



Parent Council Meeting

Tuesday 11th November 2025



Present: Emma Richards, Katie Rudge, Natalie Pickering-Ernst, Lucy Stanley, Serena Gahir, Emma Welsh, Alison French – Carr, Susan Knott, Diana Nickless. Kelly Markey and Claire Bartlett

Chair: Emma Richards and Lucy Stanley. **SMT:** Gemma Thelwell and Harriet Gill. **Minutes:** Claire Mansfield

Gemma Thelwell welcomed Harriet Gill, Parent Council Lead.

Points raised by Parents:

Catering Questions – The majority of these questions came from parents of EYFS children new to school.

Why were children in KS2 offered a hot dog, then burger and then pizza on three consecutive days? The hot dog was part of a special themed promotion for Bonfire Night. Not a weekly occurrence but an annual promotion. Children could choose it as a snack at breaktime. The burger was paired with a curry as the alternative lunch choice. Pizza is the normal menu for Fridays with the other option being fishfinger.

What is the vegetarian option for Christmas Lunch? Vegetarian Wellington. Lentil and stuffing mix layered in puff pastry. Karen, Catering Manager, assured us that it is much more festive than it sounds!

Why is there a weekly vegetarian day? ‘The [School Plates Award](#) is a UK-based recognition program by ProVeg UK that celebrates and encourages school caterers for creating healthier, more sustainable, and plant-based school meals, offering Bronze, Silver, and Gold awards for progressive efforts in reducing meat and promoting planet-friendly, delicious dishes. It's a free, evidence-based system designed to support caterers with resources, training, and recipes to improve menus, ultimately benefiting children's health and the environment.’

Can there be another fish option? Currently the menu offers a fish finger with a gluten free crumb and a jumbo fish finger in batter. Children can also choose a jacket potato with tuna or a tuna sandwich. On the last rotation there was a day when children were offered either Tuna Pasta Bake or Cheese Panini as main courses. Only around 25 children, out of 300 who have a school lunch, chose the Tuna Pasta Bake. Because it wasn't popular it was changed to a Veggie Pasta Bake and that number increased to around 85. Cook has tried to source a salmon option but knows that children are less likely to choose that. She has sourced a salmon fish cake but meals must be MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) and this one is not. Portion size also has to be considered as school is governed by Food Standard Agency policies and guidelines surrounding how much protein a primary aged child eats per portion.

Sugar content in desserts? Cakes contain hidden fruit and vegetable to increase the amount of natural sugar and decrease actual sugar content. Carrot Cake contains carrot, courgette and parsnip. The chocolate cake has hidden beetroot. There is also a chocolate and orange cake. Children are also offered a basic low sugar shortbread. Instead of the cake of the day children can also choose freely from a small yoghurt pot or piece of fruit. Fruit is seasonal, options include banana, melon, apples and oranges. All are displayed at the end of the serving hatch on a table for them to pick up. Karen will produce a page for the website to cover this for families new to Dorridge.

Year 3 Parents' School Lunch – When Year 6 were on a recent trip to Coventry Cathedral Year 3 parents were invited into school to have lunch with their child. Feedback was super positive from Year 3 parents and children who all enjoyed being able to experience lunch in school together.

Homework. Some parents would prefer the homework to be set for the weekend, others would prefer to dedicate their weekends to family time. SMT have spoken at length with staff about how homework is set in each year group. Each cohort is different, and Year Leads will use Dojo to communicate with parents.

Maths Homework expectations differ according to the Year group. For example, Years 5 & 6 must stay in at breaktime if their maths is incomplete. This policy support transition to Secondary. PC is curious about the rules for each year group. SMT will create a survey to review homework requirements and expectations. PC commented that parents would be open to completing a survey and requested that survey was designed to include Teachers.

During the previous PC meeting Spelling Homework was discussed.

From previous minutes: 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.

Year 2 no snack at breaktime? School is part of a Government scheme which provides every EYFS and KS1 child with a free piece of fruit daily. We receive regular deliveries and there is always plenty for all. Children may be offered a banana, tomato, pear, apple, packet of raisins, mini cucumber.

What is the policy for children having access to a drink in school? Children can bring a named bottle containing water into school. Each teacher has a place in their classroom where children can leave their bottle, usually near the sink. Some teachers may allow the older children to keep their water bottles near them, either on the desk or on the floor during lessons. This is discretionary may depend on what they are doing during that lesson. Spillage is a problem so teachers may prefer for children to leave water bottles by the sink. Children are encouraged to take a drink at break time, and all are offered a cup of water with their lunch. They are not encouraged to take their bottles onto the playground as they will be left, lost or forgotten! PC commented that some children are returning home at the end of the day with a full water bottle. Children also must take ownership of having a drink at regular intervals, ideally during breaktime, lunchtime and before they settle into a lesson.

Parking It was agreed by all that driving and parking around school is an eternal issue. School is doing all they can to remind parents to be courteous when parking and to watch their speed. Mrs Hales recently asked a parent not to park on yellow lines and faced an angry response. It has been noted that it always seems to be the same handful of parents who behave selfishly. We do have a community Police Officer; however, he is not always available during drop off and pick up. Parents can park at Sainsburys car park and walk up Station Road, walk from home or park on friends and family's driveways who live closer to school in an attempt to reduce traffic.

Miss Gill and the School Council will promote Walk to School Week which is in May 2026.

There was discussion around offering incentives and rewards to children who walk to school; however, this could be seen as divisive as not all parents are able to walk due to work commitments etc. PC suggested encouraging parents to leave home slightly earlier to walk if they were able.

Panto! There has been a significant reduction in the cost of the Panto trip this year. This is due to Johnsons coaches offering us a reduced rate during the school day. Because we buy theatre tickets in bulk and in advance there is also a discount on those. Last year the trip to the Panto cost £25.23 per child compared to this year which is £20.41. Year 6 will go to Leamington to see Peter Pan this year as there were not enough seats for the whole school at any of the matinee performances for Sleeping Beauty in Coventry. We are exploring options for Year 6 to go to Leamington by train and have lunch away from school. More information to follow. Nursery children will welcome Major Mustard for a Christmas production in Nursery. He is always well received. The cost of this is covered by school fund, therefore Parents will not be asked to contribute.

Reception, Year 2 and Year 4 Christmas Play Tickets have increased this year from £2 each to £2.50. Why?

Due to school policy on photos and videos school has offered parents the chance to purchase a recording of their child's Christmas Play or end of year production. Past years have seen the offer of a DVD, a USB stick or a link to the recording via Youtube. Feedback from parents has always shaped the preferred medium by which we share the videos. Most recently it was agreed that parents would prefer a downloadable link instead of watching it via Youtube. Last year School subscribed to WeTransfer to share the links with parents. School employs the same Videographer each year to record the Dress Rehearsals to give him more time to edit and produce the video. Looking back at previous correspondence the cost of a DVD was £8. To cover the cost of the Videographer and the subscription to WeTransfer, the decision was made to ask parents to contribute by paying for their tickets. Max of 2 per family due to hall capacity. Last year school was fortunate to secure an introductory offer with WeTransfer. There has been a significant increase this year. Tickets are priced at £2.50 each to cover this increase. The cost is shared equally across the three Christmas Plays and the Year 6 Leavers' production at the end of the Summer Term. This arrangement is less expense to parents than paying for a DVD. School does not make a profit from this.

Harvest Donations. PC expressed their surprise and disappointment over the amount of donations parents brought for Harvest. The picture on Dojo was taken in KS2 and there was a similar amount displayed in the KS1 entrance. Dorridge donated around 400 items. Volunteers from St Philips Church, Dorridge collected them and passed them on to Aston and Nechells Foodbank. A general thank you was added to the Weekly News the week after the Harvest assembly, and we have recently received the message below from the Foodbank.



Dear Friends at St Philips & St James and Dorridge School

On behalf of Aston & Nechells Foodbank I would like to thank you all for the tremendous number of donations recently received. They weighed 557.46kg. We appreciate that some of the donations came from the school.

We do so appreciate the longstanding partnership we have with Dorridge and Bentley Heath.

We would love the emergency need supporting crisis situations in Aston, Nechells and the wider area to no longer be needed.

Sadly this is not the situation and it shows little likelihood of any significant change in the immediate future.

All Good Wishes
Rosemary Cripps
ANFB

Remembrance. All agreed that the response to the Remembrance Homework has been amazing. Children have proudly placed their poppy stones along the main school path for all to see. Children will be encouraged to take them home at the end of the week as some were unhappy to part with them. School has also had an overwhelming response from children and parents donating to the Royal British Legion in exchange to poppy merchandise. Monies raised will be sent to RBL later this week.

Website Feedback. Prior to this meeting PC were asked to take a look at the school website and offer feedback. Currently undergoing a tidy up, the school Office were interested to hear how parents perceive it. PC remarked that it is not particularly mobile phone friendly. Quick Links were useful and parents often referred to Diary Dates.

DPS PTA Events. The PTA recently postponed the KS2 Disco and moved the KS1 Disco into the Spring Term, date TBC. This was communicated to parents via the Weekly News. The ticket link for the KS2 Disco will be shared by the end of this week. A plan for the Christmas Fair has also been shared via the Weekly News asking for donations and providing a link for parents to volunteer to give their time for preparation and on the day. The PTA are a core group of around 5 volunteers and would appreciate any time parents can give to assist with making this event a success.

Communication. School shares key reminders including dates for the diary; upcoming payment items, such as PGL and important information on the Weekly News sent to all on Fridays. Parents are expected to read this key information.

Admissions Consultation. Mrs Thelwell spoke about a recent visit from the Local Authority when the projected numbers for prospective pupils joining Primary Schools in the Arden Catchment was especially low for 2027-2028 intake. With that in mind, Dorridge Primary has put in an application to reduce the PAN (Pupil Admission Number) for that particular academic year. Funding is based on the number of children on roll and a reduction in birthrate has a huge impact. By setting the PAN at 60, school still has the option to accept more children if financially viable. The number can be changed year on year according to predicted figures. This decision was made to financially safeguard the school.

Parents were informed of the application and rationale in a letter sent on Monday 3rd November. Followed by information shared in the Weekly News and the answers to FAQ on the school website. Parents will be contacted again at the end of the consultation.

Proposed dates for Spring Term Meeting Dates: Wednesday 21st January and Tuesday 3rd March 2026.