

Parent Forum Handbook 2017



Statement from the Governing Body of Tremoilet V.C.P School

Welcome to the Parent Forum.

The Governors of Tremoilet School are keen to work closely with parents and carers to help shape the future of the school. This is why we have established the Parent Forum to encourage greater representation and influence from those who have children at the School.

We have put this handbook together to assist you in your role as a member of the Parent Forum. We are delighted you have joined this important group and I am sure you will make a positive impact. We are very much looking forward to working with you as we seek to continually improve what we can offer the young people who attend this School.

From The Acting Headteacher

Dear parents and carers,

I am delighted to see the implementation of a Parent Forum at Tremoilet VCP School. The forum supports the school and its pupils through providing 'Success through parental engagement and involvement'.

I greatly value our Parent Forum members' enthusiasm, commitment and willingness to make a difference to the School and all its pupils. We take parental involvement very seriously and work hard to establish a good and productive relationship with all parents and carers.

My staff and I are looking forward to working in partnership with the Parent Forum to make Tremoilet V.C.P an outstanding School and I wish the Parent Forum success in all its work.

Kind regards

Jayne Phillips, Acting Headteacher of Tremoilet V.C.P School

Tremoilet V.C.P School Parent Forum - "Parent Voice"

Purpose

The Parent Forum will strengthen the partnership between parents/carers and the school and will provide them with an opportunity to contribute to school decision making.

Principles

- The school governing body recognises and supports the role of the Parent Forum as part of their statutory duty to have regard to the views of parents
- The parent forum is an advisory and consultative body with no decision making authority
- The school leadership team will support the parent forum providing information, support and guidance.

Membership

Parent/carers of all learners on the school roll will be eligible to be a member, but volunteers from each year group need to contact the school to join prior to attending meetings of the parent forum.

Membership

- Meetings of the parent forum will take place at least once per school half term
- Written notice of each meeting will be given by the school, identifying the item/s for consideration
- Meetings will be led by members of the school leadership team, as appropriate to the item/s for consideration
- Meetings will normally take the form of presentation followed by discussion
- Discussion contributions by parents/carers will not be personalised
- There will be no consideration of additional items introduced by parents/carers during a meeting, but items can be added to the agenda prior to the meeting.
- Meetings will conclude with an agreed statement of outcome/s which will be considered by the school governing body and/or leadership team, as appropriate, and which will be available on request to any parent/carer unable to attend.

Items for consideration

Items for consideration at meetings of the parent forum will be determined by the school governing body and/or leadership team.

What a Parent Forum Is

A Parent Forum is a body of parents and carers, which represents parents and carers and provides a forum for them to put forward their views to the Headteacher, Leadership Team and Governing Body. The Parent Forum is representative of all parents and carers in the school community and is an inclusive and accessible way to involve parents and carers in decisions about the School. It is a forum through which parents and carers can be consulted, learn more about the School and how they can be involved in it, be provided with information and encouraged to network with others parents and carers. Involvement in the Parent Forum is less formal and requires a lesser commitment than being a member of the Governing Body, whilst enabling parents and carers to make a real contribution to the School.

What a Parent Forum is Not

The Parent Forum is not a forum for parents and carers to complain about individual members of staff nor does it have a role in dealing with complaints from individual parents. Parents should follow the School's published complaints procedure if they have a complaint against the Headteacher, a member of staff, the Governing Body or the School. The Parent Forum is intended to make a positive contribution to the life of the School by putting forward the views of parents and carers to the Governing Body. Comments about the management or operation of the School should be expressed in general terms rather than in terms of a particular individual. The Parent Forum accepts that it is not a decision making body, but an opportunity to influence and contribute to the running of the school. The Parent Forum is not a fundraising body.

Functions of the Parent Forum

The Governing Body remains the decision-maker and provides the strategic leadership for the School. The Parent Forum has a consultative and advisory role; it is a means to strengthen the voice of parents and carers and to enable them to express their opinions and influence decisions.

Parents and carers are a driving force behind their children's achievements, but also for improving the School system as a whole. The Parent Forum gives parents and carers a route to express their opinions and ideas and the School and the Governing Body a means to sound out parents' and carers' views on decisions about the strategic direction of the School.

The Parent Forum also supports the Governing Body in promoting the well-being of students. Parents and carers value not only educational achievement at the School, but a commitment to a positive ethos and a range of activities and opportunities beyond the formal curriculum. Involvement in the Parent Forum is an opportunity to generate a culture of genuine participation and to attempt to reach those disengaged parents and carers and parents and carers of particular groups of students who may face significant barriers to their inclusion such as language, literacy or culture.

The Benefits of a Parent Forum

The following benefits of having a Parent Forum have been identified:

- Children achieve more and behave better when their parents and carers are involved in their learning.
- Parents and Carers are representative of the whole school community; are consulted and have a voice in the running of the school; know they are being listened to and they can make a difference; develop a sense of ownership; learn about how School operates.
- The School draws new and different parents and carers into active involvement; gains an understanding of parents' and carers' views and experiences; demonstrates that the School is engaging with parents and carers; works with parents and carers to find solutions.

Parent Forum Vision and Mission

The Vision

Tremoilet V.C.P School Parent Forum aspires to reach out and engage with all parents and carers, providing them with a voice and to actively contribute to making a difference to the educational and life experience of students.

The Mission

"Success through parental engagement and involvement."

Parent Forum Ground Rules

Suggested ground rules by which the Parent Forum conducts meetings. By accepting appointment to the Parent Forum, each member will agree to accept these Ground Rules.

Members will

- support and be guided by the Chair of the meeting
- respect other people's opinions and ideas
- ensure only one person speaks at a time
- participate actively in all discussions
- take turns in speaking and signify a desire to speak by raising a hand
- allow the Chair to decide who speaks next
- limit the length of individual contributions
- actively listen to others' contributions
- ensure contributions are delivered in a positive and constructive manner, even when challenging or difficult issues are being discussed
- concentrate on positive outcomes for the Parent Forum that will be of benefit to the School and its students, staff and parents and carers
- keep to the agenda

Tremoilet V.C.P School Parent Forum - "Parent Voice"

- keep to time
- respect confidentiality and be cautious about naming individual students or teachers and discussing individual instances/events inappropriately
- encourage creativity and innovation in the way the Parent Forum is run and the activities it undertakes
- remind each other and any parents and carers attending Parent Forum meetings of the function and boundaries of the Parent Forum and the Ground Rules by which it operates
- be constructive and supportive when engaging with parents and carers
- try to attend as many Parent Forum meetings/activities as possible and to offer their apologies at the earliest opportunity

Relationships - Different Bodies, Different Roles

The Parent Forum must have a close working relationship with both the Governing Body and the School to ensure that its goals relate to the work of the Governing Body and the School's objectives.

The Governing Body - consulting on matters relating to the conduct of the school, through:

- attendance of Parent Governors at Parent Forum meetings
- the Governing Body parent/carer communication
- specific written requests from the Governing Body
- invitations to attend Governing Body or committee meetings to observe and provide views and opinions.

The Parent Forum - advising the Governing Body as to the views of parents, through:

- the Parent Governors attending Parent Forum meetings
- the Parent Forum meeting notes and action points
- specific written information
- invitations to other Governors and Headteacher to attend Parent Forum meetings
- regular attendance by teachers to Parent Forum meetings to advise and support
- invitations from the Parent Forum to specific teachers and the Senior Leadership Team to attend and provide presentations

The School - consulting on matters relating to the conduct of the School and providing information and guidance to parents through:

- invitations to the Parent Forum to become involved in or promote School activities and events
- requests of the Parent Forum to seek views from parents on specific issues.

Parent Forum Meeting Arrangements

The following arrangements for Parent Forum meetings have been determined by the Parent Forum:

- Timing and frequency - generally meetings will be held once a half term.
- Length – 1 hour and definitely no more than 1.5 hours - all agenda items should have time allotted to them;
- Quorum - to enable an effective meeting to take place there should be at least 3 parent/carer members present.
- Voting – where applicable will take place by a simple majority through a show of hands, with the meeting chair having the casting vote if the decision is split.
- Meeting agenda - to be agreed by the Parent Forum at the previous meeting and recorded on the approved template. Any other business should be discouraged.
- Meeting notes - simple and concise notes will be recorded on the approved template, noting a description of each item discussed and matters agreed. The minutes will be published on the School website on the Parent Forum web page. The following items will be standing items:
 - Review of Meeting Notes and Decisions
 - Review Schedule of Actions
 - Review of meeting outcomes against Parent Forum objectives
 - Date, Tim, Venue and Agenda for Next Meeting
- Action points - action points will be summarised in the approved action plan. The action plan will be published on the School website on the Parent Forum web page.
- Involvement of Members -
 - The agreed principle is that some attendance is better than no attendance.
 - To ensure maximum attendance the Parent Forum will consider different days/times to hold meetings
 - In some cases membership may be 'at a distance' using the buddy system, website or email
 - Support - members, parent governors and staff should welcome and support parents/carers attending for the first time.

Invitations to non-members - to include:

- general invitations to parents to attend open meetings
- specific invitations to groups of parents to attend meetings
- invitations to governors
- invitations to the Headteacher, members of the leadership team and teachers involved in specific areas of interest

Communication with parents/carers - this can be promoted via:

- Tremoilet School website
- Posters around the school
- Flyers
- A generic email address which parents/carers can use to communicate with the Parent Forum
- The school newsletter
- Emails from the governing body
- Use of Facebook and or twitter

Evaluation of the Parent Forum

It is important to ensure that the Parent Forum is working for the benefit of parents, carers and the School. In order to do this the Parent Forum will evaluate to what extent it is meeting its objectives, what benefits and impacts it is having and what might need to be improved or made more effective. It is essential that this evaluation is fed back the Governing Body, as depending on the outcome of the evaluation, the Governing Body may wish to review the structure or remit of the Parent Forum.

The Parent Forum objectives are as follows:

- providing a positive space to advise on parental views
- identifying and promoting opportunities
- consulting parents and carers
- providing parents and carers an opportunity to influence and contribute to the school
- encouraging parental involvement in the school
- encouraging parental networking

Evaluation against these objectives will take place using the following methods:

- at the conclusion of every meeting each attendee will be asked to complete a meeting evaluation
- annually evaluating the Parent Forum against the objectives

Review of the Parent Forum Handbook

The Parent Forum will keep the contents of the Handbook under review and will ensure that it is reviewed annually following consultation with the Parent Forum, the Governing Body and the Headteacher at the end of the academic year, for approval at the first meeting of the Parent Forum at the start of the following academic year.

The Parent Forum, the Governing Body or the Headteacher may wish to suggest committee, improvements or amendments to the Handbook at any time during the academic year. The Forum will consider these matters and, where appropriate, consult with the other bodies, before making any improvement or amendments.