

LET'S CHAT OVER COFFEE-

Q&A WITH MATTHEW HAGGER



Braeside in Buckhurst Hill, Coopersale Hall in Epping, Normanhurst in North Chingford and Oaklands in Loughton make up the Oak-Tree Group of Schools. We talk to the Group Managing Principal, Matthew Hagger, about the recent coffee mornings held with the current parents.

“ Q: TELL US ABOUT THE OAK-TREE COFFEE MORNINGS.

Between October and March each year there is a programme of informal Coffee Mornings for each Headmistress and me to chat with parents year group by year group at each school. These are useful for us to discuss various aspects of our education, with no set agenda, and to listen to feedback. This is the fifth year that these Coffee Mornings have been used to inform our school development plan as we continually look to enhance the service that we provide to our families.

Q: WHAT DO THE PARENTS LIKE TO DISCUSS?

The sessions last for around an hour, so our parents have ample opportunity to bring up anything that they would like to discuss, no matter how small or large.

We can discuss anything from the development of our extra-curricular activities programme to recent enhancements to the quality of the education. Some groups focus on particular themes, such as our intensive preparation for senior schools for parents of the older Oaklands and Coopersale Hall children, or our careers advice and Sixth Form entries at Normanhurst and Braeside. Some questions will concern the school as a whole and others the class or individual.

Q: WHICH DEVELOPMENTS HAVE COME FROM COFFEE MORNING DISCUSSIONS?

A few years ago a running theme in Coffee Mornings across

the Group was about communication. Parents were asking for more, and for ways to make it easier for them to access our information. As a result we developed and launched a new website for each school, four interactive Apps for Android and Apple devices, text message reminders to parents and a textback service for electronic signing. We are always updating and developing these. We're currently working on a new look for the websites to make them even more user-friendly. We developed our Parent Portals for the sending of all reports, handbooks and documentation and have recently launched an online Parents' Evening booking system that has proved very popular.

Recently Coffee Mornings have seen parents ask for reminders about upcoming dates, so as a result we created 'Forthcoming Events' posters that are displayed around each site.

Q: HOW DO YOU FOLLOW-UP THE COFFEE MORNINGS?

I spend time after each Coffee Morning discussing ideas for development or points for consideration with each Head and relevant members of staff, before implementing new initiatives or tweaking aspects of our provision.

The Coffee Mornings are very time-consuming as I now have around 30 of them each year across the four schools. However, I feel that they are incredibly important as I get to spend valuable time with hundreds of parents each year who have excellent ideas to contribute to our provision. ■ ”

THE DETAILS

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