



PARENT FORUM MEETING NOTES

MEETING NOTES OF THE PARENT FORUM HELD ON THURSDAY 11TH JANUARY 2018 AT 18.00 IN THE LECTURE THEATRE.

PRIORY GOVERNORS PRESENT: JASON KNIGHT, JOHN GRIFFITHS, PENNY LEACH, PETER COLEBOURN, SARAH ROBERTS AND TONY SMITH (HEADTEACHER)

APOLOGIES FROM GOVERNORS: GAYDREE WRIGLEY, GRAHAM ARR-JONES, RADHA STUART, SARAH HINKS, SUSAN CARPENTER AND SUZANNE HOWELLS

PARENTS: 18

ALSO PRESENT: Emma Brinkhurst (Clerk)

Welcome and Introductions

John Griffiths (Chair of Governors) welcomed parents and thanked them for joining the Governors at Parent Forum.

John Griffiths asked if we could go around the room and if parents/Governors could say their name and what year(s) their child(ren) are in at Priory:

Tony Smith (Headteacher)

One Parent had a child in Year 11 and 8.

One Parent had a child in Year 10 and two in Year 8.

One Parent had a child in Year 9 and Year 8.

One Parent had a child in Year 9.

One Parent had a child in Year 9 and Year 7.

One Parent had a child in Year 8.

One Parent had a child in Year 7 and Year 9.

One Parent had a child in Year 11.

One Parent had a child in Year 8.

One Parent had a child in Year 7.

One Parent has a child in Year 7.

One Parent had a child in Year 8.

Peter Colebourn – Co-opted Governor.

One Parent had a child in Year 8.



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One Parent had a child in Year 9.

One Parent had a child in Year 9.

Jason Knight - Parent Governor - had a child in Year 11.

Penny Leach - Local Authority Governor - has a Grandchild in Year 11 – last of four who have all gone through Priory.

Governors' Priorities

John Griffiths spoke of the Governors' priorities:

Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) – John Griffiths mentioned about the transition/ sharing of resources possibility of a MAT due to dwindling services and options available from the Local Authority. John Griffiths explained that Priory is already a member of the Lewes Co-operative Learning Partnership (LCLP) Trust which involves Priory working with local primary schools. John Griffiths advised that Priory is part of a working party along with one local primary school researching possible MAT options. John Griffiths mentioned the big threat of joining some of the larger Academy Chain MATs – where the school would have to accept the conditions presented rather than shape the direction of the MAT. So Priory is looking to create a model better suited to Lewes – not an off the shelf model – this is ongoing and no decisions have been made and this is a work in progress.

- **Ofsted** – The school last had an Ofsted inspection in 2015 three years ago so Priory is now in the 'Inspection Window' and could be visited for a one day inspection from this point forward.
- **Budgets** – Pressure has been put on politicians about the budget cuts. Initial indications are that the budget will balance this year as the cuts are not felt to be as bad as first thought which is a relief and relieves some pressures but there are still concerns about potential 'additional cost pressure'

#FlatCashEd - School Funding campaign

Tony Smith wanted to say a thank you to Parents for the #FlatCashEd - School Funding campaign. Tony Smith said John is right the projections are not as bleak. The Department of Education (DfE) is not giving new monies back to schools – it is just giving some of the money already taken back to schools. The headline figure is a small increase in the budget.

Budget/Funding

Mr Smith said the Teaching Unions are requesting a 2% pay increase, if this was not to be funded schools will have to spend more of their budget on this which was not planned and this could be devastating on our budgets. Headteachers have been arguing with Government, making the case that schools cannot afford this 2% pay increase without additional funding support. This would place funding below projected expenditure. Mr Smith said that staffing is 86% of our overall budget whereas the rule of thumb is for it to be about 80%. John Griffiths mentioned whatever your views on politics Marie Caulfield has been supporting the school funding campaign.



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A parent asked about the funding/budgets would the staff numbers need reducing. Mr Smith said that to date no one has been made redundant –staffing levels have been managed through natural wastage. Mr Smith said if an experienced teacher leaves and a Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) is taken on this can make a significant saving on costs. A challenge we have is young teachers are often ambitious for promotion so retention can be an issue. At present we are maintaining the expenditure at acceptable levels but have little money to do additional work. The school offers a broad curriculum and a wide range of options. In preparation for Ofsted we have had some external audits carried out. The school has been advised to reduce the number of options available – Governors/School does not want to do this. Mr Smith said we use to have I band in Year 7 and 8 but due to cuts and to save money we now do not have Iband in Year 8. If we had an increase in money we would like to reinstate an I band in Year 8, but at the moment there is insufficient funding to do so.

School dinners

A parent mentioned that Parent Voice Group (PVG) previously asked if the school could carry out a survey of students and parents opinions of school dinners. Previously it was explained that this was very difficult due to data protection, policy notices and collecting data. Tony Smith mentioned that previously a parent complained about a different survey carried out by an external company due to data protection. Mr Smith said at present we do not have capacity at the moment to carry out an internal survey. Mr Smith said there has been a vast improvement in the school's provider Chartwells. A Governor came into school and had lunch previously after this was mentioned at a previous Parent Forum. Student groups were also spoken to. The parent asked if Mr Smith would feedback to Parent Voice Group on this i.e. main meals, variety and healthy snacks. **ACTION:** Mr Smith to feedback to Parent Voice Group.

Mobile phones in school

A parent mentioned about Chailey having a no mobiles in school rule. The parent said students are more relaxed and pleased about this rule and there were no tears about not having them. A parent mentioned that in some cases students have phones out in in tutor time before the tutor arrives and it has been said that students are looking at things on their phones , some of which is racist and sexist and some students are finding this very uncomfortable.

A Parent mentioned that Mr Smith mentions in some of his Headteacher's newsletters about the school's rules on the use of mobiles. Mr Smith said that mobile phones are not allowed to be switched on during the school day.

Another parent said that some teachers in lessons/projects i.e. in Design Technology and Art require students to have a smart phone. Parents mentioned that some of their children felt uncomfortable when for a project they couldn't join in with their class as their 'brick' style older mobile was not compatible with i.e. making a speaker for a smart phone in Design Technology. A parent said they would like to have been alerted to the fact that their child would require a smart phone in school for some lessons/ projects. Mr Smith said that students do not require a smartphone.

Mr Smith said some parents do not support the school's line on mobile phones in school and confiscating mobile phones if these are seen being used. Mr Smith said he has been reported to the Police on three occasions by parents for confiscating mobile phones. No action was taken by the Police.



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A parent also said that there is an issue with teachers then asking students to take out their phones and take a picture in lessons for i.e. a project.

A parent asked if students are able to access the school's Wi-Fi. Mr Smith said they are unable to but many use 4G access.

A parent mentioned students are filming each other in tutor time. Another parent said that phones are taken away and logs issued. Mr Smith said if he sees a student with a phone out he issues a warning to the student to put their phone away and if he sees it again he would confiscate it. Parents mentioned that some of their children are using mobiles for homework.

Mr Smith gave an example of a pupil premium student using a mobile to take a picture of the board when homework is issued. The student does not access homework through show my homework but if a photo is taken – homework is completed. A parent mentioned about other schools like Hove Park having iPads.

ACTION: Mr Smith said he would take this information back and discuss with the Senior Leadership Team.

Support/advice for social media for students

A parent asked if there is any advice/support about being online and social media for students. Mr Smith said this is covered in Lifeskills lessons he has emailed Mrs Domin this week to revisit this including the case of the adult convicted for filming and sharing images of underage sex.

Parent wanted to thank Priory

Parent wanted to raise their appreciation of the school and a large part of this was due to effective teaching and a positive culture between staff and students. The parent wanted to thank the school.

Micro aggression

A parent wanted to talk about 'micro aggression' amongst students – the parent said that there are no easy answers to this. The parent gave an example of when a student sits down in Languages lessons – the chair might be pushed in by another student. The parent says her child seems unfazed but to parents this is not in keeping with the values of the school. The parent said she realises that sadly this is part of life. The parent also mentioned about pushing/shoving - could we build relationships amongst students and support each other. Mr Smith mentioned the school's five star values – for example. Mr Smith explained how a teacher might frame a response using the values such as 'Please do not push the chair as this is not showing respect' rather than just 'don't push the chair'.

Mr Smith said we work with young people not just on punishment but restorative measures after. The House teams work with students on relationship/friendship issues i.e. repairing relationships and showing tolerance and respect. Respecting difference and diversity is part of our school's vision.

Mr Smith explained that as a school we do not like excluding students – in the last three years the number of exclusions have decreased but there is a line in the sand and sadly, when the school has done all it can it may need to use permanent exclusion. It is important to note that school try a wide range of support strategies before this and permanent exclusion is always a last resort. But Mr Smith and the school have to think about the wellbeing of all other students as well.

Mr Smith mentioned in an external review behaviour was excellent but in the playground/corridors a little boisterous. Mr Smith said that in between lessons teaching staff are out at their classroom doors



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monitoring behaviour. Mr Smith explained that we now have a member of senior staff is at the main gate welcoming students. We would rather start the day with a 'Good morning' rather than having to start the day with having to challenge students for example with uniform infringements. Mr Smith explained lesson changeover and the playground can be challenging – corridors are narrow at the school. A parent wanted to praise the school her child in Year 7 had a challenging time and the house team worked with her child – Mrs Sahota- Lyons was fantastic.

Spirituality

A parent mentioned six months ago she raised spirituality and she said that Mr Smith did listen - staff are doing things and making changes. The parent mentioned about faith leaders coming into school and having a prayer space at school. The Parent thanked Mr Smith for listening and taking action. Mr Smith said a member of staff is in talks with Southover Church with regard to arranging a student group meeting.

Curriculum changes

Mr Smith explained that the school is proud of the curriculum offer and this is something we are working hard to maintain and improve. The Year 10 (KS4) is a different curriculum – students take a language and History or Geography. Some subject time had to be reduced to keep a broad offer in place. If the school had kept 3 hours per week per option there would have been increased impact on Arts and Technology but governors have supported the school vision for a broader offer which includes the option of two Arts/Technology subjects. The school does commission external provision for vocational subjects through Plumpton and also hairdressing but due to the high costs these are under threat. Mr Smith said the school is looking into some type of option for Languages – Mr Smith feels all students should do a language. But Mr Smith also feels a small proportion of students can't cope with learning a language which we need to think about creatively for 10/12 students.

Marking/changes to GCSEs

Priory is a five year GCSE – more robust in KS3 staff are thinking about GCSE learning and answering questions robustly.

Mr Smith mentioned about the terminology used with marking WWW (What Went Well) and EBI (Even Better If.) Feedback is provided by teacher feedback, peer assessment and self-assessment. Mr Smith said peer and self-assessment are highly effective once students understand the marking/assessment criteria. Mr Smith explained there is no point staff writing large amounts on work if it is not acted upon – the school policy is for teachers to mark less but provide better quality feedback. A parent said that her child does not find the feedback beneficial. As he does not get feedback on every piece of homework completed he does not want to do homework. It is difficult to keep him motivated.

Mr Smith summarised that there are pockets of excellence and some sharing between subjects to help improve feedback and achieve greater consistency. A parent mentioned she is struggling to get her understand the new grading.

A parent said it is a real strength of the school that if you email a question or issue to a teacher they reply on the day or next.

Mr Smith explained that schools decide on descriptors for level 3, 5 and 8. At Priory the school is using the A, B, C, on grades internally to support students i.e. a 5C is not a secure grade 5. Some Year 11 students are



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finding the different wording used in Maths more challenging. The school has had the new Maths paper for one year. Last year on the higher paper 17% was a grade 4 (C or above) but this is unlikely to be the case this summer. Some students feel they are going into the exam not knowing the paper. Parents are saying to their children do your best – focus on what you know. It was said the hardest question could be the first one on the paper and that students need to read the whole paper. Schools don't know the pass mark yet and advise against using last year's grade boundaries without understanding that these can change.

Mock results

Q A parent asked if the school track mock results?

Mr Smith said the school do track subjects' year on year. This summer Maths and English are on the 9-1 scale having started last year and every other subject will be graded on the new scale in summer 2018 (1-9) except Sociology, Media, Dt and Classics which remain on the old grading. History and Geography is the first year for this. A high 4 or a low 5 is considered equivalent to C grade. The results sent home are a good indicator of where students are now – some staff might be a little generous with marks as the grade boundaries are difficult to estimate. Mr Smith said that there were some concerns raised by History but this was because they followed guidelines to the letter. Mr Smith said German results were low but the students had only just started 12 weeks ago. Mr Smith explained that the DfE has said we won't be able to compare results properly until 2022.

Mr Smith said the school didn't know what to expect in the summer when students collected their results – they were the arguably the happiest set of students – there were fewer tears. Mr Smith said they said to the students all Year 11s in the country are going through the same thing and to just do their best and answer what they can in the exams.

Recruiting teaching staff in Humanities in schools

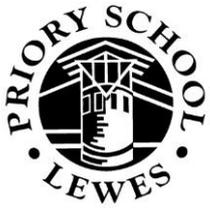
A parent asked about if the school would be recruiting in the Humanities. Mr Smith said other schools will be but Priory recruited a specialist last year.

Teaching School status

Mr Smith said the teaching school status is a real positive for the school. The status allows to enhance CPD and also opens doors to some funding bids. This will be a positive support to retain existing staff and possibly recruiting new staff. Teacher training is a high quality part of it. There are various strands to a teaching school: leadership, Continuing Professional Development (CPD), recruiting specialist leaders, and research into education projects.

A parent asked Mr Smith if there was one thing you could ask parents other than for money for the school. Mr Smith said engaging/supporting your child by working with the school and having high aspirations. Mr Smith said he sees Parent Forum as very helpful parental involvement.

Mr Smith explained an external agency came into school to do a session on revision techniques with Year 11 students and this was as a result of a previous Parent Forum discussion. The parents felt that having this



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after the mocks was great timing. Mr Smith said the school would be likely to repeat this for next year. Mr Smith said one teacher used the mind mapping in one of his lessons that very afternoon following attending the revision techniques session.

A parent asked how many Parent Forums are there per year – Mr Smith said there are two (one this time of year and one in the summer).

A parent said they found the E-Safety session for parents really helpful.

Mr Smith said the school is hoping to do a session for parents on substance abuse/drug education.

Mr Griffiths thanked the parents for attending.

Parent Forum closed 7.20pm.

Next Parent Forum is Wed 2nd May 2018 at 18:00 in the Lecture Theatre.