

Notes of the Plymouth Parent & Family Forum

27th March 2008

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Plymstock School

Attended: 51

1. Welcome and introduction of new members

- EB welcomed everyone including CM Parkside Family Liaison Worker who was attending for the first time.

2. Feedback on Forum activities

- EB provided feedback on latest IDS developments. There are currently 6 members attending regularly and others as virtual members. The group represents parents of children with a wide range of additional needs and disabilities.
- Gary Streeter MP offered to join a meeting between parents of disabled children and key officers regarding service development for disabled children and their families. Some members of the IDS reference group are planning to attend.
- BB confirmed that the Parent and Family Support Strategy Steering Group's work has now been completed and that a new group will be formed to implement the Parent and Family Support strategy. The Parent Reference group has been asked to provide a representative to sit on this new group. The Parent & Family Support Strategy Parent Reference group now has 9 members and volunteers are requested to increase the numbers to 12. For further information on this group contact Bob Burton 01752 258933
- BB looked into the issue of free milk in schools, which was raised by KD at the last Forum. He has had confirmation that children up to the age of 5 are entitled to one carton of free milk per day in schools. Full information available on the Parent Partnership website, Parent Forum page.
- Copies of the new secondary transfer statistics were distributed. They show that the new equal preference scheme means more parents are satisfied. There are currently 9 schools in Plymouth that still have places left (3rd March 2008). If parents were not successful in gaining a place at

their preferred school then they are able to appeal. BB is available to talk through individual cases.

- AS, Parent Representative for West Park Primary confirmed that the issue of head lice which was discussed at previous forum meetings has been taken up by the Children and Young People Overview and scrutiny panel – Management of infectious and contagious conditions amongst children in schools (Task & Finish group) Parent representatives have been invited to a meeting on the 23rd April to discuss this subject. Lisa Ritson and Aimee Sullivan will report back to the forum.
- EB provided feedback about the last Children’s Trust Board meeting. Dave Schwartz produced a strategy for substance misuse in Plymouth as a result of the Forum’s feedback following the presentation he gave last year. The strategy was very positive as a result of the Forum’s participation.
- A Project Initiation Document for IDS was put forward to the Trust. There will be a Children and Young People’s Plan Extraordinary Meeting tomorrow, feedback will be provided at the next Forum.

3. Service Developments – what do parents want to know?

- The issue of speech and language therapy is still a problem, what is currently being done about it?
 - JT confirmed that Gaye Powell will speak to the Forum in July. BB recommended that everyone read the information she will be providing before the forum and to submit questions beforehand so they can be answered in full.
- JM – what service/support is available from the Children’s Fund for children who have witnessed domestic violence?
 - BB will investigate and report back to the forum.
- RB - What service/support is available for parents of children who do not attend school (refuses) (where parents are being threatened with court action)?
 - Parent forum will investigate.
- JC -Where can information/advice be obtained regarding children who are regularly being sent home from school and yet are not statemented? Also, where can information on special schools be found in relation to this issue?
 - Parent Partnership to investigate
- JB brought up the issue of the Extended Services budget being cut due to the expansion of the PSA Project.

- The government funding allocation for the roll out of PSAs (as stated in the Children's Plan) sits within the Extended Schools sustainability budget. It is expected that the expansion of the PSA Project is provided from within this funding. This has been discussed with head teachers across the city and they have agreed for this to be allocated to enable the expansion of the PSA project. A contingency amount has been allocated for extended services should it be required.
- JT attended the Association of Primary Head teachers Conference that focused on the subject of bullying. The feedback from the workshops held throughout the day will help to inform a definition of bullying and some good practice examples and guidance for schools. JT suggested that this could be brought to the Forum to be shared with parents.
- EB suggested that the PSAs can take action on this at their schools.

Kevin Willis, Parent Governor

Parent governor representatives that sit on local authority committees/groups are parent governors elected by other parent governors to provide a voice for all parents in their areas in local decision-making.

Since 2003 local authorities have provided places (with speaking and voting rights) for parent governor representatives on their main committees and sub committees dealing with education matters.

Their term of office is not less than 2 years but no more than 4 years.

Kevin Willis is the current parent governor representative on the scrutiny panel.

KW gave an overview of his present work as a parent governor rep:

- The Scrutiny Panel would like to know how to get information from parents that feed back for discussion after meetings.
- The work of the governors is set by the Scrutiny Commission. The whole of last year was spent looking at Children's Social Care. All issues brought up have to be acted upon.
- Kevin is also currently looking at the head lice issue in Plymouth schools, as well as infectious diseases affecting children. There can be many contradictions in the advice given on these issues and that is what the Governors are looking into.
- A request for posters about head lice was made by KD from Working Links. They are available from the Health Protection Agency and are nationally recommended. BB will email the website link.
- Question was raised as to whether any of the work done by the Scrutiny Panel has been implemented in Plymouth? Kevin gave an example regarding how the panel pinpointed the need for education to change for

early years and Children's Centres. Five years later this area has improved and Plymouth is above the national average with its provision.

- BB will email forum members the link to the Panel's section on the Local Authority website.
- BB invited KW to attend every Forum to provide feedback.

Peter Jones – Update on Expansion of the PSA Project

- Explained to Forum members that the PSA Project has been a pilot project.
- It has developed and moved on to include a nationally accredited training programme. The project has strategic links to the Parent and Family Support Strategy.
- The pilot project finishes in July 2008. It has been a success nationally, and as announced in the Children's Plan in December '07 will continue.
- The pilot project has informed the expansion and consolidation of the project roll out in Plymouth and will begin in August 2008.
- Every school in Plymouth will be offered funding for 20 hours a week of PSA time. It is hoped that the implementation of this will be completed by January 2009.
- Head teachers from all schools in the city have been invited to attend a seminar on the 2nd May. The proposal for the planned roll out of the project will be presented to them with the opportunity for discussion.
- A new role of Parent Support Adviser Co-ordinator (PSACo) will be created. The PSACos will cover each of the city's localities and work closely alongside school based PSAs and Extended School Coordinators.
- Greater parental involvement is important where there is poor school performance. To encourage greater parental involvement and consultation, local authorities are now required to ensure that the parents of children at poorly performing schools are consulted in their plans to turn the school around. Parent Champions will be appointed and it may be a role that can be fulfilled by a PSA.
- Questions were raised about the Job Evaluation results in relation to School based PSAs. PJ - is unable to provide answers at this stage, the appeals process is available for those who wish to appeal and hopefully more information should be obtained in the near future.
- Question raised regarding end of contracts for PSAs – can it be expected for current PSAs to continue in their role at their school when the expansion project starts? PJ - is currently talking with HR about this.
- Question – are the Parent Champion and PSACo roles local or national? PJ -The PSACo role is local and the Parent Champion role is national.
- A Parent Council has been set up at Stuart Road Primary where they are actively looking to establish Parent Champion roles.

4. Service Developments – what do service providers want to know?

Request from Maggie Carter

- A focus group is going to be set up for Early Years issues. This is a new requirement from the DCSF and it is the LA's responsibility to establish a panel that focuses on the outcome of the early years age range. The group will lead to the development of a strategy. Two volunteers are requested for this group. Contact BB for more information.

5. Plymouth Fostering Service feedback from the Foster Carer Survey – Katie Perks and Olga Tomic

- Katie and Olga provided feedback from the latest Foster Carer Survey results, which have been very positive.
- There is now extensive training, a fostering forum, a looked-after nurse service and an out of hours service.
- A project to obtain birth children's views about fostering is taking place and the results regarding the payment structure for Foster Carers will be out in July 2008.
- A video presentation was given to promote the positive outcome of Foster Caring.

Answers to questions from Forum:

- You have to be over 21 to be a Foster Carer, there is no specific upper age limit.
- You should have a spare room available to be a Foster Carer.
- Agreed with the suggestion that the video presentation be shown in schools as a way of promoting the Fostering Service.
- There is a no smoking policy in the Fostering Service; you would have to have not been smoking for at least 12 months in order to be a Foster Carer.
- The current training process to become a Foster Carer is either 3 full Saturdays or 8 evenings.

6. AOB

- The Working Links engagement team is now split into three areas – this is relevant for PSAs when contacting them. BB will provide them the information about this.
- BB informs the Forum that YISP will be giving a presentation at the September forum.