



DOHA ENGLISH SPEAKING SCHOOL

Learning Together • High Expectations • Celebrating Success

Parent Council

Newsletter

March 2017

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the March edition of the Parent Council Newsletter following the Parent Council meeting on 29th March 2017.

The bulk of issues discussed at the meeting are summarised below under their relevant sub-headings.

There is also an update from Pip Hoy who is our Parent Council representative on the Board of Governors.

The Parent Councilors continue to be committed to representing the views of the parents and we would like to thank those of you who have taken the time to put forward your feedback, comments and suggestions. With each successive meeting, the Board and the School Management are better able to serve the needs of the children and their respective families.

Thank you.

Nicola Alexander (Year 6 Councillor)



Sean Sibley
Headteacher

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Health and Safety at DESS

Mrs Murray gave the Parent Council an overview of Health and Safety at DESS. She explained that the procedures are always evolving and being worked and improved upon. DESS collaborate with other schools in Doha to share best practice and experience. Some of the areas she talked about were;

- **Drills**

Mrs Murray explained that all drills are filmed and the school carries out the following types of drills:

- o Fire – practiced once a term where the school assemble on the field
- o Evacuation – practiced once a year where the school assemble in the school next door
- o Lockdown – practiced once a year where everyone in the school is hidden out of sight.

- **Educating Children on Health and Safety**

Mrs Murray spends time with the children teaching them about Health and Safety. They have recently done a litter competition, talked about zebra crossings and she has spoken to year 2 about fire extinguishers. This is an ongoing topic throughout the year groups.

- **Current Excavations – fire hoses**

DESS are very happy with the ongoing excavation work to install the new fire hoses.

- **Security**

All external contractors need police clearance to work in the school.

- **Risk Assessments for school trips**

It was explained that every school trip has a thorough risk assessment.

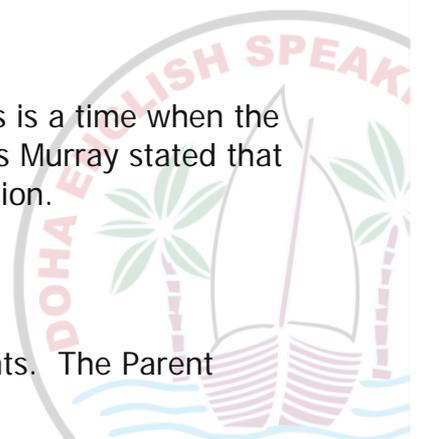
Everyone in the Parent Council agreed that Mrs Murrays' talk was very informative and most of us did not know that so much was going into Health and Safety at DESS. The school website will be updated to include some of this information as it was felt that it is a positive selling point for the school.

First Aid During ECA Time

The topic of first aid requirements during ECA was brought up. This is a time when the nurses have finished for the day and the nurses room is locked. Mrs Murray stated that all people who use the facilities for ECAs should have first aid provision.

11-Plus / Common Entrance / DESS Guidelines

Mr Sibley introduced his 11+ brochure mainly for Key Stage 2 parents. The Parent



Council agreed that it will be a useful tool for parents trying to navigate the 11+ system.

Key Stage 1 ECA Pickups

Mrs Murray has agreed with the private ECA clubs that they will pick up Key Stage 1 pupils and take them to their activity. This is a huge help for working parents and for parents with children in both Key Stage 1 and 2. It applies to all ECAs except for Taekwondo and Swimming and will commence next term.

BSME Games and PE

The BSME letter was received by parents which clarifies the selection process and states that it is an under 11 competition. Mr Sibley discussed that BSME will remain an elite competition and be selective but there have been more opportunities in PE this year for more children with more sports such as tag rugby and girls football starting up.

Friends of DESS

The Parent Council discussed how there could be more collaboration between the Parent Council and Friends of DESS. There was some clarification on the process of the spending of FOD funds - the FOD parents vote on how to spend the funds and that most children need to benefit from the expenditure. The school goes to FOD with project ideas and FOD decide where to spend the money. In the past they have provided a dug out on the field, cushions for the library and the garden by the swimming pool.

After School Club

Mr Sibley explained that DESS are working on providing a DESS ASC for working parents which will potentially go on later than the current 3.15pm by the private ASC provision. He is going to compile a questionnaire to ask parents about ASC and breakfast club run by the school. The Parent Council thought this would be a positive step for the school.

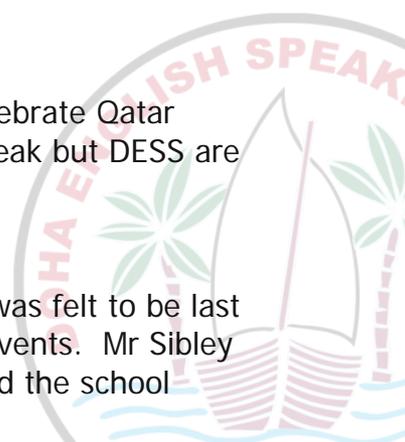
Other Matters

Qatar National Day Celebrations:

The Parent Council had feedback about why DESS do not celebrate Qatar National Day. The date tends to fall within our December break but DESS are doing something for Qatar as part of International Day.

International Week:

The Parent Council have had a lot of feedback around what was felt to be last minute changes to the school calendar and short notice for events. Mr Sibley recognized that there had been a lot of changes this term and the school



calendar will be planned for next year with fewer, if any, changes.

Year 6 Mountain Day Cancellation:

Some parents were concerned about the Year 6 mountain day being cancelled. Mountain Day could not go ahead with the field being dug up and all the work being done around school to install the fire hoses. There is a H&S risk to the children. There will be a movie night in the library instead.

Prayer Room:

Some parents have asked about a prayer room at school. DESS are not going to have a specific prayer room in the new build but they can always make sure children have a quiet space if they wish to pray.

Summer Term ECAs :

There are no summer term ECAs at school as this is the busiest term for the teachers with reports etc and the teachers only have 2 terms of ECAs in their contracts. The timing of Ramadan this year has also contributed to the scheduling challenges of ECAs during the summer term.

Upcoming Topics

Next month the Parent Council will be talking about SEN (Special Educational Needs) at DESS. If you would like to voice an opinion then please contact your Parent Council representative. Further details regarding the role of the Parent Council and your year group representatives are shown in the following pages.



DESS Board of Governors
PARENT COUNCIL – PARENT GOVERNOR

UPDATE
(April 2017)

Purpose:

The Parent Council is an annually elected parent/guardian body representing each of the year groups, a member of the Senior Leadership Team and a member of the Board of Governors. The Council supports the Senior Leadership Team and Board of Governors by acting as a communication channel through which parents can feed back ideas and suggestions regarding their ongoing experience of DESS and that of the children.

History:

The process of establishing a DESS Parent Council was initiated by Head Teacher Sean Sibley in September 2016 and was formalised in December 2016.

Via a democratic voting system, a Parent Council representative for each year group was nominated and then chosen following a vote from the parents from the relevant year group. Once the Parent Council body was formed, the same voting process was conducted for the selection of one Parent Council representative to sit on the Board of Governors as the representative of the DESS Parent Body.

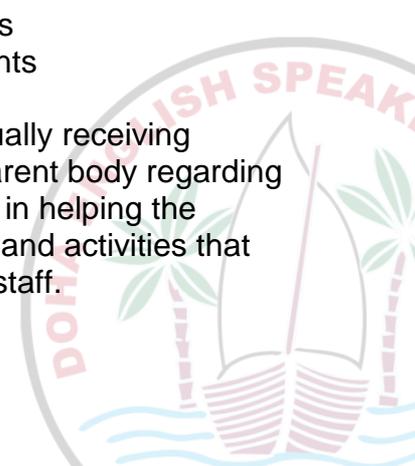
Pip Hoy (Y5 PC) is the current Parent Governor representing the Parent Council. Pip attended her first Board meeting on 4 December 2016.

Progress:

Since its inception, the Parent Council has:

- met on a monthly basis
- established a constitution
- established a monthly newsletter
- reviewed and given feedback on a range of policy documents
- reviewed and given feedback on the school survey
- reviewed and given feedback on the school inspection results
- discussed a large range of issues as highlighted by the parents

Most importantly, the Parent Council representatives are now gradually receiving increasing volumes of feedback, suggestions and ideas from the parent body regarding the activities of the school. All this information has been invaluable in helping the School Management and the Board of Governors to shape policies and activities that suit the DESS children and our broader community of families and staff.



Going Forward:

Going forward, the PC will continue its current role and looks forward to increasing interaction with DESS parents so that their voice can continue to be heard.

If you would like further details on your specific Parent Governor, please see the attached link.

<http://www.dess.org/index.php/parent-zone/parent-council.html>

Thank you:

And finally, thank you to all of you who have taken the time to pass on your thoughts. They have helped the Parent Council tremendously in continuing to improve the experience of our children and the broader DESS community.

Pip Hoy
Y5 Parent Councilor
Board of Governors PC Representative



Who are the Parent Council?

The Parent Council consists of elected parents representing each of the school years, a member of the senior management team, and a member of the school's board of governors

Year Group	Parent Council Member		Email Address
FS1	Jamal Elshayyal		FS1Councilor@dess.org
FS2	Victoria Gatenby		FS2Councilor@dess.org
Year 1	Vicki Allan		Y1Councilor@dess.org
Year 2	Rajiv Thakrar		Y2Councilor@dess.org
Year 3	Leigh Thomas		Y3Councilor@dess.org
Year 4	Birgit Narayanan		Y4Councilor@dess.org
Year 5	Phillippa Hoy		Y5Councilor@dess.org
Year 6	Nicola Alexander		Y6Councilor@dess.org
Head Teacher	Sean Sibley		ssibley@dess.org
BoG Member	Laura Warren		

Parent Council Charter

Introduction

The success of any school is built upon the success of its students. For any child to be successful at school they need to have the right educational practises and an environment that nurtures their well being emotionally, mentally and physically. Providing the best possible environment for our children is foremost in the minds of all parents, guardians and educational professional's. In order to obtain the best possible environment from all points of view, a collaborative approach is required; this is where the Parent Council adds value. The Parent Council's main aim is to provide a voice of the parents and guardians to assist the Schools Management Team and the Board of Governors.

Who We Are

The Parent Council consists of annually elected parents or guardians representing each of the school years, a member of the Senior Management Team, and a member of the School's Board of Governors. Two of the Parent Councillors will also sit on the Board of Governors.

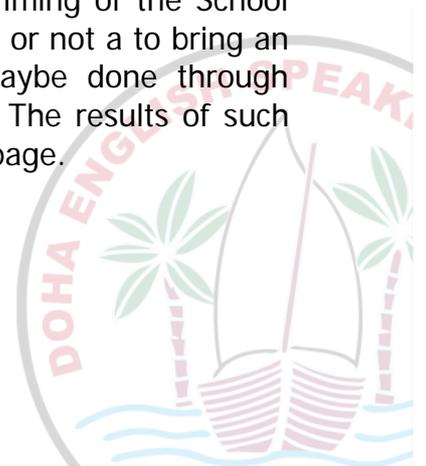
What We Do

Primarily, to provide a voice to the parents or guardians of children at the school.

This means that we raise issues or suggestions that parents see as valuable to the school. These will be generic, affecting all children or specific groups of children rather than individuals. All correspondents between Parent Councillors and parents / guardians will remain confidential unless indicated otherwise by parent or guardian. The Councillor will then raise the issue at a Parent Council meeting in a generic fashion. Confidentiality is of utmost importance to the Council.

The Parent Council will also be a channel for feedback to the Senior Management team and or Board of Governors about what parents feel is going well at the school; events or policy changes. This will help guide future events and initiatives.

The Parent Council will also discuss, policies, procedures or issues brought to it by the school's Senior Management team, such as Homework Policy or Timing of the School day. At times the Council may exercise its judgement as to whether or not a to bring an issue to the wider Parental population for consultation, this maybe done through referendum or inviting comment through an appropriate medium. The results of such consultations will be communicated through the Newsletter or webpage.



Our Promise

As Parent Councillors we will:

- Listen
- Always treat all correspondents with Parents as confidential. Any specifics discussed within the Parent Council will also be treated as confidential.
- Fairly represent Parent's opinions in the council irrespective of our personal opinions.
- Treat all Parents points of view & beliefs equally and with respect
- Strive to help make the school the best possible environment

Accountability

The Parent Council is accountable to the Board of Governors

Communications

Parents can contact their Parent Councillor via email or an informal chat. If the suggestion or issue raised is deemed by the Councillor to be within the Council's remit then the councillor shall raise it at the Parent Council meeting and subsequently feedback to the raising parent as soon as is reasonably possible.

More general points shall be communicated via the Newsletter. You can also find contact details for the Parent Councillors on the school website;

Under "Our Community"...

<http://www.dess.org/index.php/our-pta/parent-council.html>

Under "Parent Zone"...

<http://www.dess.org/index.php/parent-zone/parent-council.html>

