

# OAG Implementation – Water Mill Primary School

## Background

Water Mill Primary School is a one form entry primary school in Selly Oak. Our location is close to the University of Birmingham and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, which means that many of our pupils are temporarily at our school whilst their parents study or complete placements at these two institutions. We therefore have high mobility, with roughly a third of our pupils leaving each year and being replaced by new pupils, most of whom are new to English. This high mobility is a challenge that is managed exceptionally well, and all staff and pupils value the diversity that this brings to our school. Our pupils with SEND make up 23% of our school population, with 58% requiring some form of specialist support through an EHCP, SSPP or from outside agencies.

In alignment with the OAG, it was felt that school were currently doing lots of things to ensure parental engagement, however it was felt that these were things done more 'to' families and pupils, rather than 'with'. So as part of this project, we looked at partnership working with parents to improve parental empowerment and to develop their knowledge.

## Focus

At Water Mill, we have some great things in place to involve parents of SEND pupils in every step of their child's education. For example: we do this through termly coffee mornings with outside agencies, parent drop in sessions, workshops for parents on particular topics of interest, extended parents evenings so parents feel they have enough time to discuss their child's needs and events in school involve all pupils with reasonable adjustments made for those who may need them etc...

Following an initial meeting with parents, they were very complimentary about the support their child receives in school. They said '*they have patience and understanding*', '*it gives me confidence that the school has the involvement with parents*', '*a really supportive school*'.

When parents were asked if there was anything else that school could support with, a couple of parents raised concerns around the use of Pen Licenses. One parent said that '*the pen license has upset my child a few times this year because she doesn't feel she is good enough. She's focussing on that one thing.*' Another shared that '*those with motor difficulties or just poor handwriting will be improving their style, but it is never going to be enough to be awarded a pen*'. I shared that school were currently taking on board what parents have shared with us and that we are looking at ways this can be improved, or just got rid of altogether, and that this would form part of our joint working.

Another challenge parents were facing was that they didn't feel educated enough around SEND information and events/programmes outside of school that they could tap into. Some parent questions included '*how do I know what this diagnosis journey looks like?*' '*I worry, am I doing enough?*' '*Am I doing the right thing?*' '*Are there things/events I can access during the holiday's?*' '*Are there places I can go for support?*' One parent suggested a SEND newsletter, in addition to the normal weekly newsletter (but not necessarily weekly).

## Actions - Pen Licenses

- Parents shared concerns over use of pens in school
- Senior Leaders were already reviewing this, following conversations with parents and staff who also had concerns
- Parent voice at meeting – *'those with motor difficulties or just poor handwriting will be improving their style, but it is never going to be enough to be awarded a pen.'*
- Pupil voice – mixed views, included *'I love it, it is something to work towards', 'I might never get mine, as my handwriting isn't that good'*
- Parent questionnaire – mixed views – some hate it, some love it and some weren't bothered either way
- Following a whole staff discussion, a decision was made to remove the pen licenses altogether
- New pens were ordered – teachers evaluated these in terms of comfort in using them and weight etc...
- All children now have the opportunity to select the tool they want to use, whether that is a pen or pencil – we do say in maths that pencil is used always, due to crossing out, and diagrams look neater in pencil
- Parent post discussion – *'other parents have said thank god it's gone', 'much better', 'she's now excited about being able to choose', 'before, he was like I'm not good enough and now he says look Mum, yeah', 'school have listened to us'.*

## Actions – Termly SEND Newsletter

- Initial meeting highlighted that parents would like more information around signposts to outside support – groups/coffee morning in the local area
- SENDCo held a second meeting with a small group of parents to dig a little deeper on what this might look like. Parent voice included *'information around SEND needs and how parents notice signs of various differences, ways for parents to support each other, key topics nationally, where to go for support if parents have concerns about their child's learning, parents could feed into the newsletter – maybe following a coffee morning, share this newsletter with all parents not just those of children with SEND'*
- Following this, the SENDCo spent time researching information that would be useful and that was relevant to families living in Selly Oak, along with other websites and events that might be useful to parents
- SENDCo produced a newsletter and reviewed this with a small group of parents
- SENDCo didn't want to include all information suggested as this would be overwhelming for parents. Also the SENDCo wanted to make sure that what was shared aligned with what NHS/ADHD Teams etc., so information wasn't conflicting
- Following feedback from parents, the SENDCo sent the newsletter out to all parents

## Reflections

Parents have felt involved in the process, have felt valued and that their voice has been heard. They feel empowered that their opinions are important and help to make their child's education journey better. The Newsletter has reached all parents in school and as a result, more parents have come to ask questions about their child's needs and what further support is available.

### Parent Voice

- *'You feel included that you have been listened to'*
- *'You feel that what you say, matters'*

## Next Steps

- Review the newsletter with parents at the next coffee morning – decide collectively on topics for the next issue
- Ask if parents would feel confident to share their own stories/journeys
- Ask parents if they have attended any of the suggested groups – can they review this?