

Parent Forum

Thursday 28th February 2018

Attendees:

College staff: Mr D Rainey, Headmaster, Mr P Groves, Deputy Principal, Mr J Cutting Associate Assistant Principal, Miss S McCrory, Head of KS3

Parents:

Overview:

The parents' forum meets to discuss aspects of Ambrosian life and plans. Operating in partnership with parents; our school is an extension of the care and attention that is given to our pupils at home. Communication is very important to us and one way in which parents can meet the Principle in an informal relaxed setting is by participating in the parent forum. The process enables parents to give school leaders feedback on proposals, acting as a sounding board for new ideas and initiatives. This enables the College to develop new approaches to both academic and pastoral aspects of college life. This two way communication is an invaluable medium for the leadership of the College and it is also an opportunity for parents to have a voice within the College.

Mr Cutting, Associate Assistant Principal, is responsible for Parent Engagement and is the point of contact regarding Parent Forum.

Minutes:

The event was led by the Principal who commented on each of the topics below and then invited parent questions and observations. Comments ranged broadly, the notes below are a summary of key themes.

Options choices- why limit option choices making pupils choose both a language and humanity?

Essentially we're moving towards higher EBacc entry which is a government expectation. Pathways in some other Grammar schools can result in students only getting 1 free option. We have ensured that everyone gets 2 choices and the move away from enforced Triple Science has also increased the flexibility of choices.

Would it be possible to offer another GCSE option to both pathways if either Triple Science and a Language or Double Science and a Language and a Humanity are to remain compulsory?

There will not be any further changes to the 2 pathways drawn up for this year. We are not able to timetable an additional option given the course requirements of Guided Learning Hours. All students already take Maths, 2 x English, RE so once the Sciences and MFL/Humanities are taken into account it only leaves space for 2 options.

Options for bilingual children at time of preparing for that second language subject GCSE?

All MFL groups are not streamed and will be mixed ability, however teachers are expected to plan and differentiate accordingly. Subjects that are not covered by our curriculum we do arrange for students who wish to take additional Languages at GCSEs to sit the exams and organise for the speaking elements to happen at other local providers where there is a larger cohort.

Access to child attainment and/or issues through parent portal?

The parent portal will be going live during this term and logins and accounts will be issued via email, starting with year 7 work beginning in the first instance and rolled out to all other year groups in turn.

The parent portal element of Progresso allows parents to see their son's: timetable, assessment grades, attendance, behaviour record - positive / negatives, detentions and emergency contact details.

Why does the MILK and the planner not correspond?

Staff are expected to record homework on MILK and it is the responsibility of students to use their planner to record homework set by their teacher. If there are specific concerns please inform Miss McCrory in the first instance.

The MILK system has not been updated to show any homework has been marked / received. Nor have any merits / sanctions been uploaded - what is the timeline for these to be operational?

As this is a new system we have focused on ensuring the homework is set and recorded on MILK by all staff. The additional features of the software are being rolled out and training provided to staff regarding updating marked/received homework. The House points /sanctions function in Milk will allow for parents and students to see their positive and negative behaviour and will be to be operational by the end of this term.

Why isn't the planner used to praise the children when they do well and is there a way to see the good things like house points, etc?

Agreed – we currently have a box for removing credits so we have discussed a box which does the opposite. Hopefully the parent portal will give parents more access to the positives being recognised through the house points. It is accepted that there is currently more of a focus on the pink slips than house points and this has also come through student voice. We are looking at ways of recognising positives more.

It would be useful to get information about the curriculum and how to find the resources, whether students can borrow textbooks from library etc.

Departments have their own stock of books and pupils can request to loan a copy of the respective text book should they need so. Unfortunately we do not have a central library for students to access resources.

Learning Programmes can be found on the website giving information about the content being covered each half-term by subject as well as details regarding exam board and course codes.

The English department are currently looking at a general book swap system but it will be fiction/light reading, not necessarily curriculum focused.

Homework/Long queues at some stations at lunchtime?

We do not operate a queuing system however realise with rising pupil numbers operating a split lunch in the future might be a consideration. Due to the wide range of clubs/training offered over lunch moving to a split lunch would potentially negatively impact this provision, which would be a disadvantage for our pupils. In the meantime we will request pupils use their initiative and rather than queuing at the beginning of lunch they wait until half way through lunch to purchase food, whereby the queues will have subsided.

There seems to be a lot of supply teachers during a standard school week, some for a prolonged period of time. Can you explain the school's approach to ensure the boys do not miss out of key teaching opportunities?

As with every school there will be staff absence whether through illness, fixtures, appointments or courses. We are fortunate in that staff do cover beyond what is termed 'rarely cover' as a result of our discretionary leave policy negotiated with teachers unions. Therefore, in the vast majority of cases it will be a member of our own staff covering lessons.

Long-term staff absences this year have affected KS4 and 5 groups more than KS3 but it could be the case that timetable changes to enable subject expertise to take key exam classes has had a knock on effect lower down the school. Again, this isn't unusual.

More direct way of communicating with subject teachers?

Our policy is that concerns should go through House Tutors as the first port of call. Some staff do communicate directly with parents through email but it will mostly be by Middle or Senior Leaders. There is no expectation for staff to email parents/carers.

Late bus service to enable boys to take advantage of after school activities?

Buses are not organised by school. We can't prioritise any particular area as we have over 40 feeder primary schools - TFGM have suggested a possible reduction in the number of buses for our school next year due to budgetary constraints. They do the analysis of postcodes and don't consider any times beyond the beginning and end of the school day. If you have any complaints regarding buses please contact TFGM direct.