

Parents' Forum

First Meeting: Tuesday, 8th October 2013

Notes

The Panel

Mrs J Garretts (Headteacher)

Mr P Hodgkinson (Deputy Headteacher)

Mrs S Partington (Parent Governor)

Shape of Future Meetings

It was agreed that future meetings should be placed on the calendar prior to Governors' meetings, so that feedback to the full Governing Body can be given. A 6.00pm start for all Parents' Forum meetings was agreed.

Email addresses for all parents present were taken so that further information can be given directly.

Open Agenda

As this was the first meeting, a completely open agenda was used so that any concerns or questions could be aired. In the future, there will be an opportunity for parents to request specific agenda items.

Issues raised:

1. Uniform

A parent raised the question about why we now specify skirt length and why the "straight" skirts are no longer part of school uniform. It was explained that the original request for pleated skirts came from School Council. We initially introduced these pleated skirts as an option and their popularity was clear, so a decision was taken to make them the only option.

Skirt length specification is an attempt to address parental concerns about tights having to be worn in summer (current policy). The consistently longer length should enable us to introduce a summer uniform with socks as an alternative to tights.

Students have been informed that this will depend on how they respond to the new skirts. A number of parents commented that they were pleased with the changes, which mean that there are fewer disputes at home over the suitability of skirts!

2. Communication

There was a request for more – and earlier – information about dates of events. The suggestion was made that Parents' Handbooks be placed on the website so that information is easy to access. This will be done as soon as we can. Further information on extra curricular activities was also requested.

It was pointed out that the Student Planner is an important source of information and that Frog will be launched with parents in the near future. This should help to improve home-school communication. It was agreed that, whilst the website has improved, we still have work to do in ensuring that it is as informative as possible. Some new parents felt that they needed more information and it was promised that the Year 7 Raising Achievement Evening to be held shortly would address many of their concerns.

The School's Twitter feed was praised as being very informative, as was Parent Call.

It was noted that email addresses for Heads of Year would be useful. This will be addressed.

3. Curriculum

There were some questions about language choice. We were not able to offer Year 9 Spanish this year as there was not enough uptake. Reassurance was given that this would be an option offered at Key Stage 4, as presently.

Year 10 Curriculum Evening was very much appreciated.

4. The Student Planner

There was clarification of why we expect parents to sign the Planner weekly. This was to ensure regular communication between home and school. A new approach to recording learning has been adopted this year and students are expected to write something about their learning in each lesson. Parents were encouraged to discuss the contents of this with the students.

The merit system in Planners was praised – the students are very enthusiastic about this. There was also praise for the electronic rewards system currently being trialled in Science. It was confirmed that the merit system in Years 9, 10 and 11 is electronic and there was discussion about how parents could be better informed about this.

5. General Issues

There was a question about the short time available for students to change before and after PE. It was explained that some students had a tendency to “drag out” the process and a number of parents felt that the time allowed was sufficient. It was confirmed that the library is open until 4.00 each night and every lunchtime. The “Hot Frogs” facility at Shakerley Community Centre was also highlighted.

Summer school was outlined as being an important part of transition from primary school.

Further opportunities for electronic learning were suggested. Mathematics is compatible with the iPad.

Lexia was noted as a very useful tool for parents to monitor progress.

Frog was mentioned, including some issues with log in. There will be an official launch with parents that should iron out many issues – and Frog would be discussed at the Year 7 Raising Achievement Evening for new parents. The Humanities with whole schemes of work was noted as useful.

Parents in attendance agreed that this was a useful format to air concerns and questions. From School's point of view, it was very useful to listen to these ideas and concerns and the issues regarding communication will be given key priority.

The date of the next meeting will be on the website, communicated through Twitter and by letter. Parents in attendance tonight will receive an email with this information.