

## The Beacon Parent Forum – Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022

### Attendees

Alison Cole – Head of School

Ellie Garrett – Mental Health Lead

Julie Howell – Safeguarding/MAST Lead

Rachel Birchley – Communications and Marketing Manager

4 x Parents/Carers

### Notes

1. The theme for this term's parent forum was around how we can further support our parents and the community.
2. Alison started by explaining that we are very conscious of the financial pressures affecting a lot of families at the present time. We are trying not to ask for voluntary contribution for trips and other activities, such as the 6<sup>th</sup> form life skills, where possible. We appreciate that even £2 is a lot of money for some families.
3. We have raised £1,248 from the Christmas Craft Fair. £248 of this will go towards our new school minibus fund and £1,000 will go towards our project to convert an old minibus into a community library that will be open in our school car park.
4. The coat drive was very successful and we were so grateful for the donations we received from parents and charities.
  - a. We still have some coats available and these will be in school until the end of term so if anyone needs a coat, they are welcome to come in and have a look. Alternatively, contact the school office and we can see what we have.
  - b. Any coats remaining at the end of term will be donating to a local charity shop.
5. One parent/carer asked if we had any initiatives in place to provide Christmas presents for families who were struggling. Rachel mentioned the Salvation Army Christmas present appeal, one of which is being organised locally.
  - a. We discussed whether we could set something up in school and how we could have sensitive conversations with parents/carers to see if they're struggling.
  - b. It was decided that we could hold a Christmas present/decoration swap shop, similar to the uniform swap shop that we had in the summer, whereby people could donate any Christmas decorations that are no longer needed or unwanted gifts, etc. and then in the last week of term, and first few days of the holidays, we could invite people in to take what they need. Any leftovers could be donated to charity just before Christmas.
6. Julie gave an overview of what support MAST can offer. Many of the parents/carers weren't aware of everything that the team can do. An action was made to create an introductory guide to MAST to introduce the team members and explain what help is available and how to access it. This action sits with Julie and Rachel as the guide will be published on the website and a link posted to Facebook.
7. Julie mentioned a leaflet that's been produced an outside agency that has loads of great information but it's been insensitively called 'Hardship help for families' which might put some people off. What we will do is to pull out the links from this document and put them into a more friendly format to share with families.
8. Alison went on to talk about adult literacy and how that it's a sensitive subject however we do have families where adults struggle with literacy. One of our teachers is looking into setting up an adult literacy coaching group.
  - a. We discussed how we could make letters home more accessible. One parent/carer asked if we could put a video of someone reading out the letter on YouTube.

- b. Rachel is going to investigate options for recording Alison reading out the letters and putting a link on the website.
  - c. Rachel is also going to include more use of video in the communications strategy going forward.
9. Ellie spoke about a grant that is available to parents with a mental health diagnosis who's had to take time off of work because of it. She will find the link so we can share it again.
10. Ellie also talked about making our wellbeing workshops open to the community and holding them on a Saturday. She took an action to consider the wording used when advertising these sessions to ensure they are as accessible as possible to people who make have learning difficulties such as dyslexia.
11. Ellie recently ran self-harm training for staff and it was discussed that it would be good to hold a similar workshop for parents/carers. It is hoped that having the session in a group setting will help parents/carers reach out for support if needed.
12. We talked about what other types of support are available to parents/carers.
  - a. Respite is available for young people and young carers through Emargo but it has to be referred through a social worker.
  - b. Families can get a PA if they are open to the Disabled Children's Team. There is an application process through Front Door. Early Help is usually offered in the first instance but it is possible to push for a PA if it can be shown that the need is there. There is a long lead time so if families think they might need a PA for the summer holidays, they should start the application in January. This information is to be included in the MAST guide.
  - c. Early Help and Disabled Children's Team leaflets to be published on the website and shared on Facebook. Many parents have negative connotations of social services so may be reluctant to ask for help, however these services exist to provide support before families are in crisis.
13. Rachel took an action to put together a dedicated Christmas page on the website to signpost to free holiday activities, food banks, support, etc.
14. Alison is going to write an end of term newsletters and she's taken an action to include details about where to find information, e.g. notice board locations, FB, website, etc.
15. We discussed that parents need to know where to find information so we need to ensure that we make this clear going forwards.
16. Rachel spoke about the intention to reintroduce the digital letters opt in service whereby we will email letters as a pdf attachment instead of sending hard copies home in school bags. We need to put the mechanism in place to support this in school and ensure that email addresses for parents are up to date and then we can roll it out in the New Year.
17. Julie mentioned that some parents are struggling with transport. Those parents that bring their children into school themselves using their travel budget are finding that the budget isn't covering the cost anymore so they are wanting to put their children on KCC transport but it's at capacity so there's a long wait. This is leaving some parents unable to afford to bring their children into school every day. Alison and Julie have taken an action to look into the possibility of using one of our school minibuses to collect some children who wouldn't otherwise be able to get into school.
18. The next parent forum will be on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> February at 10.00am. Alison has taken an action to publish the agenda for each parent forum in advance so attendees can think about what they might want to add, in advance. The topic for the next forum will be emotional and mental wellbeing and what support is available.
  - a. Ellie mentioned that previously parents/carers have been able to join virtually. Alison to look into this.
19. Notes from each parent forum will be sent round to attendees and published on the website/linked to from Facebook.