

'Pegasus at Cypress: One year on' meeting summary 26th June, 7pm

Presentation by Lynne Sampson and Jolyon Roberts, with Anna Hart, Georgia Buchan, Ailsa Chapman and Nikki Carpenter in attendance.

Lynne introduced the presentation and gave background on how Pegasus became involved with Cypress after the school had received 3 disappointing Ofsted judgments (one from a monitoring visit). When they got involved the school was judged as 'requires improvement' so they have focused on improving things for children.

Jolyon commented that he has attended 6 comms group meetings so far, but as these are held at 9:15 on Fridays, this meeting in the evening is for parents who can't attend and also as a milestone to mark a year on. There has been a lot of progress but the journey is still ongoing.

PAT have been involved in school since Jan 17, though officially in charge since Sept 17. Survey done spring 2017, received 141 responses from parents/carers/community. Really helpful to determine priorities, PAT are still working on issues raised in the survey. Everything done has been based on survey responses.

Community (46 responses) was the number 1 thing people valued about Cypress. Next were parental involvement, grounds/location, Little Cypress, teachers/teaching.

Some drone photography shown which was recently done of the school to show its gardens (upper) and field (lower) - many parents may not know about these when new to Cypress. PAT have put a lot of money into maintaining grounds and improving them. But they also want teaching to rank higher as something people value.

PAT want people to see Cypress as a single school, not divided between infant/junior, so staff now refer to lower and upper site which helps people to think of it as a single school working together.

How to improve from the survey – top response was 'leadership style' (33), then communications, behaviour, learning environments, quality of teaching.

Civility/manners of staff was raised as an issue in original survey. PAT leadership have no direct experience of this but was concerning to hear – not in Pegasus values. They had this in mind when designing new lower school office which will be more accessible (to pushchairs etc.) and will only have a desk between parents and staff members to be more welcoming.

Jan 2020 is when next Ofsted inspection is due (after 7 terms), so Jolyon outlined the approach to school improvement in preparation for this.

1. **Developing teachers, coaching and raising expectations.** Aim to keep teachers and develop them. Coaching logs for teachers – even good teachers have someone from senior leadership work with them on how to improve practice. Once just used to rely on lesson observations (as a one off) but this wasn't reflective of teachers' general practice, so PAT prefer regular interaction, to give people objectives and work with them. Big focus on modelling the work to the children, showing them what you want them to do. Still working on less effective teaching.
2. **Curriculum development that is varied, flows and consolidates.** Original feedback – curriculum/homework not varied or challenging enough. In PAT teachers work together as a group and every year curriculum can change. Syllabus driven by

PAT staff but there is still flexibility - can say e.g. that one class needs more work on multiplication. Lot of pressure in schools on reading, writing and arithmetic so need to focus on that but when tests over in May can focus on other areas – arts week coming up, school journeys – have also built more visits into curriculum, people coming in to school. Need to build up children's skills year on year. Jolyon has been spending some time with classes doing SATs, commented that calculation very impressive in SATs this year. Times tables tests coming up next year for first time.

3. Premises and resourcing with strength of MAT. (See PowerPoint)

Some specific things focused on at Cypress to improve teaching:

Working on routines and transitions – getting in and out of class.

Reducing teacher talk. Sometimes far too long, especially to younger children. Shouldn't be more than 15 minutes to KS1. Raising expectations of children – teachers see lessons at other schools to see good practice, impactful learning. Little Cypress and Reception is also used as good practice for other PAT schools. PAT will have difficult conversations if needed and tackle teaching which is less than effective. Georgia Buchan added that teachers have to work hard in a RI school but staff are motivated to improve. Heads aim to find strengths of individual staff and share good practice with other teachers, e.g. good methods for classroom display and organisation of resources. Know that the Trust has high expectations.

Jolyon commented that teacher retention is generally difficult in London due to housing costs etc. Have started videoing some outstanding teachers to share teaching practice with new teachers.

Performance management now being done more effectively. PAT have an NQT (newly qualified teacher) tutor with properly allocated time for teaching NQTs. Ensuring the right balance between support and challenge.

Insets and staff meetings planned as a trust – everyday business dealt with at separate meeting, so in these meetings the sole focus is on how to make teaching better.

There is a staff development group with coaches who work with those in need of extra help.

From the initial parent survey, parents commented children's experience is great if you get a good teacher but not always the case. PAT want all teachers in Cypress to be good.

Lynne praised the very strong support from the PTFA and has been regularly attending PTFA meetings. One example was the 'Iguanodon Restaurant' performances organised by Graham Whitlock and part funded by PTFA. This level of support is very much appreciated.

Extended schools activities were discussed – PAT wanted to improve range of activities offered to children at Cypress and have had positive feedback from parents on this. A parent asked about extending the period that afterschool activities ran throughout the term. In response to parent feedback this has been done and clubs will run for 10 of 12 weeks in autumn term, as before, but additional communication needed as not all parents aware of it. Autumn term clubs should be available for booking very shortly, time to be confirmed.

There are early signs of improving outcomes. KS2 results are due out July 10th. Longer term, aim should be for results above national as very able children in Cypress.

Parents raised some concerns about SATs in Year 2. Children were aware that SATs were happening, although heads confirmed that staff work to avoid putting any pressure on children. Leadership commented that there was a focus on core subjects until May and then more variety once SATs complete, but parents asked for more balance in the pre-May teaching too, that core subjects can be taught in a way that captures children's interest (e.g. outdoor learning). There was a discussion about balancing national assessment requirements with other learning, including opportunities for creativity, and concern that preparation for SATS involved too much repetitive work. (This was discussed further after the presentation and Lynne is looking into specific issues raised.)

PE was also discussed – Jolyon confirmed that PE is important part of PAT curriculum and children should do 2 hours of PE each week. Sometimes equivalent activities are done instead where children do physical activity instead of a specific PE lesson. Heads have intervened in one instance where a class hadn't been doing sufficient PE, and this has been resolved.

Brief outline of premises improvement. This year 5 classrooms have been refurbished at £10k each - £250k spent in total since Jan 2017. Funding pooled amongst trust schools to support Cypress, to make this money available. Improved lower school office, communal spaces improved (no more dark corridors), outdoor areas improved and made safe, projection facilities improved in upper school (for assemblies and performances), reception outside play area to be upgraded. Kitchen shortly to open in upper site – very delayed! Hope to invite parents in to see it.

Next communications group meeting is on 6th July at 9:15 in community room – all parents welcome to attend and raise issues.