

Fred Longworth High School
Parents' Forum

Thursday, 5th June 2014

Minutes

1. "New" Pastoral Deputy

Mr Jonathan Whalley, our new Pastoral Deputy, introduced himself to parents. He has been in post since Easter 2014 and has settled in to the school very quickly. He said that he is enjoying working at Fred Longworth and is looking forward to working closely with parents as we move forward.

2. School Day Consultation

Mrs Garretts updated parents on the progress of the consultation. Parental response has been largely positive, though there are some concerns about the timing of the buses.

The main problem appears to be with the bus service from Mosley Common (the 32 service). The most appropriate bus for students to catch apparently arrives at 8.30 (too late for the proposed 8.30 start), but the bus timetable states that it should arrive at 8.20. We are investigating at first hand the timing of this bus – a member of staff will stand at the top of Printshop Lane every morning next week to monitor the situation.

Mrs Garretts has spoken to the bus company but has not yet received a clear answer as to how buses are being affected by significant roadworks in the area. She explained that she has requested a possible revision to the schedule or the provision of a school bus service – we await a reply from Greater Manchester Transport and should have further news shortly.

It was noted that another option was to explore the sharing of one of the St Mary's school bus services. This, alongside other service buses, would mean students arriving at school earlier. The question was asked whether early arrivals could be accommodated with a safe, warm place to wait. It was pointed out that some students already arrive early and that there is space within school. A breakfast service is already provided within the canteen.

One parent expressed a concern that the later finish would make it later to pick up younger children from primary school and asked why the school intended to make these changes at a time when results appeared to be improving year on year in any case. Mrs Garretts pointed out that the changes would give us 35 hours' extra teaching over the course of the year and that this was needed to address the greater difficulty/increased content within the GCSEs planned for 2016 and beyond (affecting current Year 9 and below). The school is being proactive in creating extra curriculum time.

A separate problem was noted in that the afternoon bus caught by many students leaves Printshop Lane at 3.00pm. Students would struggle to catch this bus even with a 2.55pm finish. It was pointed out that there is another bus at 3.30pm and a 3 o'clock finish would mean a reasonable waiting time. There are also many activities taking place immediately after school so no students should be forced to wait for lengthy periods in the cold. It was stressed once more, however, that a school bus would solve any issues and we will continue to push this.

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It is possible that, in response to bus issues, we may consider keeping the start time at 8.35 and taking 5 minutes from the lunch break to accommodate these difficulties.

Students are being consulted through assemblies and, apart from 1 Year 8 boy who clearly didn't like the prospect of extra learning time, the response has been positive. Some students have expressed the same concerns about the bus times as their parents.

There was some discussion as to how the new "guided bus way" would affect timings. One parent expressed optimism that it would eventually ease the traffic but it was felt that this would be minimal. Another point made was that the bus way was designed for commuters to Manchester and that students would only be able to access it at a few places along its route. It was therefore to be regarded as useful for some but not for others.

3. Uniform

Parents were asked how students have received the new "socks in summer" uniform. One parent expressed the view that it had been greeted gleefully as the event of the year by some of the girls and advice was shared as to the cheapest (and most expensive!) provider of plain black socks. No-one expressed any concerns about the changes.

The discussion ran on into length of skirts and it was pointed out that girls will always try to roll up the skirts – something for us as staff to monitor.

4. Mobile 'Phone Policy

A proposed change to the wording of the mobile 'phone rule was outlined for parents' consideration. Currently, the rule states that mobile 'phones are not allowed on school premises (whether or not they are switched off). We do not, however, search students' bags for 'phones and, in practice, we know that many students carry 'phones for use on the journeys to and from school. There is, of course, a safety element in this.

We therefore propose that the rule is changed. The new rule will mean the following:

- Mobile 'phones must not be used on school premises at any time during the school day (including breaks and lunchtimes);
- We accept that students may have 'phones in their possession, but these should be switched off during the day to avoid disruption to learning. They can, however, be used after school (provided a student is not in or on their way to detention);
- If a 'phone is seen or heard during the school day it will be confiscated until the end of the week. In these circumstances, a student must NOT remove the SIM card from the 'phone before handing it over to the member of staff.

Mrs Garretts pointed out that we still intend to ban the use of mobiles during breaks and lunchtimes because they are sometimes used for bullying *and* because we would like our students to speak to one another as human beings rather than spend further time looking at a screen!

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Parents agreed that the change to the rule was common sense. The rule will therefore be introduced from September 2014., subject to Governors' approval.

5. Year 8 Pathways

Mr Thomson, Curriculum Deputy, explained the changes to the way we group students within the curriculum.

It was pointed out that the increased content within the new English and Maths GCSEs, to be followed by changes to other GCSEs, needs a response from the school. Extra curriculum time has been provided for Maths and English at Key Stage 3 but we have also decided to place students in their Key Stage 4 groupings at the end of Year 8 rather than at the end of Year 9, as has been the case in previous years. This will enable Maths and English to begin teaching the GCSEs a year early (though the students will not sit the exams until the end of Year 11).

Some parents of current Year 7 students asked about what the term "pathways" means in relation to the way in which we group students and it was explained that the bands of P, O, M and N are created to ensure that best match of curriculum and teaching to students according to their ability. The process of choosing a pathway for each child is very thorough and all decisions are based upon a wide range of data. Parents were reassured that further information would be given within the annual curriculum and achievement evenings so that they would be fully aware of the process when their children reach Year 8.

There was some discussion about the changes to GCSEs. The new English and Maths GCSEs will affect children currently in school but the new primary curriculum is not yet in place. This means that children currently in high school will need to learn the new content of the "bigger" GCSEs but won't have covered everything at Key Stage 2 that future students will. This was another reason for the allocation of more time for English and Maths at Key Stage 3 – we need to bridge the gap to ensure that they can cope more easily at Key Stage 4.

June 2014