

SOC Meeting – 26th April 2024

Attendees – Chris Young (CY) - Chair

Cara Ratukalou (CR) – Nursery Manager

Tamsin Willis-Stovold (T W-S) – Parent representative

Shamin Sadrafshari (SS) – Parent representative

1. Introductions

A new parent rep, Kathryn Perry, has been elected and is to be invited to future SOC meetings. No new introductions recorded.

2. Matters Arising

a. Reduction of Meat Options / implementing one meat free day per week for all children

CY advised that since the last meeting, Bath Spa has given notice and will cease to provide meals from 1st June 2024. We have been working with Procurement to identify possible replacement providers. There are very few options in the marketplace as most external Early years caterers appear to only deliver frozen meals for cooking on site. Options include our previous provider, Mini Meals and another local provider, Early Years Catering (EYC). Both providers cater for a range of allergies and diets and will offer meat free options. It was noted that EYC also offers some organic food and that both providers use local suppliers where possible and that they publish menus in advance which can then be shared with parents on a termly basis. A trial has been arranged with EYC and a decision will be taken after that on which supplier to go with. **CR to report progress at next SOC.**

b. Finance

It was noted that we are continuing to receive a number of requests for changes to hours and attendance days and that this is continuing to have an impact in terms of ongoing administration especially in relation to updating fee schedules which is very time consuming. It was again noted that in the coming year there is little / no availability in terms of spaces so this will mean that the nursery is going to have less flexibility to accommodate requests for changed hours and days. This is likely to be the case well into 2025.

It was noted that the change in food provider is likely to result in additional cost; the key reason that Bath Spa has withdrawn from the contract is that they are unable to make this financially viable. Other provider costs are above what we currently pay and this is likely to continue to be the case in coming years.

c. Nursery policies.

As previously discussed, Parents and Carers would like further clarity on the sickness absence / exclusion policies for children who are diagnosed with certain illnesses or conditions. CR advised that the policy is ready to share and will be issued shortly. **CR to issue new policy.**

CR advised that she is now looking at the safeguarding and behaviour management policies and will be aiming to release these in the coming months. **CR to update at subsequent meetings.**

d. Occupancy

CY noted that whilst occupancy is high, we are continuing to struggle with recruitment. Meetings have been held with the University's recruitment team to look at how we can address this issue and work is ongoing to look at our processes for attracting new staff.

CR reported that Nursery is currently running on around 92%-94% across all rooms. It was noted that we continue to have a significant demand for spaces and on current occupancy, we are likely to be at capacity for the next 3 school years. It was previously noted that we will need to revisit our admissions policy to make sure that people on the waiting list are clear on how this works so that we can be sure that places are being allocated on a fair and equitable basis. **Action: CR to include admissions policy on her priority policy list.**

e. Nursery Manager's Report

CR reported that communications had been sent out to parents to ensure they know who their child's key person is and to explain how the system works. CR advised that there has been a focus on getting all reports up to date and to make sure that observations are carried out and are recorded consistently.

CR advised that Parent consultations had been organised and had taken place. These will include updates on developmental milestones and engagement with the curriculum. Feedback received from parents has been very positive and we will be looking to hold more of these events more regularly in future.

CR advised that she had spoken to Room leaders about updating white boards outside rooms for parents collecting their children at lunch time and that this had been actioned.

3. Nursery Manager's Report (Items not covered elsewhere)

Staff Changes / Recruitment

CR advised that Nursery has successfully recruited cover for Ali (3 full days in baby room) and that Layla May House would be starting on the 22nd May working Weds-Fri (Inclusive).

The vacant Admin role has been offered this Week with an expected start date, subject to usual confirmations, in early June 2024.

The Nursery room leader has not resulted in an appointment and will need to be re-advertised. The approach to recruiting this role is to be discussed with recruitment as part of the general recruitment discussions highlighted earlier in the meeting.

Sara W (Nursery room) has resigned her position and will be leaving on the 15th May. Sarah B (Baby room) will be going on maternity leave beginning of June. We will need mat cover for 3 days. Adverts will be being posted for both positions.

Dates for Diary

CR advised of the following dates:

13th June pre-school – sports day and picnic.

11th July pre-school leavers party.

Invites will be going out to parents shortly.

CR advised that the lack of a room leader and admin support at the moment were having a particular impact, and this was meaning that she was having to spend significant time in the rooms making up numbers. It is hoped that this will ease when the new administrator takes up their post freeing up time for both CR and Tara.

Environmental Health

The EHO officer from BANES visited Nursery in February and awarded 5 stars (top rating) for food hygiene.

Communications

There was discussion about the various communications channels being used and concern was expressed that this could mean that some parents are not getting all messages. It was agreed that all official “all parent” communications would in future come out from the generic Nursery email address rather than through teams or any other channels. **CR to action.**

4. Parent and Carer Reps (issues not covered elsewhere in the meeting)

TWS asked about the “packed lunch” policy as a parent had told her that she had been advised that children should not have eggs (although this did not seem to be generally well-known). **CR advised that she would follow this up and issue guidance to parents on what should or should not be in packed lunches / parent provided snacks.**

TWS raised a question with regards to the Forest School. CR advised that this is used whenever feasible but with staffing pressures this can be difficult as this means operating at a lower ratio of children to staff. CR advised that Nursery would continue to try to make as much use of this as they can however this is unlikely to be extensive until recruitment issues have been resolved.

The Nursery website was discussed. It was agreed that this is primarily aimed at new or prospective parents and needs a refresh. CY advised that this could not be prioritised currently, but he will look at least to ensure that information is updated (such as with new policies) when these become available.

5. AOB

None

6. Next meeting:

27th July 2024 – 09:30 to 11:00, Human Resources Meeting Room.