

# Parents' Forum Minutes

4<sup>th</sup> December 2014

## 1. Proposed changes to the curriculum

Mr Thomson, Deputy Head, outlined the changes to curriculum and indicated that the school is looking at further changes to the Year 9 curriculum to ensure that students are able to tackle the new GCSEs. The new GCSEs are heavy in content and are a return to "linear" exams, with exams at the end of Year 11 being the key to results as opposed to modules and coursework throughout Years 10 and 11. We have to ensure that students are fully prepared for the rigours of these new exams.

Current Year 9 will take the new GCSEs in English and Maths (and will therefore leave school with a mixture of old and new GCSEs). They have been placed into their Key Stage 4 pathways a year early, so that they can begin properly on their English and Maths GCSEs. Extra time for English and Maths has been given to Years 7 to 9, as these students will not have experienced the new Key Stage 2 curriculum at primary school; we need to ensure that they are not therefore left with any gaps in their knowledge by the end of Key Stage 4.

We are currently looking at other ways in which we can adapt the Year 9 curriculum, though have taken on board the feedback from Parents' Forum last year that students may not have the maturity to go through a full options programme in Year 8.

Mr Thomson explained the new "Progress 8" measure by which the school's performance will be measured from 2016. The implications are that more students will take Double Science; if they do so, they will only need to take *either* a language or a humanities subject to meet the measure. Further information will of course be available at Year 9 Options Evening and Year 8 Curriculum Evening.

## 2. School bus update

Mr Whalley, Deputy Headteacher, gave parents an update on our efforts to secure a school bus for the Mosley Common area (to supplement or replace students' use of the 32 bus). Evidence of need has been shared with Greater Manchester Passenger Transport and a local councillor is also keen to make this happen. We are awaiting a response and will keep parents up to date with any decisions via the usual channels.

## 3. Homework

The school is currently taking a close look at its homework arrangements and we want to involve parents' views in this. Mr Whalley asked parents to comment upon current homework provision, including the amount of homework being set and the quality of the homework. Points raised included:

- There was some inconsistency in the amount of homework given each day; some days, students had none, some days too much;
- Currently, Year 6 students at Tyldesley Primary are not being given homework but are being given extra intervention after school. It was felt that we will need to be aware of this at transition and possibly do some work on "preparing for homework";
- Clarity was needed on the purpose of homework – one important purpose being to get them into good study habits in time for their GCSE work (increasingly important with the new GCSEs);
- Some very conscientious students were feeling the pressure of a heavy homework load;
- Concern was expressed about how best to help students with homework – it was suggested that using the teacher feedback to encourage further development is a useful activity;

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- It was noted that there does need to be a balance between the amount of work students were expected to do and other activities. Mrs Garretts made it clear that it is usually not appropriate for homework to be given for the day after;
- It was suggested by Mr Whalley that we are considering introducing a homework timetable to ensure that students can plan their homework more easily. Parents were asked what they felt about this; there were no strong feelings either way but it was felt that it was a way to avoid the overload on some days for some students.

#### 4. New school day feedback

Mr Whalley reminded parents about the changes to the school day that have resulted in extra teaching time and a new pastoral curriculum. Feedback from the parents present was positive; where students had commented on their new form time, it was in a positive way. No negative points were raised, though the group at the meeting was relatively small and we need to be mindful of this. All parents will be given a chance to comment on the use of form time when we send out our biennial parent questionnaire at the end of January.

#### 5. Parents' Evenings

Parents were reminded of the Parents' Evening dates.

There was some discussion about the timing of Parents' Evenings and a Year 10 parents said that they would have liked an earlier Parents' Evening. Progress Review Day was felt to be a good way to find out about progress, especially as form tutors begin to know the children really well as they move up the school. It was noted, however, that on the (thankfully rare) occasions when the form tutor was changed more than once this did not work as well.

#### 6. Any other business

It was noted that we need to try to encourage better attendance at the Forum meetings and we will review how the events are advertised. We also apologised again for the change of date – due to the absence through injury of a key player!

#### 7. Date and time of next meeting

Thursday, 26<sup>th</sup> February at 6.00pm.