

MINUTES OF PARENTS' FORUM MEETING
Monday 25 April 2016

Present: Christine Anson, Karen Blake, Andrea Brownless, Anne Burke, Ian Cook, Sara Fraser, Wendy Heide, Candida Mellor, Helen Tovey, Karen Turner, Tracey Anderson.

Apologies: Clare Atkins, Ian Wilkinson, Peter Douthwaite.

1. Matters arising from previous meeting:

- **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: at the last meeting Tracey Anderson explained a new procedure that Stef McElwee (Assistant Headteacher) has introduced to monitor setting and marking of home learning via Curriculum Leaders. Mr. McElwee has asked me to feedback to you that Home Learning seems to be being better monitored by Curriculum Leaders and he has letters from parents recently noting that it has improved. We have also seen more evidence of Home Learning in our work scrutinies (we have been carrying out detailed work scrutinies of all departments across the school, since September and have completed several in the last term).

- **Girl's toilets** - concerns about issues with cubicle locks and taps not working, and soap not always available.

Response: All the student toilets have had the locks fixed and the majority of the taps fixed. Some of the taps have been condemned due to damage; we are awaiting a decision on refurbishments before replacements are ordered and installed. Site staff have been alerted to replace soap as soon as it runs out.

2. Issues arising from the previous term:

Parents' issues

- **Home learning issues**

Parents present at this meeting confirmed that their children were receiving more regular feedback on home learning (in particular the projects in Y7 & 8). There are still some issues of concern – some instances of students not being clear as to the hand-in date or hand-in logistics if it is a day when they don't have a lesson in the subject. It was also noted that some parents are finding that the links to projects on the school website are still not working.

Response: Tracey Anderson said that she would pass these comments on to Stef McElwee (Assistant Headteacher) for investigation. Students are regularly reminded to record hand-in dates in their planners as well as asking teachers for clarification about hand-in logistics. If in doubt they can always go the curriculum area and find a member of staff to talk to if they are unsure.

- **Toilets**

One parent mentioned that her child had said that the toilets were being locked at break and lunchtime and wanted clarification on this.

Response: Tracey Anderson explained that the student toilets are routinely locked at the end of break and the end of each lunch break for a 5 minute period to allow for cleaning and to discourage students from using the facilities after the bell (this had become common practice recently and was causing large numbers of students to be late to their lesson after break/lunch). Students are asked to try as much as possible to use the facilities during break/lunch and not during lesson time (although this is allowed if absolutely necessary and there are sanitary facilities available at the school main office medical room – all female students are aware of this).

- **Behaviour management**

A question was raised about the school's policy on managing disruptive behaviour in lessons and whether or not students would be moved down sets if their behaviour was proving to be a persistent problem.

Response: Tracey Anderson explained that we monitor behaviour issues closely and analyse behavioural incidents in detail on half-termly basis to identify those students who are becoming persistent offenders so that we can provide appropriate intervention and support. Parents are encouraged to contact their child's Guidance Manager if they have individual concerns about behaviour in specific classes/groups.

- **School meals**

One parent raised a concerns that there have been occasions recently when there has been very little food left for students on late lunch, on some days there has only be a limited amount of chef choice left.

Response: Tracey Anderson confirmed that there is always food available on both lunches, although it is inevitable that some choices may run out due to popularity. She said that she would pass these comments on to the catering manager this week to make her aware.

- **ParentMail**

Some parents expressed confusion over ParentMail – letters being received saying they weren't on ParentMail when they are, issues with registering more then one child in the same family etc.

Response: Tracey Anderson has spoken to the Data Manager about these issues who will endeavour to contact specific parents to try and resolve the problems and to also ensure that all parents are updated on any ParentMail changes.

- **Year 7 positive feedback**

A parent of a Y7 student expressed her thanks to the school for such a great year so far, saying that her child speaks very highly of the school and has settled really well.

Response: Tracey Anderson said she would pass these comments on to the staff.

GSHS Issues and Initiatives

Curriculum developments

Y7 Health Week (January)

A week of activities focussing on what being healthy means.

Each day there was a different focus in registration time, including: healthy diets, dental health, healthy breakfasts and body image. The finale of the week was a whole year group dance-off in the hall, with the year team staff fully involved.

MFL week (January)

We had another exciting whole school MFL week in January, including a number of Italian themed events. Y7 did chalk drawings of famous Italian monuments, Y9 and Y10 did cultural research on a number of different areas, Y10 MFL students watched 'Life is Beautiful' (La Vita Bella) in Italian and Italian food was provided every day in the canteen - food items were labelled and flags were up!

Engineering Education Scheme (January)

Congratulations to this year's Engineering Education Scheme students: Harley Dixey, Lewis Ashforth, Aimee Sweeney, Cameron Bee.

After months of research, including various workshops, weekly team meetings and a residential at Newcastle University, they successfully produced a written report, display and 15 minute presentation/Q&A session for a team of 8 assessors, where they suggested most efficient demolition, design and reconstruction methodologies for the Norham Roadbridge for Capita, which is soon to be reconstructed in the upcoming months to account for high levels of congestion.

Numeracy Week (February)

All Y7 were in the hall with Jeremy Dawson looking at the Maths/numeracy in Lego and Braille. Some Y8 students went up to Bailey Green to help with their numeracy for Science Week for a morning. Y9 all completed a massive numeracy across the curriculum treasure hunt around the school. All students had a numeracy starter in their lessons in every subject area at least once in the week. All students, apart from Y11, had numeracy booklets to complete in registration, where peers helped each other where needed.

Reading Week (& World Book day)

In March we had a 'dress as your favourite Alice in Wonderland character' day for our reading week, and many students (and staff!) got involved, including taking part in a 'door dressing' competition. In the same week some Y8 students went into our feeder Primary schools for the 2nd year running to help Y5's with their reading and on World Book day itself we held a 'drop everything and read' slot across the whole school during registration. Reading is obviously extremely important for all of our students and Amy Nutt, our Literacy Coordinator has worked hard to motivate students and get them involved in reading in a fun and exciting way.

British Science Week (March)

Events which took place included:

- * STEM fair, all students welcome to participate in a variety of scientific experiments.
- * Roger Cook, an aerospace engineer, came in and talk to each year 8 class for 10-15 minutes before helping them design and build wind turbines.
- * EES Celebration of Achievement Day the week after.

Live n' Learn sessions (March)

Just before Easter we provided a fantastic motivational session for all Y11 students and some Y9 & 10 students. The focus for Y11's was on preparation for the exams – self-confidence and self-esteem as well as time management and balancing out their busy lives. For the Y9 and 10 students (a trial session this year) there was more of a focus on self-belief – really inspiring young people to believe that they can achieve anything in life. The sessions were delivered by an external company called Live n' Learn – this is the 4th year we have worked with them and they are fantastic.

Extracurricular events/activities

Y11 mock exam results day (January)

Y11 students experienced what it might feel like when they pick up their exam results in August – all students were given their mock exam results in a sealed envelope in the hall during assembly. The students responded really well to this and said that they found it a worthwhile experience.

Holocaust Memorial Day (January)

6th formers Elara Christie & Brooke Cowen, who were part of a group of North Tyneside students to visit Auschwitz recently delivered an extremely moving and thought provoking assembly to all year groups to mark Holocaust Memorial Day on 27th January.

Kielder Observatory visit (February)

In February we visited Kielder Observatory for the second time with our Y13 physicists. The trip took place whilst students were studying cosmology in the course. The group (students and staff) stayed overnight in Brown rig lodges in Bellingham. The afternoon was taken up with intense study and opportunities for students to ask in-depth questions. During the visit we had limited observation time due to the weather but we benefited from discussing our studies with experts.

Ski trip (February half-term)

96 students and 15 staff took part in the 6th George Stephenson High School Ski Trip to Aprica, Italy. Snow conditions were excellent all week and we were fortunate with the weather, with the majority of days being sunny and clear. Aprica has a wide range of slopes and a particularly impressive nursery slope area, which allowed our beginners to make superb progress and the majority of novice skiers were able to head up the mountain on day three. Our more experienced students, some of whom were on their 4th or 5th trip, continued to develop their skills both on and

off piste and really impressed their instructors. Both hotel and ski staff were highly complimentary about the conduct of our students, and the growth of the trip over the years, from our initial party of 27, is a real testament to the manner in which students and staff combine to make the experience so memorable for all. Next year's booking for Vallnord, Andorra has already been made. We will be flying for the first time, in response to requests from parents and students (and staff, who will not miss the 30 hour bus journey!).

KS3 Maths G&T visit to Centre for Life (March)

We took two sets of students on different trips to the Centre for Life.

One trip was with a mixture of Y8 students and one was for top set Y9 students. The Y9 students went to the Centre for Life and took part in a range of activities, one of them was a room full of Mathematical puzzles. The member of staff at the Centre for Life who was leading the group said that one of the puzzles which our students solved had not been solved by any other students before. We were all very impressed!

Y11 Ford Castle experience (March)

In March a group of Y11 students got the opportunity to visit Ford Castle in Northumberland where they took part in an extremely successful revision weekend with dedicated time for revision and a focus on team work and perseverance skills.

Sporting Success

A massive achievement from our Y7 footballing girls. They reached the Level 3 School Games tournament after winning the North Tyneside tournament which is an amazing achievement in itself but they actually finished 4th overall. They also took part in a 5-a-side football tournament as part of the School Games programme. Two teams entered the competition, and both did really well.

Team 2 played well, narrowly missing out on the semi-finals as they finished 3rd in their group. Team 1 played brilliantly, scoring some great goals and finishing top of their group, undefeated with 3 wins and 1 draw. They went through to the semi-finals where they beat Valley Gardens 1-0 in a close game to reach the final. In the final against St Thomas More the match finished 1-1, so both teams were declared joint winners and both went through to the next round to represent North Tyneside in the Tyne and Wear finals.

Golden Ticket number 2 (March)

We were delighted to announce the 2nd winner of our newest reward – the Golden Ticket (winner receives a £50 Eldon Square voucher). There will be one more to come at the end of this term.

School Environment Update

- New fire signs put up throughout the whole school under the recommendation of the fire risk assessment.
- Keep shut/locked plates put on all doors throughout the school under the recommendation of the fire risk assessment - still ongoing.
- CCTV signs fitted up inside and outside the whole school under recommendation from the governors.
- Missing drain grates around whole school have been replaced.
- Extra evacuation chairs have been ordered and fitted in the designated areas.
- Blocks C, D, E, D and A - all corridor doors have had the faults fixed on them.
- PE - tennis nets have been put back up; new goals have been erected and fixed to the walls in gym 1.
- Some ceiling tiles have been replaced across the school.

3. Leading Parent Partnership Award Reassessment

The school was successful in receiving the Leading Parent Partnership Award in December 2012. On Thursday 14th April we had a Reassessment visit and are delighted to announce that we were successful in achieving the award for a second time. The award is valid for 3 more years. A full report will be sent to the school shortly but initial feedback from our assessor included the following comments:

*“Parents are very happy with the **support** they receive from staff both in relation to their children’s education but also with home to school support”.*

“Information sharing and communication are viewed by parents as very good. It was a general view that the school was “easy to communicate with”.

“Consultation with parents happens on a regular basis and the Parents’ Forum provides an opportunity for discussion of issues and feedback to parents”.

“The school listens to parents”.

4. Rewards Trips proposals

Tracey Anderson explained the following proposal for this year’s rewards trips:

- Previously top 50 points scorers received a subsidised place on an end of year rewards trip. (Y11 students given money towards Prom Ticket).
- Last year we extended this to 75 places in Y7 and Y8.
- This year, in response to student & parent voice we have a new proposal:
 - All* Y7, 8, 9 & 12 students go out on a half day trip to the cinema (week beg. 11th July)
 - Y10 students unfortunately will miss out due to work experience week (this would probably apply to all Y10 students in future)
 - Y11 students keep same format (top 50 points scorers given money towards Prom Ticket)

*as many students as possible – school will reserve right to withdraw the place of any students with responsible for extreme behavioural, punctuality or attendance issues.

There was also a suggestion is that the top 75 points scorers in each year group receive a more heavily subsidised place so as not to devalue the points already accrued by students this year.

Parent Forum comments:

- Generally in agreement with these proposals although still some concerns about fairness of any points scheme run in school.
- Some comments that subsidising places is more of a reward for the parents rather than the child.
- Question asked about doing something nice for Y10 students in school as they will miss out on a trip.
- Suggestion that we just call it an end of year celebration trip and reward top 50/75 students with certificates instead.
- General consensus that Hero Cards are worth keeping but not so sure about planner points.

Action: Tracey Anderson to work with Guidance Managers & Leadership Team to find a way forward as a trial this year. Students will need to be informed.

5. Date of next meeting

September 2016 – date to be confirmed.