



Julian's Primary School

Parent/Carer Forum Handbook

2019

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Julian's Primary School Parent/Carer Forum

'The Parent/Carer Voice'

Foreword

From Julian's Primary School Governing Body

Dear Parent/Carers,

Welcome to the Parent/Carer Forum.

The Governors of Julian's Primary School are very keen to work closely with parent/carers and carers to help shape the future of the school. This is why we have established the Parent/Carer 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/Carer 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.

Kind regards

Julian's Primary School Governing Body

From Alison Moller, Executive Head teacher

Dear Parent/Carers,

I am delighted to see the implementation of a Parent/Carer Forum, which has chosen as its mission its support of 'success through parent/carers engagement and involvement.' I greatly value Parent/Carer Forum members' enthusiasm, commitment and willingness to make a difference to the School and all of its Pupils. We take parent/carers involvement very seriously and work hard to establish a good and productive relationship with all parent/carers.

I and members of my staff are looking forward to working in partnership with the Parent/Carer Forum to make Julian's School an outstanding School and we wish the Parent/Carer Forum success in all its work.

Kind regards

Alison Moller, Executive Headteacher of Julian's Primary School

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1. Introduction

What a Parent/Carer Forum Is

A Parent/Carer Forum is a body of parent/carers, which represents parent/carers and provides a forum for them to put forward their views to the Head-teacher and Governing Body. The Parent/Carer Forum is representative of all parent/carers in the school community and is an inclusive and accessible way to involve parent/carers in decisions about the School. It is a forum through which parent/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 parent/carers. Involvement in the Parent/Carer Forum is less formal and requires a lesser commitment than being a member of the Governing Body, whilst enabling parent/carers to make a real contribution to Julians School.

What a Parent/carers Forum is Not

The Parent/Carer Forum is not a forum for parent/carers to complain about individual members of staff nor does it have a role in dealing with complaints from individual parent/carers. Parent/Carers should follow the School's published complaints procedure if they have a complaint against the Executive Headteacher, a member of the Senior Leadership team or staff, the Governing Body or the School. The Parent/Carer Forum is intended to make a positive contribution to the life of the School by putting forward the views of parent/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/Carer 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/Carer Forum is not a fundraising body.

Functions of the Parent/Carer Forum

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

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

The Parent/Carer Forum also supports the Governing Body in promoting the well-being of pupils. Parent/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/Carer Forum is an opportunity to generate a culture of genuine

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participation and to attempt to reach those disengaged parent/carers of particular groups of pupils who may face significant barriers to their inclusion such as language, literacy or culture.

The Benefits of a Parent/Carer Forum

The following benefits have been identified by schools who have already implemented Parent/carers Forums:

Children

- Achieve more and behave better when their parent/carers are involved in their learning

Parent/Carers

- Represents the whole school community
- Parent/carers 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 parent/carers into active involvement
- Gains an understanding of parent/carers' views and experiences
- Demonstrates that the School is engaging with parent/carers
- Works with parent/carers to find solutions

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2. Parent/Carer Forum Vision and Mission

The Vision

Julian's Parent/Carer Forum aspires to reach out and engage with all parent/carers, providing them with a voice and to actively contribute to making a difference to the educational and life experience of pupils.

The Mission

Success through parent/carers engagement and involvement.

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3. Parent/Carer Forum Ground Rules

The Parent/Carer Forum have developed a set of ground rules by which it will conduct its meetings. By accepting appointment to the Parent/Carer Forum, each member has agreed 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/Carer Forum that will be of benefit to the School and its pupils, staff and parent/carers and carers
- Keep to the agenda
- Keep to time
- Respect confidentiality and be cautious about naming individual pupils or teachers and discussing individual instances / events inappropriately
- Encourage creativity and innovation in the way the Parent/Carer Forum is run and the activities it undertakes
- Remind each other and any parent/carers attending Parent/Carer Forum meetings of the function and boundaries of the Parent/Carer Forum and the Ground Rules by which it operates
- Be constructive and supportive when engaging with parent/carers and carers
- Try to attend as many Parent/Carer Forum meetings / activities as possible and to offer their apologies at the earliest opportunity

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4. Membership of the Parent/Carer Forum

Parent/Carer

- Having a child in the school makes parent/carers automatic members of the Parent/Carer Forum.
- Ideally each meeting should include parent/carers members from;
 - One parent/carers for each year group
 - One parent/carers to represent children who speak English as an additional language

Parent/carers Governors

In addition, there will be at least one parent/carers governor attend Parent/Carers Forum meetings.

Staff

- In addition, there will be at least one member of the Senior Leadership Team at Parent/Carers Forum meetings
- Staff are invited to attend if they wish to do so or if invited to speak on a particular topic

Fixed Appointments within the Parent/carers Forum

Named Parent/Carers will be appointed to the following positions

- Chair
- Secretary
- Coordinator

The term of office will be for the academic year, with appointments being sought in September.

Role specifications for these positions can be found in section 6. A parent/carers holding a position in another school body, such as the Governing Body, cannot be appointed to one of these roles.

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5. Relationships - Different Bodies, Different Roles

The Parent/Carer 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 responsibilities of other groups in place in the school, for example PTFA, are not affected by the Parent/Carer Forum.

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

- Attendance of Parent/Carer Governors at Parent/Carer Forum meetings
- The Governing Body parent/carers 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/Carer Forum - advising the Governing Body as to the views of parent/carers, through:

- The Parent/Carer Governors attending Parent/carers Forum meetings
- The Parent/Carer Forum meeting notes and action points
- Specific written information
- Invitations to other Governors and Executive Headteacher and Heads of School to attend Parent/Carer Forum meetings
- Regular attendance by teachers to Parent/Carer Forum meetings to advise and support
- Invitations from the Parent/carers 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 parent/carers through:

- Invitations to the Parent/Carer Forum to become involved in or promote School activities and events
- Requests of the Parent/Carer Forum to seek views from parent/carers on specific issues.

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6. The Role of the Parent/Carer Forum Chair, Secretary and Coordinator

Role of the Chair

The Chair will:

- Liaise with the Secretary and Coordinator over the arrangements for the meeting
- Welcome everyone to the meeting
- Remind everyone of the practical arrangements such as toilets, fire exits, refreshments
- Explain the purpose of the meeting and if necessary, the purpose of the Parent/Carer Forum
- Clarify the Ground Rules where necessary
- Ask for reports on any actions undertaken since the last meeting (as per the action plan)
- Keep the meeting on track and to order
- Keep the meeting to time - maintain control as to who speaks, in which order and for how long
- Make sure people observe the Ground Rules
- Keep the discussion focused, positive and constructive
- Stop inappropriate behaviour and where necessary remind people of other routes such as the complaints procedure
- Repeat people's comments if you think they have not been heard or understood or ask for clarification
- Sum up each discussion in terms of what has been discussed and what has been agreed including who will take any agreed actions forward and how progress will be reported back
- Agree the date, time and venue for the next meeting
- Have the casting vote where there is a split decision
- Ask for agenda items for the next meeting, agree the allotment of time for each item and lead the discussion as to whether the meeting should be open or closed
- Thank people for their participation and contributions
- Check the meeting notes once prepared by the Secretary

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Role of the Coordinator

The Coordinator will:

- Liaise with the Chair and Secretary over the arrangements for the meeting
- Encourage representation from each year group through special invitations
- Market the Parent/Carer Forum to be fully inclusive and representative of the whole community
- Ensure the room is booked for the meeting and refreshments are ordered via the School
- Seek help in clearing away and ensure the room is clear and tidy before leaving
- Advise parent/carers of the date and topic of future meetings following each meet
- Invite the parent/carers community to the Parent/Carer Forum meeting at least two weeks in advance
- Promote the Parent/Carer Forum through posters and flyers
- Ensure all advance details of Parent/Carer Forum meetings are on the Julian's website
- Send a follow up invitation through the school newsletter one week before the meeting
- Liaise with the school to agree schedule of meeting dates each year

Role of the Secretary

The Secretary will:

- Liaise with the Chair and Coordinator over the arrangements for the meeting
- Receive and record apologies for the coming meeting;
- Record attendances of members;
- Note the attendance of parent/carers and carers and others;
- Take notes of the meetings and draw up the action plan for the meeting;
- Record the agenda as agreed by the meeting with the allotted times for each separate agenda item and send it out to all members, by email no less than 7 days before the meeting;
- Arrange for the agenda to be posted on the Julians School website;
- Send out the meeting notes and the action plan no more than two weeks after the meeting, having agreed them with the Chair;
- Arrange for the meeting notes and the action plan to be posted on the Parent/Carer Forum webpage of Julians School website;
- Email the agenda, meeting notes and the action plan to the Executive Headteacher/Heads of School.

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7. Parent/carers Forum Meeting Arrangements

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

- i. **Timing and frequency** - generally meetings will be held once a term with the meeting to take place just before the Governing Body meeting.
- ii. **Length** – 1 hour - all agenda items should have time allotted to them;
- iii. **Quorum** - to enable an effective meeting to take place there should be at least 3 parent/carers members present.
- iv. **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.
- v. **Meeting agenda** - to be agreed by the Parent/Carer Forum at the previous meeting and recorded on an approved template. Any other business should be discouraged.
- vi. **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/Carer 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/Carer Forum objectives
 - Date, Time, Venue and Agenda for Next Meeting
 - Appointment of Chair, Coordinator and Secretary
- vii. **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/Carer Forum web page.
- viii. **Venue / booking rooms / refreshments** - to be booked through the School.
- ix. **Involvement of Members** -
 - The agreed principle is that some attendance is better than no attendance.
 - To ensure maximum attendance the Parent/Carer 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
- x. **Support** - members, parent/carers governors and staff should welcome and support parent/carers attending for the first time.

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- xi. **Invitations to non members** - to include:
 - General invitations to parent/carers to attend open meetings
 - Specific invitations to groups of parent/carers to attend meetings
 - Invitations to governors
 - Invitations to the Headteacher, members of the leadership team and teachers involved in specific areas of interest
- xii. **Exclusion procedures** - Where members or others attending the meeting do not comply with the Ground Rules and this has been highlighted by the Chair, if that person's behaviour continues to breach the Ground Rules and disrupt the meeting and a specific warning as to expulsion has been given by the Chair, that person will be asked to leave the meeting.
- xiii. **Assistance / support** - Where the Parent/Carer Forum requires specific assistance or support, that need should be communicated to the Governing Body via the Clerk to the Governing Body;
- xiv. **Communication with parent/carers** - this can be promoted via:
 - Julian's School website
 - Posters around the school
 - Flyers in book bags
 - A generic email address which parent/carers can use to communicate with the Parent/Carer Forum
 - The school newsletter
 - Emails from the Governing Body
 - Text messages through the School's messaging facility

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8. Evaluation of the Parent/Carer Forum

It is important to ensure that the Parent/Carer Forum is working for the benefit of parent/carers and the School. In order to do this the Parent/Carer 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/Carer Forum.

The Parent/Carer Forum has determined that its objectives are as follows:

- Providing a positive space to advise on parent/carers views
- Identifying and promoting opportunities
- Consulting parent/carers
- Providing parent/carers an opportunity to influence and contribute to the school
- Encouraging parent/carers involvement in the school
- Encouraging parent/carers networking

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

- At the conclusion of every meeting each attendee will be asked to complete a meeting evaluation
- Annually evaluating the Parent/Carer Forum against the objectives

9. Review of the Parent/Carer Forum Handbook

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

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