

Questions for the Committee Meeting on January 2023

Dear Parents/carers,

We thank you for communicating these questions to the academy committee. Many of them are answered below by the headteacher, Mr Wheeler, as they are operational in nature (where you see 'I' used in the response, this is referring to Mr Wheeler). Other queries however rightly sit with the Academy Committee. Regardless, this has provided us with a helpful insight into the matters arising for our school. The nature and subject of the questions can also give us assurance that the school is performing well in its core business of educating and caring for the young people in our community. We hope you find the information below helpful.

Yours Faithfully,

Pamphill Academy Committee

1. Who is the academy made up of and what type of members are they?

Please follow this link to our webpage containing information about: the academy committee and its members; its purpose; and how it provides its strategic role.

<https://www.pamphillfirstschool.org/page/?title=Academy+Committee+Members&pid=18>

We are always looking for ways to improve representation on our committee based on our skills audit which we use to identify areas of need. Our current priorities are to appoint an additional staff representative, and to finalise the membership of a trustee appointed member. The webpage above is updated as and when personnel changes are made.

2. In light of the recent weather conditions

• What is the school's snow policy?

If it is deemed necessary to close the school, for us at Pamphill this would most likely be due to the roads not being safe for travel, parents would be informed of this by Parentmail by 8am. Forecasts are monitored to inform parents of the possibility of such events as a prior warning where possible too. In an instance where snow began to fall during the school day and a closure part way through the day became the best course of action, parents/carers would be informed that their children should be collected at the earliest opportunity. I, Mr Wheeler, have also strived to provide additional information in recent times regarding road closures and ice to support our parent community. The safest route to the school in 'less than ideal' conditions is undoubtedly past the dairy up Abbott Street.

• Where is the nearest grit box for the roads? Do we need to request one?

The AC will ensure this is raised with the parish council as a result of it being brought to our attention, although as the school is on a council maintained road, the responsibility would lie with the Highways agency to grit the roads.

- Is it reasonable to expect reception to stay out in temperatures at or below freezing for a full 2 hours? (Forest School)

All weather conditions are something we monitor very closely in relation to Forest School, evidenced by the fact sessions have previously been cancelled/postponed due to high winds this year. Children are encouraged to wrap up well for said sessions, and parents are informed about appropriate clothing, including on the school website. During the sessions, staff and helpers monitor the wellbeing of the children and if required, sessions will be shortened or cancelled in cold temperatures.

3. Road Safety

- What are the options to resolve parking?

A parent survey last year gathered opinions on potential changes and these have been turned into the concept drawing approved by the parish council. The challenge here is that none of the land outside the school walls is owned by the school. We therefore need to work in collaboration with the National Trust and Highways to find the best solutions. The draft plan includes a revision to the car park opposite the entrance to the school, the Vine pub side, with clearly marked bays, laid out with logs provided by the National Trust. We are also hoping the main car park used at drop off/pick up opposite the green can also be extended.

However, sadly, some of the issues with parking have to be owned by our parents. Parking on the Avenue at key times reduces visibility at the narrowest point, adding danger to our children on a national speed limit road. For that reason, we are exploring installing a fence from the corner of the school to the border with the National Trust car park. Our Academy Committee and the school welcome dialogue with parents on this issue, as we move to the next phase. Martyn Underhill and Mike Wheeler intend to head up a focus group on this next half term with parents invited to attend.

We will share further information as it becomes appropriate. Please be reassured that road safety and child safety are key priorities for the Academy Committee and the school..

- When will the speed limit be reduced? How can we make this happen? There was some mention of changes to local government policy which should make this easier.

This is being explored within the remit of current plans, mentioned above. The challenge we have faced thus far is that to change a national speed limit street lighting would need to be in place. The Parish Council and National Trust agree with us that the speed limit on the Avenue is concerning.

- Can anything be done about the potholes on the road past school?

This issue has been reported to highways for them to take action. We are in their hands.

4. Linked with the above, parents asked whether any first aid was taught at school such as CPR or how to call 999? The feeling was that the roads were at times so dangerous as to have potentially caused an accident and having children know what to do in the event of an emergency would be beneficial to their education.

A really great question and one reflected on across the trust when designing elements of the PSHE (Personal Social Health and Economic) curriculum. It is also woven in through some of the work we do more linked to personal development and life skills. I do want to give this further consideration though as I agree there are age-appropriate levels at which to address/ teach responses to

emergencies. On a related point, as a school, we explored installing a Defibrillator which proved too costly. However there is one at Pamphill Dairy for emergency use.

5. School Lunches

- There is concern that children are coming home hungry after eating a school meal at lunch time. Children have reported to parents that the food isn't enough and they aren't allowed extra portions.

Portion sizes are guided by Chartwells (food supplier) and are linked to the nutritional information they provide. This is not an issue that the children have raised. If this is a concern for your child, please do get in touch with the school to explore further options.

- Are children being given the correct portion sizes? Why are they not allowed seconds if they are still hungry?

Yes, children are given the portion sizes that match the nutritional information guidance from Chartwells. Children are always encouraged to finish and we find it is far more common that children choose to leave parts of their lunch unfinished rather than express hunger. The school also shares with parents if a particular meal choice is refused/not eaten by a child and regularly goes above and beyond to provide a replacement to ensure the children are fed.

- Can this be looked into and resolved as a priority?

Yes. This will be taken up with the school as it is an operational matter and the committee will request an update at the next meeting. Parents are encouraged to contact the school as described above to discuss cases.

6. New and temporary teachers in school

- How are they appointed and what is the recruitment process?

Hiring of school staff is a thorough and rigorous process in which interviewers have completed Safer Recruitment training. If you would like further information about this, Wimborne Academy Trust's HR department can answer further questions. Their contact can be obtained via the school if you wish for further information.

Temporary or 'cover' teachers are sourced in a variety of ways which is largely determined by availability. Any covering staff member must have a full DBS check completed and ideally QTS (qualified teacher status). For us at Pamphill, in cases of short term cover up to two consecutive days, that often means that we resolve internally using myself (Mr Wheeler) or our HLTAs (Higher Level Teaching Assistants). In such cases those teaching assistants are those who have completed additional training to support them in leading classes. Acting up pay is paid for hours worked in this capacity.

The overriding benefit is that those people have a greater knowledge of the children and the school's systems than a supply teacher from an agency might, and at a lower cost to the school. It is these same reasons that we try to contact the same small group of individuals when we need to look beyond our own staff – they know the school and this makes a big difference to the offer that the children receive. We can also reach out to our partner schools within the trust to meet needs. In cases of longer term cover, there could be a need to appoint an additional, temporary member of staff. All staff employed are subject to DBS checks.

• What checks do they need to complete in order to teach in school?

Answered above with the addition of having read our school safeguarding policy and procedures.

7. Dogs outside of school

• There have been instances of dogs running across the road at pick up and drop off nearly causing accidents. A parent reports that her child was knocked over by a dog that was improperly supervised on a flexi lead, and there are several children at school that are frightened of dogs. Could the school request that all dogs be kept on a short lead whilst waiting at the gate for pick up and drop off?

I would hope that in sharing this document that this one speaks for itself. I am happy to request that dogs are kept on short leads at drop off / pick up so that we can show consideration to all of our community. From my experience people have shown due consideration and adverse instances are rare. It is also important to note that a lot of dog walkers near the school are members of the public, not parents.

• There have been a couple of instances of dog fouling outside the school gate and owners not picking it up (witnessed by parents). Could a friendly reminder be put out to all parents to pick up after their dogs.

Again, I would hope that in sharing this document that this one speaks for itself. If said witnesses would like to make this known to me (Mr Wheeler) I would gladly follow up. I certainly expect us to look after the public spaces we all benefit from.

8. Will there be more opportunity to partake in church services with pupils this year?

Rev. Suzie and I are discussing this and we want to build stronger relationships between the school, church and community. Once those decisions have been made you will receive details about the Easter service which will likely follow a similar pattern to last year (service followed by a bonnet parade at St. Stephen's church).

9. What is the funding agreement for the school and could a link be posted to this information.

It seems this was a gap in updating the trust webpage and has been remedied. It can be accessed using the usual link from our website or by clicking [here](#).

10. How are contractors appointed and what is the tendering process for school projects.

Process as follows:

- Get 3 quotes from an approved list of contractors (approved either by the WAT or the council)
- Select the quote that best fits the needs of the school
- Schedule major works for holidays to minimise disruption. More reactive works may require temporary arrangements to be made by the headteacher.
- Works 'signed off' by the site manager.
- Amendments to site risk assessments made where necessary.

Any companies or services interested in working with the school or wider trust are encouraged to get in touch with the headteacher who can pass on contacts and set up a meeting accordingly.

11. Academy meetings

- Are meetings open to parental attendance?

I am currently awaiting a response from our legal team on this subject, though it is important to note that academy Committee (AC) members complete a range of training that enables schools to feel comfortable sharing and discussing sensitive information that would sometimes not be appropriate to make public knowledge. Parents with a desire to join the Academy Committee are invited to make that known to the headteacher or to Zoe King (Chair of the AC).

- Could we look at holding town hall Academy meetings where parents can come and ask questions face to face and hear about the progress of the school?

It is not something I/we have considered previously. Some schools do hold parent forums where a desire exists for parents to raise issues with the school. This is not something I (Mr Wheeler) have seen a need for however as I am so regularly available for parents to raise things with already. Regarding progress of the school, some schools do share an abridged version of their school improvement plans for parents and we have added this to our next agenda for discussion. The Academy Committee is strategic in its approach to monitoring and challenging school improvement through its ongoing practices (as described on our website). The school will share all SIAMS and Ofsted inspection documentation as appropriate too. The latest ones are all available on the school website.

- Where can parents get access to the minutes of meetings?

They are not made freely available for the same reasons as in Q11 bullet point 1. We do publish academy committee member attendance on our website however and this year's document will be added ASAP. Any parents with a desire to have minutes of academy committee meetings can request them from the headteacher who will ensure that any appropriate redactions are made before sharing.

12. When will we hear more about the school strikes, especially given the at the first date is next week?

It is imperative that we as school leaders support our staff's decisions in this matter and they have no obligation to inform the school of their plans prior to the day of action. If it is safe for the school to remain open, it will be on days of strike action. Adjustments may just have to be made to staffing arrangements and learning content on said days.