

Present: Jennifer Adams-Hall, Christine Anson, Karen Blake, Andrea Brownless, Angela Henderson, Jeanette McGhie, Sharon Nisbet, Joanne Sharp, Leanne Stewart, Helen Tansey, Emma Thompson, Julie Thompson, Helen Tovey, Rachel Westwood, Ian Wilkinson, Lynn Simpson, Tracey Anderson.

Apologies: Anne Burke, Ian Cook, Candy Mellor.

1. Matters arising from previous meeting

Tracey Anderson feedback to the forum on issues raised at the previous meeting in January.

Accelerated Reader – a number of issues were raised:

Parents asked if it was possible for students to complete the Accelerated Reader online tests at the weekend - currently it seems that this is only possible Monday – Friday.

Parents have asked if information about AR can be sent out again via ParentMail (there was a lot of information about it last year but less so this year apparently).

Some students have complained that the AR books they are being directed to are too easy for them – is this the case? Can the testing of reading age be incorrect at all?

Feedback:

The company don't recommend that students do quizzes at home, however, if it helps some students we are happy for them to try and Mrs Dickinson can provide parents with log-in instructions.

As for the books being too easy, we are fully confident with the tests – they assess comprehension & understanding, not ability to read. Mrs Dickinson is fairly strict at the beginning until she gets to know the students and then she is open to negotiation. A lot of students read their own books and as long as they pass the quiz and progress on the Star Test we are happy.

We will send out a reminder about Accelerated Reader via ParentMail. This includes a reminder that students are expected to read for 30 mins every day.

Water in dining hall

A request was made for more drinking water to be provided for students in the dining hall as currently there are just two small jugs of water provided that doesn't always get refilled and some student have been told that they aren't allowed to fill their water bottles from them.

Feedback:

These comments were passed on to the catering team and Business Manager. In response we have provided additional jugs of water at lunchtime and ensured that students are allowed to refill water bottles. There is also a drinking fountain accessible to students in g-block at lunchtimes.

2. School Improvement Update

Ian Wilkinson outlined key school improvement priorities and action following on from the recent Ofsted inspection.

In September 2020 our school will celebrate its 50th Anniversary.

By then we will:

- Be a fully inclusive school where all students make excellent progress and achieve positive outcomes
- Be a school where all students secure their most appropriate progression route and become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens
- Be the school of choice and be full in every year group
- Be a school with a large, vibrant collaborative Sixth Form
- Be a school where students are emotionally resilient and where emotional health and well-being are valued and promoted.

Post-Ofsted Update

Ian Wilkinson updated the forum on progress in the areas of work which have been underway post-Ofsted which includes:

- Governor Committee
- Post-Ofsted Action Plan written
- Governance Review undertaken
- Pupil Premium Review undertaken
- Support from LA including Raising Achievement Group and support for Maths
- Support from other schools/PiXL
- Staff working groups
- Section 5 inspection should be in 2019/20

Progress so far

Teaching and Learning – challenge in lessons; high expectations; questioning; home learning; numeracy and literacy; curriculum mapping exercise

More rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning

More rigorous approach to attendance

Changes in the Maths department

3. Parents issues

Uniform

There was a detailed forum discussion of the most recent uniform changes.

Key issues/questions raised included:

- Cost – the new trousers and skirts with log may prove to be slightly more expensive than some supermarket and other retail suppliers.
- Size issues – will Emblematic be able to provide the range of sizes required?
- Possible impact on students' emotional health of having to wear Emblematic trousers/skirts.
- Why has the school chosen Emblematic and not other suppliers?
- Does the school gain anything financially from the relationship with Emblematic?
- Accessibility issue with Emblematic – parking, opening times etc.
- Can uniform be ordered and delivered to school for collection?
- Why do parents have to pay postage on online orders as an additional expense?
- What will the stance on shoes be in September?

Feedback:

Tracey Anderson, Ian Wilkinson and Lynn Simpson answered as many questions as possible and explained the rationale behind the change. The majority of the issues raised are addressed in the attached Factsheet and letter to parents from Ian Wilkinson. We will also pass on comments re. accessibility and online ordering etc. to Emblematic on behalf of the forum.

There was a collective acknowledgement and understanding of the problems we face as a school regarding students not wearing correct uniform and the need for us to be able to focus all of our energy towards teaching and learning going forward.

Update on electronic communication with parents

A query was made as to how far we have progressed with the set-up of an electronic communication platform for parents (as an alternative to Milk which has been looked at and decided against).

Feedback:

Tracey Anderson confirmed that we have signed up to the SIMS teacher app and are working behind the scenes on the IT side to get this up and running for the start of the new academic year in September. Details to follow as soon as possible.

6th form open evening

Some feedback on the recent joint NE12 6th form open evening held at Longbenton High School expressed concerns about how crowded it was which meant it was difficult to get to see all staff on the night.

Feedback:

Ian Wilkinson confirmed that it has been agreed to hold the open evening at Longbenton and the parents evening at George Stephenson going forward and also said that there had been a lot of very positive feedback from students and other parents. He also mentioned the plans for transition into 6th form this year – there will be discussion held on GCSE results day re. admission and then a full induction week in September.

Message of thanks

Forum members wanted their thanks to be passed on to school staff who have been running morning, after-school and school holiday revision sessions for Year 11 students.

Feedback:

Tracey Anderson has passed this on to staff. Individual staff mentioned have been personally contacted.

Trip photos

A request was made for photos for the recent Iceland trip and Ski trip to be shared with students & parents.

Action:

Tracey Anderson to speak to relevant staff members and check on permissions to share photos.

4. GSHS Issues and Initiatives

Curriculum initiatives:

- STEM
- Performing Arts
- BTEC Hospitality
- MFL
- Sport
- RE
- Geography
- Literacy

STEM club

Weekly club, still with high numbers, exciting activities & events across the year.

Events since Christmas include:

KS3 G&T maths visit to Centre for Life 9th Feb.; Y11 Villiers STEM scholars residential, Y13 Villiers STEM scholars workshops – end of Jan.; Y12 Villiers STEM scholars residential Feb. 19th, Numeracy week – 5th – 9th Feb.

EES (Engineering Education Scheme) 6th form team (Ben Graham, Oliver Tovey, Oliver Brown, and Dan Shipp) completed a successful EES project, and graduated as industrial cadets. They worked hard to provide solutions to a relatively tricky topic (traffic management in North Tyneside) and impressed the judges with the level of technical detail in their report. They were great representatives of GSHS over the last 6 months and have behaved professionally with a wide range of people including engineers, assessors, and students from other schools.

Performing Arts

Grease (March performances) – incredibly successful production again.

Trip to London (2 February-4 February) – students went to see School of Rock and an Agatha Christie play & did some tourist sight-seeing.

TICE (This is Creative Enterprise project) - we have three students (Lauren Wilson, Eve Robson and Leah Marshall) involved in the process. We have our final interviews happening in 2 weeks, before we find out if they all get through to the final stage.

Other events/activities include:

The year 10 drama workshops with year 7 students as party of literacy week

The sixth form P. Arts students performing at the O2 in Newcastle.

Year 9 into GCSE singing day at St Mary's.

BTEC Hospitality

Students recently went on a visit to the Marriott Hotel Gateshead to see their hospitality & catering set-up and meet the executive head chef who talked to the students about health and safety.

The owner & Head Chef of Sacchins Indian restaurant was also in again last week for a masterclass in Indian cooking with the BTEC students.

MFL

MFL week – January.

The focus this year was on Japan and Japanese. Ms Prior delivered an assembly for Y7-Y13 which examined the culture and customs of Japan.

This was followed up with all KS3 MFL classes on how to say greetings and make a business card in Japanese.

Girls Sport

This Girl Can:

Just before the Easter holidays sixteen George Stephenson girls participated in a 'This Girl Can' event at Queen Alexandra Sixth Form in North Shields. This gave the unique chance to experience fun and different sports such as Zumba, Boxercise, Football with Newcastle United Foundation, Health and Fitness and even learning how to weight lift with Faye and Lily who represent Great Britain. This was a sport that none of our girls had tried before and some are going to attend a club outside of school.

Indoor Cricket Tournament:

George Stephenson Year 7 Cricket Team got to experience their first ever Indoor Cricket Tournament in March at The Parks, North Shields.

North Tyneside Dance Festival 2018:

On Thursday 8th March the George Stephenson High School dancers performed 'The Circle of Life' at the Whitley Bay Playhouse.

Indoor Rowing Champions:

Hannah Niccolini and Grace Laws got through to the Regional Tyne and Wear Indoor Rowing Finals at Newburn with Hannah making it through to the next individual round.

Boccia:

The George Stephenson Boccia Team competed against several other schools in South Shields. We did not make it through to regional finals but the students thoroughly enjoyed the experience and for many it was their first competition for this sport.

All of our info/results etc. are on our twitter page - @gshs_pe

RE – Holocaust Memorial Day (& week)

This year's Holocaust Memorial Day theme was 'the power of words' because words can make a difference both for good and evil. During Holocaust Memorial Week, all students took part in different registration activities which enabled them to learn more about the Holocaust.

Maya Walker and Harriet Clowes (two sixth form students) gave talks to the Year 9 students about their visit to the Auschwitz concentration camp.

On Friday 2nd February, Year 9 were off timetable and had lessons delivered to them about words written during the Holocaust and subsequent genocides. One of the highlights of the day, was that students were able to listen to the testimony of Rudi Oppenheimer (one of the few remaining Holocaust survivors), who lost both of his parents in Bergen-Belsen when he was only a child. Another highlight was the lesson delivered to the students by two of our talented Year 12 students, Maya and Harriet who were lucky enough to visit the Auschwitz concentration camp earlier in the year. During their lesson, Maya and Harriet maturely recounted what they saw on their visit and explored the words used by the Nazi perpetrators as well as words used by people who wanted to criticise the Nazi regime. They also explored how unfortunately people today are still using their words to deny the Holocaust ever happened.

The day was a real success and the students fully engaged with everything and took a lot away from the day.

Geography

In April 2017 40 students from Years 11 to 13 ventured on a trip of a lifetime to Iceland.

Highlights of the trip included visiting Thingvellir National Park, Gulfoss, Iceland's 'Golden Waterfall', the Blue Lagoon and the Geysir geothermal area. It was a fantastic opportunity to see such fantastic landscapes in real life. We attempted to see the Northern Lights but unfortunately the skies were too cloudy. Throughout the trip we had an expert tour guide and great driver, who both went above and beyond.

Gabrielle Watson Year 11 said the trip was 'amazing' and Harriet Frost said the trip, 'was a once in a life time opportunity'.

'That's one ticked off the bucket list', Isaac and Lewis Andrews Year 11.

Literacy

A Year 10 and Year 7 peer tutoring group has been established and has been running for several weeks now (organised by Ms Prior, Curriculum Leader for MFL). The students meet every Wednesday during registration: the focus was Peer Reading in the Spring Term and this term is extended writing. The Year 10 students plan and deliver the mentoring sessions themselves. Student voice feedback has been really positive with both groups benefiting from the sessions.

Extracurricular activities

Year 7 Health Week

Week beginning 8th January. The annual Year 7 Health Week went really well with students learning about emotional well-being, diet and exercise, they got to try a variety of healthy food and drink for a Breakfast Morning. The whole year group also got to participate in a Zumba session!

Year 11 Mock Exams Results Day

15th January – Y11 students got to experience that results day feeling by receiving their mock exam results in a sealed envelope. We followed this up with a review of how the mocks went in tutorial time and revision planning for the real exams.

Young Mayor & MUKYP elections

January of this year – GSHS students invited to stand for Young Mayor and Member of UK Youth Parliament. Nominees went into an online vote to select the top 4 in each category for the final elections. Daniel McTiernan (Y7) made into the final election for Young Mayor and Kai Tinnion, Y11 made it into the final for MUKYP. Kai wasn't elected, however has been given a place on the NT Youth Council. Daniel has been given the position of Deputy Young Mayor.

Question Time with Paul Hanson

22nd March – our senior students in Y10 and 11 asked if they could send some important questions to NT council regarding provision for young people and their community. The questions were really strong and high powered. Sophie Anson in 13 (our current MUKYP) submitted the questions on our behalf to Julia Bradwell (Participation, Advocacy and Engagement Development Officer) who then got back to us to say that Paul Hanson, the deputy chief executive of NT council, wanted to answer the questions personally. It was just like Question Time and our students did us proud – they gave Paul a challenging time and he was extremely complimentary about them and our school.

Ski Trip

The 2018 Ski Trip was a great success, with 76 students and 12 staff involved. The party was based in the beautiful Austrian city of Salzburg, and skied the Amade area, one of Europe's biggest, accessing three separate resorts throughout the week (Flachau, Flachau Winkel and Radstadt). The variety of slopes on offer was fantastic and ensured that all our skiers, from beginners to advanced, were able to challenge themselves. We have decided to return to the same resort next year and 101 students have booked up already, meaning that our 2019 trip could well be the largest that the school has so far undertaken. Unlike most other schools, we believe in taking as many students as possible away, rather than capping our numbers, and the growing popularity of the trip is fantastic for us to see. A trip of this size is exceptionally rare and it has become a firmly established tradition at George Stephenson. This success is a real testament to the amazing spirit that the staff and students create every year. Plans are also afoot for another European trip in 2020, while for 2021 we have begun to investigate the possibility of skiing in the USA with a quick trip to New York thrown in for good measure. We are immensely proud of the opportunities and experiences we have provided for our young people over the 8 years of trips so far, and we will seek to make each future trip bigger and better.

School Environment Update (spring term works programme)

We don't have anything else new to add to what we updated you with at the last meeting, as we have been concentrating on general repairs and maintenance.

We are on target for the up and coming projects - the next major one is a full replacement of g-block roof.

5. Date of next meeting: September 2018 (date t.b.c.)