

The Bellbird Primary School

Parent Forum – Minutes

Date: Wednesday 22 October 2025

Time: 5:30–6:30pm

Location: The Bellbird Primary School

Chair: James Puxley (Head Teacher)

1. Welcome and purpose

James welcomed everyone, thanked parents for volunteering, and outlined the Parent Forum's purpose: to listen to parent views, celebrate what works well, identify what is not working, and agree practical improvements within budget. The ethos is collaborative, drawing on ideas from the parent community.

2. Attendees

- James Puxley – Head Teacher (Chair)
- Amie Clarke
- Grant Severts
- Katy Holloway
- Steph Popa
- Beth Gardener

Apologies – Nichola Francis-Newton

3. School update (Head Teacher)

- New senior leadership: a newly appointed Deputy Head Teacher and a new Assistant Head Teacher (new role).
- Pupil numbers currently 424; local schools reported declining rolls, The Bellbird is over-subscribed
- Finances sound at present but likely tighter next year.
- Reputation is strong; families report pupils feel safe and supported.
- Mixed legacy perceptions (historic Ofsted judgement noted by governors), but current outlook is positive.

4. Joining the school: how well new families are supported

What is working:

- Children feel well supported on entry; calm start reported this year.
- Visual information in the prospectus and website helps set expectations.

What can improve:

- Clearer first-day directions; not all families know where to go.
- On-site signage suggested: arrows to Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 gates; external labels for classroom doors and class names to aid new carers and grandparents.
- Home visits: some nearby schools offer these; the school will review feasibility at scale.
- Open day dates: publish earlier and communicate to nurseries and local settings so they can share with prospective families.

5. Communication between school and parents

Newsletter: Weekly on Fridays is preferred to many ad-hoc emails.

Parents requested:

- A “Key dates next week” box at the very top of the email body.
- New dates highlighted for the first week they appear (in red)
- Proof-reading to reduce typographical mistakes and ensure attachments match references in the email.
- Reduce duplicate emails where families have multiple children.

Website: Current site is outdated. A redesigned site with updated photography is ready to launch soon. Parents offered to user-test before go-live. A governor will audit statutory content for compliance with Department for Education requirements.

6. School lunches

- Choice and ordering: Parents gave mixed feedback on pre-ordering versus daily choice. Benefits include reduced morning disruption and planning for dietary needs; drawbacks include children not recognising dishes and less spontaneity.
- Menu balance: Too many tomato-based options in a single day reduces real choice for some children.
- Dietary needs: Alternative menus can be limited, sometimes leaving only one viable option.
- Portions and sequencing: Reports that Key Stage 2 later sittings face smaller portions and reduced dessert availability.

- Improvements suggested: Add photographs or simple dish descriptions to the ordering system; review menu rotation for variety; check portion equity across sittings; explore flexibility for same-day selection where possible within waste constraints.

7. Clubs

- Wider range now available and appreciated (sports, choir, gardening and others).
- Notice and fairness: First-come-first-served emails at midday can disadvantage working parents.
- Proposals: Publish a termly clubs brochure with all details, costs and dates, shared before the end of the preceding term.
- Open a booking window at a set time and date; hold back places for Pupil Premium pupils; operate transparent waiting lists with rollover priority next term.

8. Educational visits and residentials

- Acknowledge costs, journey times, and staffing capacity.
- Consider funding support through local charities to widen access.
- Ensure equity across year groups: each year should have at least one substantive visit planned and published early.
- Residentials are valued; staffing availability is the main constraint.

9. Uniform and physical education kit

- Families are unsure where to purchase some items; school-supplied sales are ending to meet affordability guidance.
- Interest in a standardised physical education tracksuit in school colours to look smart at events and reduce morning uncertainty, balanced with affordability and sensory comfort.
- Proposal to survey parents on willingness to adopt a common kit and to keep non-branded options for affordability.
- For EYFS to Y1, clarify number of physical education days per year group so families can plan uniform and laundry.

10. Homework

- Views are mixed. Many value homework for consolidation and deadline practice; others find online-only tasks difficult due to devices, screen-time or motivation.
- Requests include: clear release day each week for new online tasks; paper-based alternatives (emailed printable sheets if printing at school is not feasible); send a termly homework menu on paper as well as online; consider a single page suitable for fridge display; a simple central hub (for example, a page with a QR code) linking to current tasks by year group.
- The optional approach is appreciated; workload for staff must be considered.

11. End-of-day routines

- Variation in class release times causes crowding and uncertainty.
- Suggestions: use radio-controlled clocks for consistent timing; keep gates managed to avoid very early releases; replace passive screen time before dismissal with a short class read-aloud where practical.

12. Community engagement and fundraising

- Family movie nights at school with snacks for fundraising.
- Restaurant or curry-night partnerships with a share of proceeds.
- Choir and pupil visits to local care homes and community groups at Christmas and Easter; expand participation to more classes.

Thanks and next meeting

James thanked everyone for constructive, candid feedback and practical ideas.

Next meeting: Wednesday 11th February 2026. A draft agenda will be circulated in advance and will include progress updates on the actions above.