

What are the demands of CFL Parents? (Transcript)

Hello, my name is Nagini. I would like to share with you a little about what the demands are on parents who join CFL, Centre for Learning.

I am sure you will have expectations of this school and the teachers, similarly we have some expectations of a parent's role at CFL. We have tried over the years to work on how we communicate with parents about what you all will be signing up for, what these expectations are, but I'm sure there is always room for us to improve! We encourage you all to take on this responsibility and ask questions if you have doubts during the online Zoom sessions which will be scheduled over the next few months.

At the most basic level, parents will be part of school bus duty rotas and cooking rotas in our community kitchen. And many parents enjoy these rotas as this gives them an opportunity to interact with other parents and catch glimpses of their children on campus during snack and meal times.

Once a month we have a Sunday meeting with parents and it is a very essential part of working together. We expect both parents to be part of these meetings. These meetings are a forum for teachers and parents to come together to discuss a range of topics from the very practical to the philosophical. Even though I use these two terms, practical and philosophical, I know this is an artificial divide and both are in fact enmeshed; one directly informing the other. Examples of themes over the years have been: media, boredom, well-being, fear, beliefs, communication with the young, child sexuality and, insecurity. Some of these are important, as we are bringing up children together. Others are important as they inform how we as human beings relate to each other and the world around us. We have recently started weekend-long retreats as part of the Sunday meeting and these are voluntary.

Other than these aspects of the school, there is something else much more fundamental. Although we have come together because of your child, we expect that **you** are signing up for this journey of enquiry as well. We expect that you are interested in the questions and philosophical leanings of this school; we expect that you are interested in examining your own lives, looking inward; we expect that we may not always agree but that you will bring your disagreements to us, as we will to you, with an honesty and openness to look together; we expect you to engage with the philosophical questions of CFL with your child at home (it cannot be just what the school does); we expect that your own engagement and interest in the philosophy will inform how you relate to your child and communicate with them; we expect that we as adults can question each other in an open, non-judgemental way about anything that affects the upbringing of our children.

At home, there must be a culture of communication and listening between you and your children. As they grow up, you may experience different challenges in communication, however it can never be assumed that the school will take care of everything. There must be an open communication at home; there cannot be a fear of invading your child's privacy or, as sometimes happens, a fear of broaching certain topics with your child.

We expect that both parents of a child are equally interested and wanting to engage with all that I have just said. After all, the school and both of you are bringing up these children. It is essential that when something bothers you, and believe me something will, you bring it to the school. A nagging irritation or doubt, a private perception or an assumption can carry over years, slight and imaginary hurts can accumulate without communication. You will notice that affection for the school can quickly be dented when there is a build up of such feelings. You will also notice that these are often resolvable in a friendly conversation.

I also want to assure you, that the teachers have never and, will never, treat your child badly or differently because you've asked questions or critiqued the school. This is a journey that, if things work out, we may be taking together for the next decade. Please do give serious thought to whether all that I have mentioned is of interest to you. Because if it's not, these years will be difficult for all of us. If you are interested and ready to plunge in however, we are excited and look forward to working with you.