

St Andrew's Major Church in Wales Primary School

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Dear Parents/Carers,

27th May 2021

Outcome of consultation to alter the timings of the school day

Background

The school undertook a consultation exercise from Thursday 18th March until Thursday 22nd April 2021 on the proposal to change the arrangements for the school day. There was also a Zoom meeting held on Tuesday 27th April 2021 for all stakeholders in order to provide further opportunity for information gathering. The proposal to change the school day came about as a result of the changes implemented due to Covid restrictions, and the benefits that the school has seen as a result. The proposed changes are as follows:

- Flexible start 8.40 to 8.50 am
- Reduction of lunch by 15 minutes
- Afternoon break for KS2 (7-11 year olds) reduced by 5 minutes to a 10 minute 'comfort break'.
- Flexible end at 3.10 to 3.20 pm

The consultation process followed *The Changing of School Session Times (Wales) regulations 2009*. It provided an opportunity for parents and other stakeholders to learn about the proposal and for members of the Governing Body to hear the views of all those with an interest so that they could be taken into account before the final decision was made.

Governors considered the following before making their decision:

- 36 emailed responses.
- Opinions reported as part of the Zoom meeting on 27th April 2021.
- The opinions of school staff.
- The opinions of pupils from Year 2 to Year 6.
- The opinions of the Local Authority, Community Council and Llandaff Diocese.

A meeting of the Governing Body took place on 6th May 2021 in order to discuss all the information received and make the decision on the proposal.

Objections to the Proposal

Objection theme 1: Staggered approach to the start/end of the day.

There is currently a lack of opportunity for parents to communicate with one another on the playground (particularly new parents). This also includes the PTA not being able to engage with parents and carers on the playground. Not being able to drop off older children in the layby was raised along with the fact that at present, children using the bus leave class before their peers. There was also a query around why the proposal included a change to an earlier 8.40 start, which in turn contributes to the earlier finish.

Response

Social distancing and the wearing of masks has restricted opportunities for parents to socialise. This is also true for members of the PTA. This will improve as measures introduced due to Covid are relaxed as per governmental guidelines.

The safeguarding of children has greatly improved as a result of the staggered start and end to the day. It is much safer for everyone in the lay-by without car drop offs. Post-Covid, bus children will leave class with their peers. The earlier start would be beneficial in terms of quality of learning.

Objection theme 2: Reduced Lunch break and KS2 afternoon play.

Objections raised included that there would be less time for children to eat or visit the toilet and reduced opportunity for the development of physical and social skills including the lack of opportunity to mix with children from other age groups.

Response

Many of the issues raised are due to current Covid restrictions. Currently, all classes have a very strict time frame for eating and when they can be on the yard during the lunch time. When restrictions are lifted and we have full use of the hall again, this will return to being much more flexible depending on the needs of the individual child. Children cannot currently mix with other year groups – even outside. Post Covid this will change and year groups will be able to mix, although interestingly feedback from children is that they prefer the zoned areas for their playtimes.

Well-being days and the use of The Rainbow Curriculum are enabling social skills to be developed in a more structured way throughout the week. There are indeed more opportunities for outdoor learning now than before the pandemic. The 'mile a day' initiative will continue. The new Curriculum for Wales gives scope for further development of outdoor learning. A key school improvement priority for the next academic year is to further develop outdoor learning and to improve our playgrounds.

The KS2 'Comfort Break' can involve physical activity too – teachers will decide (with the children) what length and style of break is needed based on the learning going on at the time.

Children are rarely denied the opportunity to go the toilet, including during lessons where necessary.

Objection theme 3: Earlier finish.

There were objections based on problems for working parents. There are limited spaces in Deb's After School Club and limited childcare options in the local area generally. A query was made over whether extra-curricular clubs could help. Some felt that following a year of lost face to face learning, the day should be lengthened not shortened.

Response

The staggered end of 3.10 – 3.20 means parents can collect at the latter end of 3.20. Once restrictions are lifted, extra-curricular clubs can resume but these cannot be guaranteed to assist with childcare. Deb's After School Club numbers are governed by CCSIW guidelines and restricted at present due to covid measures. Numbers will increase once restrictions are lifted. Deb's club will also then return to its original end time of 6pm. Discussions are taking place with Deb Eynon about potentially increasing numbers and looking at other ways of running the club in order to support our parents.

Other Queries, Objections and Suggestions

- i. The timing of the consultation was criticised given the current situation.

Response: It was felt that as this is how the school is currently operating it made sense to consult before we were required to change the day back to its pre-Covid version. Otherwise, we may have changed the school day back to its previous iteration when we were able to (we have had no guidance as to when that may be), then run the consultation, then possibly changed the school day again, potentially all within one calendar year.

- ii. Possibly reduce collective worship or change it to the afternoon.

Response: All schools are legally required to have daily collective worship. We do sometimes move worship to the afternoon and we are considering this further.

- iii. The timings have been fine for years so why change them? These times must have been set up originally for a reason.

Response: The curriculum has changed significantly and is undergoing major reforms at present. The changes that are proposed align with the new curriculum for Wales, and also with what is best for our pupils' well-being.

- iv. Have we considered a free breakfast club?

Response: This is something that governors have considered in the past and will do so in the future as necessary. We have not introduced it in the past because it would have a negative impact on the provision of our private breakfast club – we are not able to run two clubs in tandem, and the free breakfast club would only run from 8:15 – 8:40 and this is not suitable for the majority of our parents who use Deb's club.

- v. What do other schools do?

Response: This varies, but of the primary schools closest to us geographically, the finish times range from 3pm to 3:30pm. Across the Local Authority, there is a mixture in terms of lunch hours from 45 minutes to 1hr 15mins. Some schools have no afternoon play. One other school in the Penarth Cluster is also holding a consultation on removing their afternoon play and as a result, finishing the day earlier.

- vi. Is there any chance of the school having to close for half a day to cover teachers' PPA (Planning, Preparation and Assessment time).

Response: No. This was something considered a few years ago but is definitely not something we are currently planning. PPA will continue to be covered within the school day.

- vii. If the lunch time is shortened, is there any scope to consider the teachers' contact time with the 1265 hours of directed time?

Response: Teachers in the school work extremely hard and fulfil their contractual obligations fully. This includes designated INSET and meeting time before/after school along with parents' evenings etc. Reducing the lunch time does not reduce the directed hours of teachers as they are not contracted to be 'on duty' during this time. The face to face learning time between pupils and their teachers will not be affected.

Conclusion

The governing body met on 6 May 2021 and discussed the response to the consultation during the meeting.

The governing body concluded that the proposal would have a positive impact on the education and well-being of the pupils and staff, and as such agreed by a majority that the proposal should go ahead. Covid restrictions allowing, the new timings of the school day will be formally adopted by the school from 1 September 2021.

Yours faithfully,



Sarah Jenkins Welch
(Chair of Governors)