



## PARENT FORUM (OFSTED) MEETING MINUTES

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13<sup>th</sup> MAY 2015 AT 19.00 IN THE LECTURE THEATRE

**PRIORY GOVERNORS PRESENT:** AUDREY WHYTE (AW), GRAHAM ARR-JONES (GAR) AND PAULINE QUINTON (PQ)

**HEADTEACHER:** TONY SMITH (TS)

**PARENTS:** 16

**ALSO PRESENT:** EMMA BRINKHURST (CLERK)

**APOLOGIES FROM GOVERNORS:** JOHN GRIFFITHS, GAYDREE WRIGLEY, MICHAEL BULL, SARAH HINKS AND UWE DORNBUSCH

Pauline Quinton (Chair of Governors) and Mr Smith welcomed parents.

### **Mr Smith gave his view of the Ofsted report which was carried out in February 2015**

Mr Smith explained that he has no issue with the report itself as the areas identified in the report had already been identified by the school in its SEF (Self Evaluation Form). The SEF shows the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The school had shared the SEF with the Ofsted team. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Mr Smith accept the report as an accurate reflection of the school. One surprise was the mention the site is free from litter! Mr Smith feels the report vindicates the school's own SEF report of the school and shows we know the school very well. We as a school graded our-self as good for the four main areas of Outcomes, Teaching and Learning, Behaviour and Safety and Leadership. The other thing Mr Smith wanted to say about the overall grade is we are the 3<sup>rd</sup> Secondary school in East Sussex to move from an outstanding to good. The Lead Inspector said to Mr Smith that the new Ofsted framework is 'brutal.' Mr Smith explained that it was a different experience with much higher thresholds from the inspection the school had five years ago due to this new framework. A disappointing feature of inspection is that they are mostly data driven and the inspectors access a lot of this before they even come into the school.

The early exam entry used for the Year 11 students hit us hard as the first set of results was no-where near the end results. The SLT had to convince the Inspectors of this by providing lots of data including performance tables. Luckily the Lead Inspector was prepared to listen. Early exam entry is difficult to compare to anything else. The Lead Inspector asked Mr Smith if he made the right decision about using early exam entry. Mr Smith told the inspector he stands by his decision and this gave the best outcomes for Priory students.

Mr Smith explained about a Section 8 Ofsted inspection which is a cause for concern triggered by three sets of triggers in Priory's case early exam entry, attendance of students (which is not high enough at Priory – it is below the national average), and exclusions (Priory had previously excluded more students than other schools nationally.) Due to these triggers a Section 5 Ofsted full inspection was carried out of the school this was also due to the last Ofsted inspection being carried out five years ago.

Mr Smith said that the inspection was much harsher this time and different from the Ofsted inspection of five years ago. The previous inspection was a more supportive process.

Mr Smith advised that from September Ofsted are bringing in another new Ofsted framework.



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In summary, Mr Smith commented that Ofsted inspections are very important but not the be all and end all as they have a heavy focus on English and Maths and less on the wider areas. The governors and SLT were pleased the report did recognise the broader curriculum the school offers.

Mr Smith wanted to thank the six parents that met with the Ofsted inspectors and to all those parents that responded to Parent View (261 responses received). The Inspector told Mr Smith this was an impressive number of responses for a school of this size. Over 90% with good views on Parent View too.

The questions raised from parents to Mr Smith and the Governors were:

### Maths

**Q A parent had one concern from the report the downward spiral in Maths and the parent asked what Mr Smith felt about Maths?**

Mr Smith said he agreed with the Ofsted report that Maths needs to improve but disagreed that it is a failing department. As the school's outcomes are above the national average. Mr Smith advised that Ian Taylor (a Maths Specialist) is working with the Maths Department to improve the teaching and learning of Maths. Mr Smith also advised robust conversations had been taking place with the Maths department for at least two years. The Maths department have tended to focus on getting the Year 11s at least a grade C rather than trying to focus on every student achieving progress. The school have advised the Maths department that the aim is now to focus on every student making three or four levels of progress. The school has already seen significant changes and approaches in lessons. Mr Smith mentioned that one member of the Maths department had been sent to Finland (at no cost to the school) to see how they teach Maths. This is due to the fact Finland are the highest performing area in maths in Europe. The main thing the school were interested in about the way Finland teaches students in Maths is they do not set. Also, the Maths department have been attending conferences with Ofsted that are to drive the department from good to outstanding.

**Q A parent mentioned they had attended a Year 7 parents' evening and Maths was the parent's biggest concern. The parent advised they were shocked that their child's teacher seemed to be advising them that their child was on track to get a grade C as if this was the teacher's main aim?**

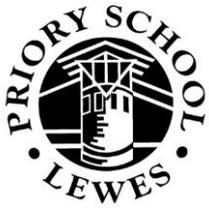
Mr Smith confirmed that this was a culture that the school are trying to shift away from in the Maths department that teachers are not just teaching a pupil in a way to gain a minimum grade C. The aim is for all students to gain three or four levels of progress and that all students can do well.

**Q A parent asked if a teacher in the Maths department is not showing rapid progress in this new move in Maths teaching what will happen?**

The first thing the school would do is to support and help that teacher i.e. using training, coaching and mentoring but if there is not an improvement the school has the capability procedure.

**Q A parent asked in 2013 wasn't there a reversal in the decline in Maths?**

Yes, we thought there was going to be a reversal in the decline but unfortunately there was not. Mr Smith and the Governors looked at this about two years ago. Last year, the school were hit by a couple of long term absences from the Maths department which unfortunately did not help.



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**Q A parent said she would like to take things back to basics and she asked was the Ofsted report only ten pages. It was confirmed yes it was. The parent advised that this is everything that is wrong with Education how can you sum up a school in just ten pages. The parent advised the report seems to be just a form ticking exercise using data in her opinion. The parent felt it would be better if the Inspectors spoke to students and asked their opinion on the school. The parent advised that each student is different and has different experiences some will have an outstanding experience and some a good experience. The parent advised that the one aspect she was slightly worried by was the most able students are doing very well. But the middle attaining students do not do as well and she felt this was the same twenty five years ago when her child attended the school. She felt that the middle attaining students need more help.**

Mr Smith commented that the lower attaining students have been making good progress and closing the gap. Mr Smith advised two years ago the middle attaining students were doing satisfactorily and the focus was on students with low prior attainment. But last year's data and SEF showed middle attaining students did not do as well as projected.

**Q As Maths seems to be the biggest concern could the school look at progress over five years and feedback how Maths is progressing to parents. To show the efforts being implemented are bearing fruits?**

Due to the whole national curriculum changing the difficulty the school is facing is there will be no similar data to look at to compare. An example was given of two years ago the school knew what a GCSE grade C looked like. Then the move came for every student to sit the exam and then these would be looked at nationally. Then a percentage would be worked out as a cut off for a student gaining a C grade. So year by year the criteria changed for what a student needed to achieve to gain a C. Mr Smith said that quick surveys could be sent to parents to get feedback on new strategies that had been implemented.

**Q A parent asked how progress in subjects is measured internally by the school?**

The school have its own internal tracking which provides the school very accurate data.

**Q How could this information be more accessible to parents?**

It was recommended that the Full Governing Body minutes are available on the school website for parents to access.

### 'My Maths'

Quite a few parents felt 'My Maths' was not helpful for the students as they said it lets the students have lots of goes but does not tell them what they are doing wrong. Parents asked if there were other alternatives the school could be using instead of 'My Maths'.

### Homework

**Q A parent asked why the students do not get feedback on homework or homework marked that is sent home for parents to see?**

Mr Smith explained that homework was a big focus and part of the school's SEF and agreed that feedback is important. Robust discussions are taking place with teachers about feedback on homework/marking of



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homework that is to be sent home. Mr Smith advised that the proposal is one style of homework in three will be marked/have feedback given which will go home. This is sustainable for teachers and a clear model to work towards.

### **Q Will this be a whole school policy?**

Yes it will be some subjects might give feedback/marking on a pro-rotas basis due to i.e. some subjects having fewer hours per week on the timetable.

### **Early Exam entry**

#### **Q What are the advantages and disadvantages to using early exam entry?**

The advantages are: we have found in the past that it boosts the students' confidence. As they have the option to re-sit exams in the summer. There is also the knowledge provided to the students that they secured a minimum grade. Diagnostic information can be provided which drills down and helps the school help the student with aspects they are struggling in. Also if the student secured the higher grade in the exam they did not have to re-sit in the summer.

The disadvantages are: The summer exam period is an intensive period for students and lots more students are suffering with anxiety. We use to have two exam venues we now have up to twelve due to more students suffering with anxiety issues. There is a lot of pressure felt by students in exams in every school.

#### **Q A parent suggested is early exam entry a winner with exams for the school?**

If a school was given a Requires Improvement (Grade 3) from Ofsted the new government are suggesting that schools are forced to join an academy chain. Pauline Quinton advised that five years ago the Governors looked at various options for the school including becoming an academy, attending various conferences and visiting different schools. For Priory it was felt that becoming a co-operative trust was the best option.

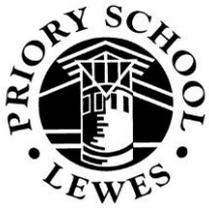
### **anxiety/exam pressures**

#### **Q Some parents wondered if it is possible that exam pressures are not passed onto students at all from School, Government and Ofsted. The parents felt that students do better if they do not have pressures put on them?**

Mr Smith said that students attend assemblies and are advised that all the school expects is for all students to do their best in exams. But it was felt it was difficult to shelter students from all pressures. Mr Smith mentioned that teachers are under increasing pressures as teachers now have performance related pay which ties in with exam results. Before teachers had an annual increment for the first six years. Mr Smith said that he feels education should be an enriching/rewarding time for students. Mr Smith feels the broad curriculum the school offer also helps.

### **Governing Body on Ofsted report**

#### **Q A parent said that in the Ofsted report it mentioned that the Governing Body should have a stronger role within the school?**



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Pauline Quinton said that she felt that the Governors are felt as on par with the Senior Leadership Team. Mr Smith said that he feels that the Governors come into school a lot more than they use too. Mr Smith feels that the Governors provide him with an equal measure of challenge and support and they do not believe everything he says and challenge/question him. Pauline advised that Governors are volunteers and that it is sometimes difficult to recruit Governors as people do not want to be Governors and give up their own time. Pauline advised that Governors give up their time to attend meetings including some that are in the school day or meetings that start at 15:30. Mr Smith felt that the Governors came out well in the report. Pauline advised that John Griffiths (Vice Chair) and Graham Arr-Jones and Pauline as Chair of Governors were interviewed by Ofsted. Pauline felt that the Governors work hard with the Senior Leadership Team. Mr Smith explained that Governors are attached to curriculum areas within the school.

### values instead of rules

**Q A parent asked about the school's move from rules to values that was mentioned at a previous Parent Forum?**

An overview of what the school's values are was provided to those parents that were not at the previous Parent Forum. The schools values have been designed by students these are still being finalised at the moment. This will involve re-writing the values into the Sims computer system at the school. Pauline mentioned she had attended lunch in the dining hall with the students and mentioned the code of conduct that the students created. Mr Smith said that the school are obtaining the Rights Respecting Award which Mr Trudgian is heading.

### Exclusions

**Q A parent asked about the high number of exclusions at the school and how the school was trying to decrease the number of exclusions?**

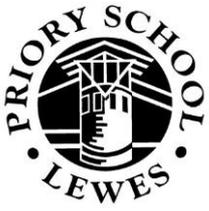
From between September to now there have been 47 exclusions. Previously in the same time frame there had been 187. Our vision is to use alternative methods to exclusion. With the under 14s, it is very difficult due to legislation to provide an alternative curriculum. The school is setting up its own forest school from September in which one day per week some students will attend the forest school. The forest school will incorporate our values like making fires incorporating trust and responsibility. This includes some students who have i.e. anxiety problems not just students with behaviour problems. In November 2016, the school could be using the new learning centre within the new Lewes Cinema which will be used for media in Key Stage 3. This year we have had three challenging Year 11 students who have not been in school but we have been able to provide them with other alternative education options. We have also used outside agencies that provide full/part time courses like Brighton and Hove Albion.

**Q A parent asked if all students will be able to take advantage of the forest school?**

Due to funding constraints it was advised this would not be possible.

### Upcoming things going on at the school

It was mentioned about the upcoming activities week next week for students in Years 7-9 this is felt to give the students a different set of skills. Mr Smith advised the school valued Activities Week and this was something we want to retain but there are always pressures on the curriculum.



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It was advised that the school also provide work experience for the Year 10 and Year 11 students and some schools do not provide this any longer. But the school feel this is valuable for student's career education.

Pauline Quinton thanked the parents for coming to the Parent Forum and was pleased to see so many of them at the Forum.

Some parents said they felt the school/Governing Body were doing a wonderful job.

**Meeting closed:** 20:15

**Next meeting:** to be determined