

Parent forum 11/7/22: 60 attendees including Hania Ryans Head teacher, Jeanette Brumby Executive Head teacher, Emily Bruggy Assistant head and Ros Clarke Executive Business Manager

HR introduced the parent forum

Fairlawn's journey to becoming an anti-racist school (see separate slides)

EB: Talked about Lewisham's anti-racist pledge and discussed the statistics on our equality statement which can be found on our website. Referenced letter sent to all families regarding racist incidents that have happened at the school, the point of which was to ask parents to work with us. In school the children have been working on their own version of how to report racist incidents. There was a particular focus on the use of the word 'upstander' and the children themselves identified that sometimes rather than reporting it they get too involved in the incident. (refer to slide 4)
(address questions opened in the chat)

Parent: My daughter has never heard about the word "N" I honestly don't know how to explain that. Any advice? They know about the email but I couldn't explain in a way they could understand.

EB: The best advice I could provide is to be honest and discuss what kind of long-term impact that word can have.

Parent: Thank you for the transparency of the anti racist letter to all parents. I feel this is very important as approaching this subject in the early years will be extremely beneficial. Is this something that will be made monthly / quarterly for each school? Having it (the letter) sent by email I feel is better than keeping it on the school website.

Fairlawn: Sending updates out by email on a regular basis is definitely something we can look at.

Staff Continual Professional Development (see slide 5)

Across the federation there will be an anti-racist audit led by an external company to support us to do things better. This should be starting in September.

Curriculum update (refer to slides 6-10)

This year we have focused on updating our range of books to ensure that they are inclusive – thank you to the PTA for supporting us in this. We now have a calendar, which includes days that promote diversity and celebrate our differences, which we will revisit yearly. A variety of sporting heroes are displayed and discussed throughout the school year to ensure children can see themselves reflected in positive role models.

Knowledge organisers (slide 11)

We shared the vocabulary and time line from a couple of our history knowledge organisers to show how our work to decolonize the curriculum is developing.

HR: shared headlines and priorities from our school develop plan and our brilliant KS SATS results (slides 12-13)

Restructure (Slides 14 and 15)

JB: Talked about her journey at Fairlawn. In 2014 the school was no longer receiving additional funding which the previous executive head had secured. To try and reduce costs we closed our off-site nursery. A number of factors have meant that we have a deficit, eg. falling numbers on role, the government funding per child not increasing with inflation, COVID catch-up funding. We were given this following the pandemic which meant we could employ more teaching assistants but this funding was only given to schools for a set time. Therefore we have had to make some decisions around cutting staff. It is not something we would choose to do if the government gave us the funding. Recommendations were made by the leadership team to the governing body, following a consultation it was decided to reduce the amount of redundancies.

(Fairlawn goes on to address questions opened in the chat)

Parent: Would the closure of the Catholic school at the end of the road increase students into the school and increase funding for September 2022?

Fairlawn: We have had a number of children start with us over the last few weeks already but not enough to ensure we have every year group full. In order for a class to be financially viable it must consist of at least 25 children.

Parent: What is the overall change in terms of number of teachers/teaching assistants from 21/22 to 22/23 and how does this compare to pre-pandemic?

Fairlawn: The number of teachers has not been affected. What we can say is that 3 teaching assistants were employed via the catch up funding who have now been let go. 1 Information and Communications Technology technician, 1 teaching assistant and 1 learning mentor were also made redundant in order ensure we don't go into further deficit.

Parent: When did you actually know about the restructure vs when you notified us? There have been pretty detailed rumours since March / April.

Fairlawn: There is a timescale for all of these processes and we followed the borough guidelines, so within that timeline there is a time we can make it public. The consultation period happened before that time which is why you may have heard rumours earlier than we shared the restructure.

Parent: Thank you for explaining the structure and decision-making. What is the % of the structure spent on senior leadership (heads) compared to teaching staff?

JB: I don't feel comfortable divulging financial information regarding myself or my staff and I also don't know how helpful it would be to know those statistics.

Parent: And also what is it that has led to the funding changes? eg. falling pupil role; reductions in funding from LA.

Fairlawn: We have previously mentioned things like decrease of pupils on role and government funding not staying in line with other costs but there are a number of things that will also contribute to our overall funding deficit in the future which we have had to consider, including increasing in-house costs like heating, building maintenance and the general cost of living.

Parent: Removing the TAs is seen by all parents as a lowering of standards at Fairlawn which is currently in the 'Good' category. Is it realistic to be able to maintain that 'Good' level with such a drastic restructure? And I assume you realise and have modeled in your 'strategy' some level of exodus of pupils as

a result. Will that further reduce your budget? And how will you manage that fall in income in the future?

Fairlawn: We are hoping that the exodus of pupils will not be too great as there are similar circumstances happening across the nation in other schools. Part of the reason we have chosen to make these cutbacks is to be prepared for further future financial decrease. I think it's important to remember how high the standard of quality first teaching is at Fairlawn and how much support and quality teaching our class teachers provide.

Parent: Lots of us chose Fairlawn over other local good schools in part because of its focus on the arts and the high standards of music and art at the school. Our brilliant teachers are already stretched by a demanding core curriculum. What plans are in place to reintroduce specialist art and music teaching? Also, prior to the pandemic we had lots of music/choir opportunities for the children. Will we see these return in '22/'23?

Fairlawn: We can't promise anything but we are looking for someone who can take over the choir, we don't currently have anyone. The reality is that primary schools don't have specialist arts teachers and we have been incredibly lucky to have them up to this point. There are two experienced Higher Level Teaching Assistants who will continue to replace some of the roles of former specialist teachers and have been covering some lessons this year. These subjects will always be taught as they are part of the National Curriculum so the children will have a variety of art lessons, some terms they will have art, some DT and so on.

Parent: What independent advice outside of Fairlawn did you seek before deciding how to restructure or was it purely led in-house?

Fairlawn: The decisions made in-house by the leadership team and our governing body which includes two people with experience in this kind of thing. There were a couple of back-and-forths with our staff and senior leadership team, we had a consultation period so we all shared those discussions.

Parent: Are you able to share the minutes?

Fairlawn: There is a folder in reception for the minutes of all meetings which anyone has access to. All the minutes are available unless they contain confidential information.

Parent: What will the support exactly be for Year 1 pupils? Will Year 1 have a TA?

Fairlawn: Teaching assistants will not be assigned to one year group but rather to individual pupils. The TAs will be there to provide support in group interventions which will happen on a weekly basis; things like Daily Supported Reading and Maths Passports have already been timetabled for next year. For the last few years we have not had TAs assigned to year groups.

Parent: I know the school is in a federation with Haseltine Primary but don't know much about how it works. As budgets are so tight, can you explain the benefits of the federation (budgetary and broader / educational) for Fairlawn?

Fairlawn: Shared staff and resources reduces costs. Staff learning from each other.

Parent: Could we think about an online / automated volunteer system to make it more straightforward and to ensure each class gets help?

Fairlawn: We are always happy for volunteers, although an online system might risk a breach of safeguarding but we certainly do encourage as many

volunteers as possible and if there is anyone who would be interested in that you are welcome to contact me on hryans@fairlawnschool.net.

Parent: Is there anything else that parents can do to help limit the impact of the restructure? Can the PTA direct its fundraising efforts next year in any specific directions that will help the school (sorry, not sure what has already been discussed)?

Fairlawn: As we mentioned, volunteers are always welcomed. The PTA are not allowed to directly employ staff or fund the school in this circumstance so in that way our hands are tied.

Parent: Could parents have training on how to talk to our children about difficult subjects like sex, drugs, smoking and alcohol? It is not easy for some parents due to stigma and worry we will tell too much too soon.

Parent: There's loads of stuff here: annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/ and here <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk>

Parent: RE: Nursery, how will it work with the much tighter ratios for the very young children with Miss Fellows also being head of early years and head of arts & music and the two support staff also doing their additional roles?

Fairlawn: Miss Fellows will just be leading music, which she has led in the past and taught across the whole school. She also has leadership time for EYFS.

Parent: Have all teachers had updated training in attachment and how this affects on learning. If not, is there a plan for training?

Fairlawn: We are a trauma informed school and we have just completed training for one teaching assistant in emotional literacy. We provide this kind of training on INSET days on at least an annual basis.

Parent: The budget link doesn't give much information. Can you provide more detailed budget information to the parents?

Fairlawn: A break down of the budget is confidential but you can access an overview on the link <https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk/>

Parent: Thank you for the updates. Off topics but just on Jeanette's point about energy prices, are there any grants available for schools to apply for solar etc.

Fairlawn: We have a governor looking at this RE: solar panels.