



Parent Council Meeting

Wednesday 24th September 2025



Present: Katie Rudge, Natalie Pickering-Ernst, Lucy Stanley, Serena Gahir, Emma Welsh, Diana Nickless, Sarah Copeland, Susan Knott, Clare Taylor, Kelly Markey and Claire Bartlett

Chair: Emma Richards and Lucy Stanley **SMT:** Gemma Thelwell and Jodie Hales **Minutes:** Claire Mansfield

Crossing Warden School understands that Rik Edwards, who covers Mill Lane, is leaving early 2026. School have not been informed of this by the council. School will do a collection.

Year 5 After School Netball Year 5 parents and pupils expressed their gratitude to school for setting up a new Year 5 club due to there being an overwhelming interest in netball. Parents are wondering if the Year 5 team will be entered for matches within the borough. SMT remarked that we have never had this much interest and were happy to be able to accommodate another club using teachers who have volunteered to run the club on Tuesdays after school. Priority for matches will be for the Year 6 Team, however, previously Mrs Barker has arranged friendly matches with other schools for the Year 5 Team and intends to continue with this this year. PC and other parents have offered to assist with matches and transport but the logistics of this could prove to be too complicated in terms of Safeguarding.

After School Football Clubs are no longer teacher led. DPS have employed a new Sports Coaching Team, Mr Root's. They provide lunchtime activities and afternoon PE for Years 2-6. They continue after school to offer clubs. We have the same team assigned to Dorridge for consistency and they are able to assess the children and their ability when it comes to selecting teams for matches outside school. They will assist Mr Coley, Sports Lead and Teacher in Year 5, during football trials for teams. There have also been Cross Country Trials at lunchtime. Same for Football. Coaches will assess children during PE sessions, at lunchtime and at after school clubs. Feedback from children re sports coaches at lunchtime has been very positive at home.

Security. Parents raised concerns about the pedestrian gates being open after school.

Offices are manned until 4.30pm. They need to be open for Darby's and after school club pick up. Darby's doors are coded doors and they operate a password system for parents/carers who pick up. The Darby's Team will question an unfamiliar face. It would be difficult to just keep one gate open for those parents who access school from the other end of the path.

At drop off in the morning, parents are permitted on site for Nursery at 8.30am. Main doors into school will be opened by staff and gates will be manned by SMT and Pastoral Team from 8.40am. Until then, parents are responsible for children on site. Parents without nursery aged children are encouraged to arrive between 8.40am and 8.50am when the gates will close for registration.

Are ex Arden Pupils a risk? With the main doors into school being locked, Arden pupils using school as a cut through on the way to and from school present no risk. They are often previous pupils who know the route.

Siblings and Arden pupils aged 14 and over are permitted to pick up or drop off.

Bleed Kit and Defibrillators in school

Both Heads were familiar with its uses following their recent First Aid Course. We have 3 defibrillators in school. One in each reception area and one on the outside wall of the Den in KS2. Mrs Thelwell researched different kits and subsequently, a Bleed Kit has since been ordered. This will be kept in the KS2 office.

Year 3 Parentpay. Please can parents have a refresher on Parentpay and information about lunches and tuck as their children move from Year 2 to Year 3.

A letter was prepared and has been sent to all Year 3 parents, and those new to school in other year groups. This will also become part of the transition process from Year 2 to Year 3.

Homework – Spelling - Can parents know in advance what the spelling list is?

Weekly spelling follows a rule. If children learn the rule and apply it, the weekly spellings will be made easier. It's difficult to publish all spelling lists in advance as not all children in the class have the same list. School does not set homework at the weekend. Weekend is for family time. Year Leads will publish the spelling rules for the term on the Class Dojo. Words the children will need to know specifically for their year group/ Key Stage can be found in the rear of the Home School Organiser.

Next steps: SMT to survey parents- homework to be kept MONDAY – FRIDAY or to include the weekend too. Teachers marking time must be factored in.

Is school too focussed on English and Maths and not spending enough time on creative subjects?

No. The timetable is very much governed by the National Curriculum and the wider curriculum is exceptional. Children are exposed to a variety of different subjects, workshops, sporting events, visitors and trips.

ECO and School Council Elections Process - Heads have seen powerpoints, raps and talks all presented by the children. There was a variety of different ways the children presented themselves to their peers and a mix of children were chosen to share this with SMT. Teachers explain to the class what they must look for when listening to the presentations and what to consider when voting. Not always a popularity vote. Year Groups to inform parents when the elections will take place so they can help their children prepare.

Uniform – Can school explain the difference in prices, specifically, the school hoodie, at Monkhouse and Palmers?

It has been noted that there is a significant price difference, however it comes down to personal preference. School cannot dictate to uniform providers about how much they charge per item but are obliged to recommend at least two providers to parents. Parents must make their own choice. PC and SMT discussed that that they have found that the hoodies sold by Palmers are a superior quality and therefore have the potential to wash better and last longer. This is important if parents wish to pass uniform down to siblings. Palmers also offer a free initials embroidery service for all hoodies bought from them.

Communication – Are there too many platforms for communication from school?

At the end of the academic year 2024-2025 and at the beginning of 2025-2026, Heads of School sent a letter to all about the Pastoral Team and an explanation of the Communication Systems and how they are used between Home and School.

- Arbor is for Data Collection and parents can manage their child's data via the App.
- Arbor is also for email, in App messages and for reporting illness; choosing lunches and giving consent
- Class Dojo is used for class-based reminders and direct messages between teacher and parents. It is also used to promote whole school messages, such as #WakeupWednesday.

There was some confusion around 'Class For Kids' which is the booking system for Mr Root's after school clubs in KS2.

Screen Usage in School – Should parents give consent? A concern was raised by an EYFS parent around the use of TVs in school. SMT explained that what may look like TV is actually the Interactive White Board (IWB). This is a fantastic teaching and learning resource that all schools use. In younger years, the IWB is used for children to self-register as they walk into the class room; for educational games; for face to face teaching for example. There are also times where it is appropriate for the children to enjoy a short episode of an age-appropriate programme, such as numberblocks, at the end of the school day, for example. It may be that after children have collected their coats and bags for pick up, they watch TV on the mat before dismissal at home time. It may be the last thing they did, therefore the first thing they remember when asked by the adult collected them.

We also know how children with educational needs, such as a language disorder or dyslexia, benefit from watching a visual film clip first to make sense of a story, before exploring the text in a physical book. School will only ask parents for consent if the film or programme they wish to use in class has a PG rating. Darby's Wraparound have the option to watch TV after children have eaten their tea.

Increase in class sizes in KS2

This year's Reception intake has seen a nationwide fall in admissions due to a low birth rate. We predicted a shortfall of 18 for September before going into the summer break. This has huge cost implications to school and to offset that it was decided that we increase class sizes in KS2 from 30 – 32.

We have offered places to children on our waiting lists across Year 3-6, some who already had siblings at Dorridge. This was well received by families who were having to manage two different school runs and diaries.

Year 4 pick up – bottleneck by bike sheds

SMT see this as being a start of year challenge which SMT hope will subside as everyone gets used to a new routine and teachers are more confident with spotting the right adult before releasing a child to them. This has been the collection point for many years and there hasn't been an issue previously. Parents are reminded that they must not enter through the KS2 playground gate before 3.25pm as lessons are still taking place.

Year 5 and 6 boys on scooters at pick up

Matt Gaunt, our Community Police Officer, assists with behaviour in school and will be presenting in assembly soon about general behaviour and attitude. He assists with playground duty and is part of the Early Help Team. His remit also includes Road Safety.

Diary Dates

Arden Parent Information Evening clashed with a Year 12 Talk. These dates are set by Arden not DPS. It's sometimes a little tricky to confirm diary dates with Arden. Especially when we publish ours at the end of the Summer Term for the Autumn Term in order give parents as much notice as possible. Arden's dates are not always published as early.

Teaching Assistants – how are they distributed in school?

Reception has a full time Teaching and Learning Assistant (TLA) in each class

Year 1 has two TLAs who job share but actually overlap on a Wednesday providing 6 days a week between them. One of them is a HLTA.

Year 2 has 2 TLAs. One works every morning; the other 3 full days.

At KS2, each year group has one general TLA 5 mornings a week. They work across the 3 classes.

Across school, there are a number of TLAs who are assigned to pupils with a specific need. These are commonly referred to as 1:1s.

When will parents be invited into school for classroom based activities?

There are many reasons why school will no longer be supporting activities for parents in during school time. The Mothers' and Fathers' Days became 'Special Person' Day due sensitivities around some children only having one parent at home. This in turn caused difficulties with split parents when children could pick who their special person

was. Children who have working parents who are unable to attend become upset in the classroom. Parents with more than one child in school are sometimes put in a difficult situation when trying to move on to their other child, thus wanting to take the sibling with them, causing a safeguarding concern and organisational nightmare. Teachers are made to feel like they are on show. Having up to 30 additional adults coming and going from the classroom can be very challenging. Lots of the children don't enjoy the experience, especially as they get older (they feel embarrassed).

Parents and carers are invited into school for Walkabout (one per term), Christmas Plays, Music Assemblies, Picnics, Christmas Carols and Year 3 Parents Lunch. They are all inclusive events.

Lunchtime alphabetical queuing. Children with names towards the end on the alphabet are consequently always at the end of the queue. Is it possible to shuffle the order as they complain that they have less playtime?

Children are asked to line up in the same order that they are listed in the system to ensure they are catered for in terms of what they have ordered and if they have any allergies and dietary requirements. All children have an hour to eat their lunch and play which is ample time.

Change of Date for Next Meeting: Tuesday 11th November 2025