

No: P65
Title: Evaluating the effect of creating a website to improve communication between school and parents
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Background

I work as a Teaching Assistant at Furze Infant School. We are a four form intake school with approximately 440 pupils aged 3 – 7. Part of my role within the school is that of Website Co-ordinator.

The main reason for creating a website came from the last Ofsted inspection in 2000, where it was noted that links between home and school, information going out to parents, needed improving.

Aims

- To improve information for parents and pupils, both existing and prospective.
- To showcase the school and its activities, examples of pupils' work, in words, pictures or video clips.

Safety Issues

To keep the identity of children appearing on the website safely – no child will appear with a name alongside their photo and children's work will appear with their name but no photo.

Progress

Before I could begin to develop the website I had to wait for the Local Education Authority to set up its template for its Borough schools, (this was done end of 2004) as they wanted the format to be consistent. However, content was to be decided by each school individually. As website co-ordinator, and in consultation with the Headteacher, I began to put together ideas for the Homepage.



Headings									
	About Us	Events	Diary	Newsletters	What's going on	Hints	Our Work	Downloads	Links
Sub-headings									
	Our School	Events	Insets	Furze News		Headlice	This week	Prospectus	Council website
	Mission Statement	Visits	Holidays	Nursery (termly)		Sickness	Homework	Ofsted Report	For parents
	Prospectus	Fetes	Trips	Reception (termly)		Medicines	Art	Accessibility Plans	For Children
	Policies	Discos	Special Lunches	Year 1 (termly)		Contagious Diseases	DT	Home School Agreement	
	Curriculum	Concerts		Year 2 (termly)			English	Community Room Meeting Minutes	
	Staff						ICT	Supporting your child with reading	
	Governors						Maths	Info for parents - fruit & veg scheme	
	Uniform						Music	Previous newsletters	
	Dinner Menus						P.E.		
	SATs						PSHE		
	News Updates						R.E.		
	Community Room						History		
							Geography		
							Science		

The Headings and Sub-headings were agreed and I started to collect together all the relevant information and documents needed to begin setting up the pages and inputting the data. The collection and inputting of data took approximately 4 months and the website went live at the beginning of 2005.

The website was announced to the parents by way of the weekly newsletter, however no formal launch was undertaken.

At the beginning of the new school year 2005/2006 I thought it may be a good idea to do some research into how many parents accessed the website.

Research

I prepared a questionnaire to go out to all parents in December 2005.

This was sent out to all parents, 420 in total with just over 10% being returned (44). The results of this can be seen in Appendix 1 – Website questionnaire December 2005.

After collating the data from the questionnaire it was decided to repeat the process, this time concentrating on one class only. Circle Base was chosen for this and 27 questionnaires were sent out with approximately 45% being returned (12). These results can be found in appendix 2 – Website questionnaire 2006.

Feedback (For Q7 – 2005 & 2006)

Question 7 asked: "Is there anything else you would like to see on the website?"

Some of the parent's comments for question 7 can already be found on the website, such as

- curriculum projects
- links to external websites (including fun stuff for children)
- examples of children's work
- school menus
- lesson plans
- dates for diary

These have been on the website from the beginning.

Other comments raised have indicated a wish for

- video clips of children working in the classroom or taking part in assemblies, concerts etc.
- features and childcare programs
- homework sheets and activities linked to work done in the classroom.

There were also requests from parents for information about the average standard of achievement of a child / children of the same age so comparisons can be made, and weaknesses with an individual child could then be worked on. Parents also queried whether there could be information about how children were getting on throughout the year in all aspects of school whether there could be a section for asking questions.

Feedback for Q8 (2005 & 2006)

This asked "Do you have any suggestions on how the website can be improved?"

Comments range from

- Excellent
- Maybe needs a kids page
- Interactive activities for children to aid learning
- Update it more frequently
- It's a bit dull compared to other websites

Response to feedback

The website is updated on a weekly basis, lesson plans for Nursery, Reception, Year1 and Year2 are put on every Friday/Saturday ready for Monday morning, there is a weekly newsletter for the whole school as well as a termly newsletter for each year group.

There were some good ideas from some parents about what else they would like to see on the website and I have liaised with other members of staff about the possibility of adding video clips and more examples of children's work.

The idea of homework sheets has been acted upon and when available have been put onto the website, this will be continued and improved as resources are gathered

Progression for the future

We are one of the first schools in the Borough to have given parents access to their children's reports, pupil details and attendance via Cmis (management information systems), using secure log-ins, each parent has their own user name and password, this can also be accessed via a link on the website. We are also looking into the possibility of making the children's assessment folders, which contain examples of their work as they progress through the school, available via the website to parents, also using a secure log –in. This will hopefully be available some time during the 2006-2007 school year.

Conclusions

It is clear from the results of the questionnaire that parents do access the website, however it seems that some have difficulty in finding specific areas. As a result of this I am putting together a user's guide on what can be found under the headings and sub-headings, enabling parents to make full use of the abundance of information to be found.

The suggestions made by our parents will be acted upon, however we will not be having a section for answering questions about how children are getting on during the year, as this is discussed on 'open evenings'. Parents can also make an appointment with their child's class teacher, either before or after school, if they have any specific concerns about their child, when appropriate extra curricular or additional activities could be discussed. I will add this information to the website to make parents aware of the fact that they can speak to the teacher about any concerns they may have.

The comment about seeing the average standard of children to make comparisons will also not be acted upon as children's ability at this age varies greatly, and over-anxiety by parents may actually have negative effects on children's development.

The Website has also been accessed by 'Sky News', this led to a news crew coming to our school to film a group lesson on 'Synthetic Phonics', which was shown on Sky News the same evening, this report can be found under the heading 'About Us' in 'News Updates'.

Furze Infants School has just had its latest Ofsted inspection, which took place on 10th and 11th May 2006. The chief inspector came to look at the website while I was updating it and concluded that the website was 'excellent', one of the best he has seen, full of detail and information for parents and would definitely get a mention in the report.

The response rate to the questionnaire was quite low, which could possibly indicate the general satisfaction of parents or neither positive/negative feelings which would explain the low initial take up of the service, however with time, the website should become an accepted part of the home/school culture.

The development of our website has not only improved links between school and parent/carers but with the wider community. We have now also been listed on the '020' for London search engine.

The website can be found at www.furze.bardaglea.org.uk.