



## PARENT FORUM MEETING MINUTES

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2016 AT 19.10 IN THE LECTURE THEATRE

**PRIORY GOVERNORS PRESENT:** AUDREY WHYTE (AW), PAULINE QUINTON (PQ), JOHN GRIFFITHS (JG), SUZY CARPENTER (SC), PENNY LEACH (PL), AND JASON KNIGHT (JK).

**HEADTEACHER:** TONY SMITH (TS)

**PARENTS:** 8

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

**APOLOGIES FROM GOVERNORS:** GAYDREE WRIGLEY, MICHAEL BULL, GRAHAM ARR-JONES, PETER COLEBOURN AND RADHA STUART

John Griffiths (Chair of Governors) welcomed parents and thanked them for joining the Governors and Headteacher on not the nicest of nights.

### **NEW PARENT GOVERNOR – JASON KNIGHT**

JG introduced JK the school's new Parent Governor. JK said that he had been to a few of the Parent Forums previously as a parent and said he was looking forward to being a Parent Governor.

The key points raised were:

### **OVER THE LAST 6 MONTHS THE GOVERNING BODY HAVE BEEN FOCUSING ON:**

JG explained that following on from the Ofsted report last year the Governing Body had been focusing on:

- Maths
- Middle leadership
- Learning outcomes/giving feedback to students/Marking

JG also explained that Governors have been looking at policies/procedures in the strategic role Governors have to see if these are effective. The Governors have also been looking into the new measures of Progress 8/Attainment 8.

Three parents arrived at 19:20 as they were unable to get into the school and the school seemed very dark.

**ACTION:** JG apologised to the parents that they could not get into the school and said this was something he would look into for the future.

### **CO-OP TRUST**

JG explained that the Co-op trust started small and quiet in July working in partnership with local primary schools. JG explained that some primary school students came to the school and worked on a STEM project (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths) making robots.

PQ mentioned that she, JG and another Governor were interviewed by Ofsted and Governors are viewed as part of the Senior Leadership Team.

JG said as a group of Governors we have been quite busy over the last 6 months.



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JG explained that parent forum is an open forum for parents to raise any queries or questions they might have to the Governors or/and Headteacher.

Introductions were made by the Governors and parents present.

The parents who attended the Forum had:

- A son in year 9
- A daughter in year 9
- A daughter in year 8
- A son in year 8
- A son in year 7 and 11
- A daughter in year 8
- A son in year 8
- A son in year 9

### **FUNDING**

**Q A parent was concerned about all schools funding been slashed and the parent asked if the Governors and school were concerned?**

JG said funding is challenging but we are within budget but there is not a lot of surplus. The budget is tightly managed and the school has a 2 and 3 year budget plan. There is no increased funding available. The increased teaching staff pension contribution and national insurance contributions will put pressure on all schools' budgets this year. We have very good financial management at the school our bursar is very strong. TS said there is a lot of unknowns for the future. Year on year we don't know our budget amount till April. TS said we look closely at our budget and we protect our front line services:

- Teachers in classroom
- Level of staffing for care of the students

In many schools they are decreasing the number of support staff we feel this is false economy. We feel that particularly our pastoral/house assistants play a very important role. But TS also said that he can't make promises in regards to the future.

### **MIXED ABILITY TEACHING & MASTERY CURRICULUM**

**Q A parent was quite concerned that her son in year 7 was being taught via mixed ability teaching and the parent asked if this was just due to budget constraints and were the outcomes going to be reviewed?**

TS confirmed that this is not just budgetary. This is being used to meet the needs of the new curriculum/mastery. So no setting/streaming is being used just mixed prior attainment grouping. Over the last 4/5 years the same levels of performance have been achieved by students – the higher level students achieve excellent results, the middle level students achieve good results and the less abled achieve not as good results as expected. Ofsted picked up on this past performance and the school needed to do a serious review. As if this was not done this could trigger a required improvement grade from Ofsted. The school carried out visits to other Schools to see how they are teaching mixed prior attainment classes. We joined the Kings College maths project. The creative arts/humanities/languages have always taught in mixed prior attainment and achieved good results. The mixed prior attainment grouping is a 2 year pilot which will be reviewed.

**Q What does a mastery curriculum mean?**

It means all topics are covered in more detail until all students have a deep and fundamental understanding of a topic. In China and Finland they achieve very high grades in Maths and teach in mixed groups.



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**Q Are there more discipline issues in the classroom due to teaching in mixed prior attainment classes and if so do you have the resources to support it?**

It has been reported that there are actually fewer discipline issues in year 7.

**Q Will the Year 9 -11 students be taught via mixed prior attainment groups?**

TS said he does not know as yet – but it is open to review.

**Q Will the high achievers be affected by the teaching of mixed prior attainment – are you confident?**

The school are confident as the data is strong. Kings College are going to advise us of a formal assessment we are not sure when but possibly in March/April across the Maths department.

### MATHS

**Q A parent asked if there have been any improvements in the My Maths site and the culture in the Maths department as spoken about in a previous Parents' Forum?**

TS explained there is now different leadership in the maths department. Good Maths teachers are difficult to recruit. We are investing heavily in CPD (Continuing Professional Development)/training for the department. We are part of the Kings College maths project. We have a Maths expert Ian Taylor working with the department. TS was unsure if there were improvements with the My Maths site. The school have visited other schools that teach mixed prior attainment groupings including one in Kent that has a similar profile to Priory who teach mixed prior attainment right through all years. The grades they are achieving are very high they are out performing us. The class TS and the Head of Maths saw were doing Maths that some of our Year 11 students would have found very challenging. Great teaching was seen with a culture of everyone aiming to achieve the highest they could. There was also a learning culture of students showing other students how to do Maths.

### TURNOVER OF STAFF

**Q At the school in Kent that you visited what was the turn-over of staff?**

Similar to Priory's. As a Headteacher it is frustrating when staff leave but they have their own individual reasons i.e. location of the school to their home. TS advised he does carry out exit interviews with all staff most don't want to leave Priory as they like it but it is for things like distance from home to the school or cost of living. TS also said at the exit interview he asks staff what they feel Priory's strengths are. The majority always say quality of staff, training, and fantastic students. TS also asked staff for any weaknesses some staff feel the school has in-consistency across the school. Which TS said is difficult with 140 staff.

**Q What about the member of staff who was on long term sickness in Maths?**

There is no longer a long term sickness in Maths.

**Q Some teachers have not taught mixed prior attainment groups before do they have concerns?**

At the beginning there were but now there is less resistance. The school is investing in CPD.

### TARGET SETTING – YEAR 7

**Q Is there target setting for the Year 7 students?**

There are no targets in Year 7. There are new GCSE grade levels to assess and each school have to devise their own. We use a 1-9 scale and we also mark against the GCSE grades/specifications for each subject but not all have been released as yet. A grade 9 is accessible to all, as all students come in and start at the same level. The year 8 students do not have targets.



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### DRUGS IN SCHOOL

#### **Q A parent asked about drugs in school?**

TS said the school take the drugs issues very seriously and don't deny that drugs are in school but said that every school has a problem with drugs. We are very proactive we work closely with the family which can sometimes be difficult. We also use external agencies. Unfortunately the school's location opposite Sussex Downs College and being near the railway station and close to the drugs market in Brighton does not help. We are very concerned about legal highs as students get these via the internet and have no idea what is in them which makes them very dangerous. We do provide drugs education in school via Life Skills lessons. PQ mentioned she has been in some Life Skills classes and they are brilliant. TS said to the parents at the forum he would advise them not to let their children go to the skate park. The school can carry out random searches if i.e. we can smell drugs on them. A student was permanently excluded for dealing drugs in school recently. We have a zero tolerance policy. We also do assemblies about drugs. We had a sniffer dog in Mountfield Road 14 people were searched but nothing was found on any of those searched. Skunk/crow is a really powerful version of cannabis and the most dangerous which we are very concerned about. We will be running a parent session on drug education.

#### **Q Is your drug education up to date?**

Yes it is and includes about legal highs and we have a leading teacher in drugs on our Life Skills department.

#### **Q Was the permanent exclusion common knowledge amongst the students?**

Yes we told students during assembly.

TS said to the parents if you have a question or issue please raise it with the school don't feel you need to wait for the next parent forum.

A parent said to TS he wanted to say how much development he has noticed his daughter in year 8 has made and how much she has benefited from being at the school.

Also a parent said how much they enjoyed the parent evening and he was amazed how much energy and enthusiasm the staff have.

JG thanked the parents for coming to the Parent Forum.

**Meeting closed: 20:10**

**Next meeting: WEDNESDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2016 19:00**