

GEORGE STEPHENSON HIGH SCHOOL

MINUTES OF PARENTS' FORUM MEETING

Monday 18 January 2016

Present: Christine Anson, Karen Blake, Andrea Brownless, Anne Burke, Candida Mellor, Helen Welford, Caroline Sykes, Tracey Anderson, Peter Douthwaite.

Apologies: Clare Atkins, Ian Cook, Angela Henderson, Helen Tansey, Helen Tovey, Karen Turner, Rachel Westwood, Ian Wilkinson.

1. Matters arising from previous meeting:

6th form

Year 12 students' study sessions – Parents' Forum comments about noise levels & working practices in the study area were discussed with the 6th form team.

Response: noise levels in September were not the usual situation and mostly due to students settling in and getting used to the purpose of study lessons and knowing what to do in them. We regularly have students using the room when they aren't in study lessons and Miss Tate (Guidance Manager 6th form) & Miss Cullen (Learning Mentor 6th form) endeavour to make sure those students aren't distracting the ones in study lessons.

Students are not allowed to complete homework in study lessons because homework is the bare minimum of work 6th form students need to be doing outside of lessons to keep up with the content. The study lesson is expected to count for 1 of the 4/5 hours students should be doing outside of lessons to keep up with wider reading/notes/revision etc. We have a resource bank of wider reading textbooks, exam papers and specifications in the drawers in the study area that aims to support them with this. The purpose of the study lessons is to support students to develop their study skills as opposed to just completing work set by their teachers.

Website

Concern expressed about home learning calendar and events diary not being updated on website.

Response: we are currently in the process of moving to a new website and some of the information in the home learning section is still being updated. The subject areas have all been asked to ensure that their projects are added as soon as possible.

Bike Club

The forum asked at the last meeting if there were plans to bring this back.

Response: despite several attempts, and announcements in assemblies, Mr. Turner has still only had a response from one Y7 student. He will try again this half term, and the Sustrans officer is still willing to work with us, so the hope is that we may eventually get it up and running again.

Football

36 Y7 students tried out for the first team and parents wondered of there was a chance of a second team set up.

Response:

Mr. Bell runs the Y7 team this year and they are in the North Tyneside league and cup. He also runs the Y10 team so between the two there are a lot of games to fit in between September and April when the season finishes. During the winter months it's hard to play games unless the school has floodlights so fixtures all get condensed into a short time frame which means we are stretched to run more teams. There were 12 games in the first term. The other two male PE teachers also run football and rugby teams. This together with other sports like winter cricket, badminton, winter athletics etc. means that staffing capacity is an issue.

However a lot of players have been asking about a Y7 B team and Mr. Bell has informed students that he will try and get one or possibly two games after the main season is finished, although we can't guarantee this as there isn't an official league for B teams as there is for A teams. Mr. Bell will be contacting other schools to see if anyone else is interested in any B team games, however

everyone is under pressure to complete their A team league and cup games and if no other schools are interested then unfortunately we won't be able to arrange B games.

Duke of Edinburgh

Update on progress towards return of Duke of Edinburgh (Bronze award) scheme in school. Tracey Anderson informed parents that Miss Heron & Ms. Heslop have met with relevant staff at NTC to confirm what the school needs to do to be able to run the scheme. Initial planning is underway – hoping to set up a group of around 15-18 Y9 students in the first instance (depending on staff availability). Students will need training sessions and there is a financial cost which may require some fundraising. More details to follow when available.

Communications

Query about ParentMail – possible issues with it not working for some parents, new Y7 parents not yet informed about it.

Response: all Year 7 parents not yet signed up were sent a text message asking them to do so. Despite this we still have 120+ Y7 parents not signed up. These parents are now being written to again.

Fencing around the school grounds

The Forum asked if there had been any further progress towards fencing off the school playing fields.

Response: we have passed on Forum comments to the council (Capital spending team) so they are aware of the concerns. For information the Capital team are currently working with the school on 3 other major priorities: planning for replacing windows in A-block, heating & fire safety provision on site.

2. Issues arising from the previous term:

Parents' issues

- **Home learning issues** - children being set home learning projects, putting a huge amount of time and effort into them and then not receiving any feedback concerned that it sets a negative message to students about attitudes to work.
Response: Tracey Anderson then explained a new procedure that Stef McElwee (Assistant Headteacher) has introduced to monitor setting and marking of home learning via Curriculum Leaders. Parents encouraged to contact Mr. McElwee or the relevant Guidance Manager/Curriculum Leader as soon as there are any concerns rather than waiting until the Parents' Forum meetings. The school will review these procedures and update the forum.
- **Girl's toilets** - concerns about issues with cubicle locks and taps not working, and soap not always available.
Response: Tracey Anderson has passed this on to site team who are investigating and plan to timetable works on the girl's toilets during February half-term.
- **Scholars' bus** – it was mentioned that the general public are getting on scholars bus. Tracey Anderson explained that all passengers are welcome on the scholars' service.
- **Accelerated reader** – the reading card is being filled in by students but is it/should it be checked by English teachers? There was also a concern raised about the appropriateness of the books for Year 7 students – one parent felt that her child had been given an age inappropriate book. Suggestion that the letter code on books reflects this but do students know?
Response: Louise Dunn (Curriculum Leader for English) has confirmed that reading record cards (Year 7 and 8) are checked every fortnight and signed by the teacher who takes the AR lesson in the library. Students who do not bring their reading record card or do not have enough reading recorded on it are asked to bring their card the following day. If they fail to do so, a detention is given. All English teachers have been reminded everyone about this.

GSHS Issues and Initiatives

Curriculum developments

- **STEM club** – a weekly club, huge numbers attending, exciting activities & plans for the year including finding ways to make the school grounds bat friendly.
- **Maths** - Great North Maths Hub Shanghai project, an English-Chinese Teacher Exchange Programme organised by the DfE. Two of our Maths teachers, Andrea Gill & Jennifer Heslop went to Shanghai for 12 days in September, where they visited secondary & primary schools and looked at the education system there. Then in November 2 teachers from Shanghai visited GSHS for 3 weeks and taught 4 groups of students (Y7 & Y8) in their very different style. Our students rose to the challenge and really enjoyed the experience.
- **Literacy** - accelerated reader goes from strength to strength for Y7, 8 and some Y9 students, with even more word millionaires.
- **MFL** - plenty of exciting MFL events so far this year! All Y9 students entered the French version of '**Come Dine with Me**' again – a whole year group inter-class competition where teams of 4 produced their own menus in French, cooked their own food and served it up to a team of judges. '**Sounds of Spanish**' – the evening event for Y8 students and their parents ran again in October. The aim was to give parents the confidence to help their children learn by testing them with their new vocab each week. Another great fun evening with 'tapas' on offer! '**Beat the Rat Race**' – 10 Y9 linguists went to Newcastle University to take part in a day of languages competitive event. **Spanish educational weekend trip** in October – to Andalucía.
- **History** - in October our A-level History Society plus members of staff & public attended a seminar on how the Great War affected the North East. Historian Jo Bath delivered the seminar. There will also be a series of Somme events before the anniversary on the 1st July - a lecture and a Somme 'walk' as part of the next series of Centenary project events. All welcome, free admission. In addition we have Holocaust Memorial events this week – 2 of our 6th form students, visited Auschwitz and will be doing assemblies to all year groups about their experience as the 27th January is Holocaust Memorial Day. The theme this year is "Don't Stand By".
- **Sport** – highlights include the indoor athletics competition for all feeder schools in October at the Lakeside, our trampolining squad in the NT finals & who made it through to the Newcastle finals in November, our Y7 football team who are doing really well so far and GSHS involvement in the Sky Sports Living programme – Y7 & 8 students working with athlete mentor Katie Storey (ex. England rugby captain).

Extracurricular events/activities

- **Young Person's Question Time** - 9 Y10 students took part in the second NT Young Person's Question Time. The panel was made up of Norma Redfearn, Mayor of NT, local councillors and representatives from the police and NHS. Students grilled the panel with a range of questions written by young people across the borough, including students from our school.
- **Children's Commissioner Takeover Day** - Takeover Day is a successful and exciting children and young people's engagement project which sees organisations across England opening their doors to children and young people to take over adult roles. It puts children and young people into decision-making positions and encourages organisations and businesses to hear their views. Children gain an insight into the adult world and organisations benefit from a fresh perspective about their work. Fourteen Y9 students went to NT council for the day in a wide variety of different roles across the authority. Two students worked with housing property services looking into North Tyneside's available housing and how it is repaired and managed. They were also invited to share their ideas.

Four students looked at North Tyneside's children centres and youth offending service. They were involved with role play activities, asked their opinions to help services be improved for your people. One looked at digital communications and social media and helped the authority look in to ways of developing this. Two students experienced a real courtroom and were then involved in some role play looking at various aspects of law and Governance. One worked at the Lakeside Centre experiencing how a leisure centre runs day to day and was allowed to contribute to his views to help improve the service. Two students were involved with the housing operations team looking at anti-social behaviour and what the process involves when dealing with perpetrators of anti-social behaviour. One worked with the manager of sports development giving his views on how areas around health, sport and fitness could be developed for young children.

- **Dimensions Day 1 for Y7** - as part of the Year 7 iLearn course, the students were challenged to create a 'pop-up' exhibit for The Discovery Museum. They spent six weeks developing historical skills such as source interpretation and analysis and were given the opportunity to study various aspects of local history (coal mining, urban change, jobs etc.) before then choose what they wanted to investigate further. The Discovery Museum gave some students access to their archive and the students used the internet to gather more information. They worked in large groups (8-10 students) to create their exhibit and each student had a role (e.g. Project Manager, Archive Diarist, Exhibition designer, Researcher). On Wednesday 9th December, the students spent half a day at The Discovery Museum. They displayed their exhibit and spoke to members of the public about what they had been studying. They also critiqued each other's' exhibits. Parents were invited to come and a number of relatives supported the students.
- **Golden Ticket week** – December saw the launch of our new rewards event, Golden Ticket week. This is a termly event where every member of staff (teaching & non-teaching) are given a 'Golden Ticket' to present during that week to a student of their choice from Y7 – 13. The choice of recipient is up to each individual member of staff and the ticket can be presented for any positive reason. At the end of the week all of the students who have a ticket go into a prize draw for a £50 Eldon Square voucher. The response was very positive and we look forward repeating the event again at the end of this term.
- **Senior Citizen's Party** – held annually at Killingworth Social Club and organised again by our 6th form students and many of our staff. Even bigger numbers than last year! Entertainment from GSHS students and Holystone choir.
- **Charity update** - this year's whole school charity is Luke's Life Legacy – so far we have raised just over £3000 towards our target of £10,000. On July 16th 2010, at just age 7 months old, Luke Collins was diagnosed with a Visual Pathway Glioma (a brain tumour on his optic nerve). He sadly passed away after a long fight with cancer and almost all of his life spent in therapy. He did go to school however – Holystone Primary, and our students chose this charity set up by Luke's' parents as the whole school charity this year. The charity helps provide families of children with brain tumours accommodation when travelling to any hospital within the Northumberland, Tyne and Wear Foundation Trust, from out of the local area as well as providing or assisting with the provision of respite holidays or short breaks for families of such children.

School Environment Update

- G Block - installation of windows and blinds.
- Major repairs to the school boilers and heating convectors throughout the school.
- Clearing of vegetation surrounding F Block with the immediate benefit of extra light to two classrooms.
- Drains professionally cleaned and cleared; the benefits have been no floods so far.
- Student chairs and tables purchased to replace old furniture.

Teaching School updates

Conferences

July – 3 day conference for 55 colleagues from across the north east focussing on the core subjects, Teaching & Learning and Behaviour and Guidance.

October – GSHS & primary feeder school colleagues took part in a Teaching & Learning conference here with a focus on sharing teaching styles, techniques and practices in order to better support transition from primary to high school.

October – Learning Spaces conference for academic staff from Newcastle University who are interested in researching the impact of different types of classrooms and learning environments on levels of student achievement & engagement. As part of this they observed lessons in our SOLE room as well as English lessons where students were writing on the walls & windows.

School Experience programme

We continue to regularly welcome potential teachers (over 100 so far) into our school for experience days before they hopefully apply for our School Direct programme which has really taken off. We now have a group of 12 graduates training with us and our partner schools to become teachers.

3. School catering updates

Tracey Anderson handed out details of the latest catering provision within school and explained that we are developing further the range of food service areas in the canteen at lunchtimes. There will also be a 'fine dining' pop-up restaurant event in July, aimed at the new Y7 parents for next year to give them an idea of the dining experience their children can look forwards to as they move to GSHS from primary school. Parents' forum members will also be invited- details to follow.

4. Any Other Business

- Tracey Anderson asked the forum if there were any learning activities that parents might be interested in and if so to contact her at the school to pass on suggestions/ideas.
- The school is going for LPPA (Leading Parent Partnership Award) re-designation and will need a group of parents to meet with the assessor during the school day – we are not sure of the date yet but if there are any volunteers who might be available during the school day could they please let Tracey know?
- Parents are reminded that if they have any individual concerns about their child they are advised to contact the school (Guidance Manager in the first instance) as necessary rather than waiting until the forum meetings to air those concerns.

5. Date of next meeting

Monday 25^h April 2016