

PRIORY SCHOOL

PARENTS FORUM HELD ON 5th March 2014 at 19.00 IN THE LECTURE THEATRE

Governors present: Pauline Quinton (Chair) Penny Leach Audrey Whyte John Griffiths

Apologies: Hayley Olcay

Headteacher: Tony Smith

Parents: 6

Pauline Quinton welcomed parents and introductions were made including new Governor John Griffiths and new Clerk to the Governors Emma Brinkhurst.

Parents introduced themselves and explained the issues they would like the group to discuss.

Key points discussed were:

Mobile phone use

Q: Parents asked about mobile phone use in exams/coursework by pupils. As in the Year 10/11 Science mock exam no mobiles were allowed during the mock. But in English coursework which goes towards GCSE a student was seen using a mobile under the desk. Should mobiles be taken away or not allowed in for exams/coursework. As information could be stored on the mobiles to help students with coursework and this would give some students an advantage.

TS: Will look into this as there is a strict criteria in place on mobile phone use in School.

Care & respect for the school community

Q: Parents asked why some students seem to have a lack of respect for each other at Secondary Schools especially litter dropping compared with Primary Schools students.

TS: During assembly and tutor time litter is regularly spoken about. The school is currently working on a respect agenda. There is also a student eco group which students can become involved in.

Maths in Year 7

Q: Parents asked why all year 7 students are put on the same level in maths classes regardless of ability. Could able students in maths be progressed during year 7.

TS: In Year 7 students are all placed on a broad setting. As students progress through the school some areas do start more rigid setting. Maths does have more setting in KS4.

Year 7 homework

Parents discussed that they thought the schools policy of the new Year 7 students not having homework for their first three weeks was a great idea to help them settle in. They also like that the homework was then gradually increased.

Parent evening Year 7

Q: A parent mentioned about 2 weeks after the year 7 students started there was a parent evening. Parent mentioned they felt this was too early for this parent evening. Parent felt 4 weeks after they started might be a better time as students will be more settled in at school. Parent discussed that having the next Year 7 parent evening not until March was too long a period of time and a suggested of January was put forward.

Q: Another parent mentioned that perhaps a 'hello email' from the tutors could be sent to parents after the year 7 students have started maybe after 2 weeks. This would reassure parents of new students how their student was settling in. This may also help parents feel a personal connection with the house staff.

TS: The Year 7 parents evening has been set up after 2 weeks for those students who struggle to settle in. But TS would look into these suggestions.

Christmas fundraising

Q: A parent wondered why there was quite a poor turn out to the school Christmas concert. They also wondered if these opportunities could be used more effectively to gain extra revenue for the school i.e. perhaps a Christmas fayre with the concert. This would also help to improve respect and care for the school community bringing a feeling of togetherness. Another parent mentioned how impressed they were with a quick response from the friends of priory via email.

TS: The Friends of Priory (FoP) have been improving the fund raising events for the school and are continuing to do so. The Wizard of Oz musical is the biggest event coming up at the School in March. Sometimes having a Christmas fayre is not always as well supported if students have younger siblings at primary schools and more parents tend to support Primary School events. In previous years we have had a summer concert on the field and FoP wish to develop this further (there are however clashes with Primary School events)

PQ: Summarised what The Friends of Priory and Parent Voice Group do at the school. Pauline also invited any parents who are interested in supporting them to contact them they are always pleased to have extra help. Parent voice group have suggested changes and the school are implementing these changes i.e. marking.

Communication

Q: Parents wondered if some of the automatically generated letters/emails sent by school could have a general review of choice of words used. As an example a letter was sent out to parents about a student's truancy from school. But when the parents spoke to the student they were in school but not in the classroom. So sending a letter out saying a student was truant is not accurate and causes extra unnecessary worry for parents. Could the template used by the school be changed for different circumstances that occur in regard to truancy.

TS: Tony says this is possible and he will look into this.

Q: Parent explained a student wanted to go on a school trip but there was limited numbers who could go. The student's money for the trip had been brought in on time but due to limited availability the student was told they could not go. The Student wanted to write to the school herself to say that she thought it was unfair she could not attend. She received no response from the school. Parent asked if more of a personal touch could be given to communications received especially when a student has taken the time.

TS: Asked if the parent knew which address and who the student addressed the correspondence to as TS always replies to his correspondence. Unless this has unfortunately slipped through the net and not got to TS which if it has he apologised. TS asked if it is possible the parent could ask the student to re-send the correspondence to him.

Q: A parent asked about the communications about voluntary contributions from parents and what are the pros and cons of this.

TS: This is more widespread and being used by many Schools now due to lack of funding by Government and the pros and cons have been regularly discussed at Governors meetings. We are the 4th lowest funded School in the area.

Head Teacher Newsletter

TS: Explained he is using a new template for his Head Teacher Newsletter after Parent Voice Group raised issues about the old layout.

School website

TS: Summarised Parent Voice Group is working on trying to make the school website more intuitive and easier for parents to use and find things. A You Tube video clip is hoped to be posted on the website with a quick guide of how to find things on the website to help parents.

Responses to issues raised and how any changes to these issues are reported back to parents

Q: Parents wanted an update on how any issues raised to the school have been changed or improved. Suggestions were this information put on the school website and possibly some type of display board in reception with responses.

LCLP update

TS: During the initial consultation period in October 2013 200 responses were received. During the Statutory period no further comments were received by us or Western Road. A joint meeting is to be held on Thursday 6th March between our Governors & Western Road Governors. This involves both schools deciding independently whether to proceed with the trust. Even if one group of Governors agree the trust could start on 1st May.

PQ: There is a possibility that local companies could become part of the trust if the trust decides to go in this direction and maybe gain charitable donations.

Q: A parent asked how the governing bodies of all the schools involved in the trust will be affected if they do chose to become a trust.

TS: Each governing body will keep its own identity and communicate with the trust. The funding stays within each individual School. PL mentioned that more than one school working together is better than one individual school. This could be used by the Schools involved in the trust to pull together to get for example a speech therapist which a school on its own might not normally be able to afford. Or a cross face teacher in i.e. maths who would come through the school with students. Being a trust may also give staff extra professional opportunities.

Food Group - Breakfast club

PQ: Summarised that the school is looking for funding for a breakfast club which would be open to all students. The food group has just re-started and is starting to look into funding for a breakfast club.

Q: Parents discussed whether having a breakfast club would improve students eating habits

Some parents thought maybe having a nutritionist come into school might be a better idea than gaining funding for breakfasts that not all students would come in and take advantage of at school.

Canteen

Parents mentioned what a good idea they thought of the year 7 students having a separate lunch hour.

PQ thanked parents for coming and for their contributions.

Meeting ends: 20.10

Next meeting: Wed 11th June 19.00