

Parents' Forum  
8th January 2014  
Minutes

The following school representatives were present:

Mrs J Garretts (Headteacher); Mr P Hodkinson (Deputy Headteacher); Mr A Gallimore (Director of Business and Finance); Mrs S Partington (Parent Governor).

**1. Update.**

Mr. Hodkinson went through the minutes of the last meeting and updated parents on some of the issues raised last time. He confirmed with parents that, since the last meeting, Curriculum Evenings have addressed many of the issues about information that new parents had raised. He also reported that 75% of parents attended the Progress Review Day in December, including 96% of Year 7 parents. Parents were reminded that they now have access to Frog and this is a valuable source of information.

**2. New Website**

In response to issues raised last time, a new website is being developed. Mr. Gallimore demonstrated the new website, which is to be launched in late January. Items such as Parents' Handbooks and an extra curricular activities timetable have been added in response to concerns raised at the last Forum meeting. There is also a Twitter feed on the new website. The completed website should be a valuable, central source of information for parents.

Parents can access the website to view and review the suggested new site on [www.flhs.org.uk/wordpress](http://www.flhs.org.uk/wordpress). Mr. Gallimore invited comments and asked for feedback to be emailed to [sbm@flhs.wigan.sch.uk](mailto:sbm@flhs.wigan.sch.uk).

Some suggestions were made by parents:

- A Headteacher's Blog;
- An interactive section to encourage parental comment. It was felt that the forum sections on Frog would be more useful for this to take place, as it would be easier to comment more openly in a forum that remained within the school community;
- Access to Frog from the website. It was confirmed that there is a link to Frog on the new site. It was suggested that Frog is put as a link under the Parents' tab so that it is more accessible. This was accepted as a good idea.
- Names and possibly photographs of staff to be on the website, so that parents can clearly recognize each teacher. Mr. Gallimore pointed out that some faculties had already listed their staff; the Science Faculty had listed staff alongside each teacher's specialism and this was felt to be a useful model. It was suggested that each Faculty might do something similar to this.

**3. Communication**

Some concern was expressed about the danger of parents missing something within so many lines of communication. There was a discussion about current forms of communication. Parents felt that Parent Call texts work well.

Some parents felt that the Forum meeting had not been widely advertised. It had

been advertised in the Parents' Newsletter but this had gone out before Christmas. It was confirmed that this evening's attendees will be reminded of the time and date of the next meeting by email.

Mr Hodkinson reminded parents that the Planner is an important means of communication.

Mrs Garretts asked parents if the new Reception arrangements have made a difference to telephone access. It was confirmed that this has been much better, though there are still some issues with receiving responses from individual teachers. It was advised that to go through the Head of Year is the most reliable way to get a response.

#### **4. Rewards**

Mr Hodkinson updated parents on the rewards system. At students' request, vouchers other than for the Trafford Centre are now being used. The system appears to be working well. Some parents reported that they had had Praise Postcards and said that they felt that these were effective.

#### **5. Parents' Evenings**

A parent raised the issue that the Year 8 Parents' Evening doesn't take place until March. It was pointed out that Progress Review Day is earlier and this is an opportunity to raise issues. It was also explained that the Parents' Evenings are organized to provide an opportunity for direct contact in each term. The Parents' Evenings on which parents see subject teachers have to be spaced out and Year 11 has to be the first of these in the cycle.

A parent suggested that it would be useful to have all this explained in a document within the Parents' Handbook, so that parents could easily see to pattern over 5 years. It was agreed that this was a good idea and it will be acted upon for the next set of Parents' Handbooks.

#### **6. Questions and Answers**

Several questions were asked, as follows:

- Is it feasible to have lockers for students? This has been discussed but there is no suitable space in which to place the lockers.
- Is there a lost property facility? Lost property is taken initially to Reception.
- Why were there so many "reds" on the Year 7 reports? This has been looked into and was due to a technical issue. A letter will go to Year 7 parents with the Spring interims.
- Why are some new students joining the school when it is full? This is not the case. We only admit new students when vacancies are created. This happens over the course of a year because families move away from the area from time to time. Our standard admission number is 255 per year group and will remain the same.
- Do students have access to counsellors from outside the school? Yes. Our pastoral care is regarded as a model of good practice by other schools. A complex network of support is in place.
- Are there any adult education classes? Our facilities are used by students out of school hours – their needs come first.

- Are there any plans to open a sixth form? Not at the present time. Funding for school sixth forms has been reduced.

## **7. General Issues**

Questions were asked about school meals. It was confirmed that the menus will be on the new website. Some parents were clearly using Wisepay to check upon what their children were eating.

It was suggested that we publish a response to national issues, possibly as part of a Headteacher's blog or by involving other staff. The dangers of schools expressing opinions about national developments were raised and one parent made the point that it would be difficult to find time to do this regularly. One parent also added that teachers need to concentrate on teaching rather than creating blogs. Some consideration would need to be given to this and how often - perhaps a termly update rather than a weekly blog.

Teachers' Twitter feeds currently available are very useful.

## **8. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Thursday, 13 March 2014 at 6.00pm.