Schools to avoid potential issues. The reasons for Bengeworth taking Year 6 are to minimise transition issues which may achieve higher results for pupils. These results form the basis of predictions for GCSE and A Level results.

Parents were asked to consider the following:

If we had Year 6 would you keep your child here, even if it meant a possible disruption to their Middle School experience?

If Bengeworth had a Year 6, which school would you choose to send your child to afterwards?

Would Bengeworth having a Year 6 make a difference to your choice of next school?

Should Bengeworth pursue the option of providing Year 6?

- Would Bengeworth be able to provide different classrooms for different subjects in a Middle School style?
No, this would not be possible. Pupils would be taught in a similar style to the way they are taught at Bengeworth now – i.e. 1 teacher per class. The school would become a Primary School in line with the school model in the rest of the country.
- When might the conversion to take Year 6 take place?
The school is not currently sure of the timeline and will depend on a number of factors, such as parent feedback and liaison with other First Schools to ensure a consistent approach. There is nothing to stop any school from changing age range, but everyone must act in the best interests of people who live in Evesham and whose children attend the local schools.
Moving to a Primary School can't be a short-term plan and would have to be clearly managed, but we would hope to have Year 6 within 2 years.
- Do most children attend The DeMontfort School? There seems to be less choice of middle school places than in the past.
Moving to a Primary School may take some pressure off TDMS and would help children to end their first few years of education more appropriately. The growth in population has been reflected in school places, and it may be that by accommodating Year 6, Bengeworth accommodate this growing number of pupils rather than the middle schools. The choice of middle school places is certainly less than in previous years.
- The DeMontfort School have stated that they do not want to move to a 2-tier system. Will this change?
This indicates that all discussion must be with the children's best interests at the forefront.
- There may be instances where, if some pupils move at the end of Year 5 and others choose to remain at Primary schools until Year 6, pupils may be entering year groups where friendships are already established?
It is important to ensure that any plans are consistent across all first school and middle schools to ensure that this does not happen.

- Are other schools considering this?

Other areas have done this but it has not been done correctly because it wasn't done in partnership with all schools. There are now many schools that are not Local Authority schools and therefore conversations between schools are crucial. Local smaller schools have recently taken Year 6 successfully.

Concerns that no-one is looking at the whole picture of local area – but no local authority to do this and educational landscape is changing in terms of MATs. The admissions policy will have to be agreed, but a common sense approach would be taken and the policy would follow a similar to the admissions' criteria currently used at the school. This would form part of the consultation process.

Further comments:

- Children may not be ready for Middle School at the end of Year 5 so would benefit from a further year at Bengeworth.
- It is obvious that the 3-tier model is a failed model – KS2 ends at end of Year 6, so to move at beginning of Y6 is ludicrous. It is the main data point for GCSE predictions. An extra year in outstanding setting would be better – 90 students is a large number to let down.
- The solution would be that middle schools become secondary schools.
- Do I want my child to be a guinea pig? It is a brave move to keep Year 6.
- If there were only 1 option for middle school, the parent would keep their child here.
- If Bengeworth and TDMS come to an agreement, what about other schools? Parents may end up passing up the chance to apply to other schools if they leave their children at Bengeworth in Year 6.
- Bengeworth may have to take a brave step and to lead from the front. It may be a leap of faith rather, but this is far better than having to live with a failed system and do nothing about it. Full support would be given as to do nothing is not an option. Others will follow.
- The school must have evidence to support the argument and need to be able to prove reason for making a change.
- Bengeworth having Year 6 may reduce the choice parents have; they may sacrifice being in Year 6 in this school if want to be able to choose middle school.
- One of reasons parents chose Bengeworth is because the school is not afraid to make a change; don't think it will be to detriment to education but needs to be done with others.
- Bengeworth is the right school with the right leadership team to push this forward and would regret it if they didn't do this. All children will have a transition at some point and it would be better after Year 6 SATs. Bengeworth has to prove what a good idea it should be by showing the evidence and justifying why it is needed.

Homework/COOL time

The school held a Parents' Forum on the topic of homework in the last academic year and would like parents' feedback on the changes made, whether practice seen at home meets the policy shared with parents, and if there are any further ways in which the school can improve homework for children.

- Should children be receiving Athletics Silver certificates in school? This seems to be inconsistent.
These should be given in school by class teacher as the teacher gets a list of those achieving this. This is aside from 'Mathlete of the week'. This will be clarified with teachers.
- There was lots of homework in the first week of school for Reception children. This seems to be much more than when an older sibling was in Reception – phonics, maths, reading and COOL time, which was an initial shock. Why is this?
The National Curriculum and Early Years Foundation Stage have changed and there are greatly increased expectations of what a child should be able to do and achieve by the end of Reception. The school has responded to this. At the last forum parents discussed consistency and response and feedback was that this was put in place.
- Some parents feel that there is too much homework at the weekend which is impacting on family life.
This could be changed so that there is an element of choice so that there is not always a need to take lots of materials if going away. It must also be made clear when it is due in and staff will be reminded of this.
- Some parents don't fully understand the task set and sometimes takes ½ hour, sometimes a few minutes. It does not always relate to what has been learnt in class.
Teachers will be reminded that they need to make any instructions clear, that it relates to skills taught in class and that they explain the homework to children when they give it out.
- Is it possible to have an electronic log for homework? It is not always clear what the child has to do and when it has to be completed by. This would help communication It would also prevent spelling sheets going missing throughout the week.
It is not currently possible to have an electronic log for homework, but may be a consideration for the future.
- Could there be more feedback with spellings? Often a child does not know what they have achieved, although say that they have got them all correct.
The Leadership Team will discuss this with teachers to ensure that children have a clear understanding of the scores they achieve in their spellings.
- Parent perhaps feels that homework club would be helpful as gets anxious about doing at home, but homework club has a charge so is out of reach for some pupils.
In these cases, it would be important for the parent to approach the school to discuss funding and to see if the school could support in any way (e.g. if the pupil was eligible for Pupil Premium funding).
- Sometimes it feels as though children get too much homework and can cause difficulties when parents don't get home until 6 or 7 at night. Holidays should be free of homework.
If homework is set over a holiday, there should also be allocated time in addition to holiday. Parents should challenge teacher if this does not match policy.
- Homework club is great, but does not always work well if the children do not get given homework book on a Thursday.
- One parent commented that they did not sign homework agreement as they didn't want the pressure for the child.
- Sometimes homework has been handed in late, but parents have found teachers to be flexible and can be realistic and recognise that things change at home.
- Purple homework books introduced as a result of the parent forum are great and allows for consistency.

- A parent expressed surprise at the early introduction of IT at home (Reception) and feels that there needs to be a balance between tablet to learn and variety of other homework.
- It is good to see that changes are clearly in place as a result of the feedback from last forum.
- Parents are reading at night with their children. COOL time at the weekend is more challenging but it does get them into habit of homework, so on balance is worth persevering.
- Athletics and phonics – some parents prefer to do this at the weekend, as parents don't want screen time between end of school and bath time at 6. Bedtime stories incorporate reading so this is easier.
- A parent liked the degree of flexibility of when has homework to be in which meant that it didn't have to be completed at the weekend.
- It would be helpful to have more handwriting in Year 1 rather than Phonics Hero.

Updates from School:

Bengeworth Academy is currently undergoing conversion to a Multi Academy Trust (MAT), which means that the school can legally support other schools in future, but have been doing so informally over the past half term.

Parent Pay has been introduced and has been well-received. All parents have had a log in and the school aims to be cashless as soon as possible. If parents have any feedback, please let the school know

The way that Clubs are booked has changed and all clubs now have to be booked through Parent Pay. The system runs on a first-come-first-served basis. Some places are held back for parents who have issues with joining. Please give any feedback regarding the booking process to the school office.

School communications (email and text); the school is still aware that some parents are still getting multiple texts if have multiple children in school. If this does not change, please contact Mrs Potter at King's Road.

Whiteboard markers in Reception; the school is aware of issues and is trying to establish if there is an alternative to the pens currently used.