

GEORGE STEPHENSON HIGH SCHOOL

MINUTES OF PARENTS' FORUM MEETING

Tuesday 02 May 2017

Present: Jennifer Adams-Hall, Karen Blake, Christine Anson, Ian Cook, Candy Mellor, Sharon Nisbet, Helen Tovey, Helen Welford, Ian Wilkinson, Steve Tyson, Tracey Anderson.

Apologies: Clare Atkins, Andrea Brownless, Peter Douthwaite.

1. Matters arising from last meeting

Parents' Forum PR – work is continuing to develop communication platforms for the school (see later agenda item). Twitter is already being used more (a new Twitter Policy has been introduced).

Student Lockers – a number of lockers have been installed at the end of C-corridor (ground floor) and in Science for use by 6th form students in a first come-first served basis. Unfortunately we do not have enough room to install any more within the school.

2. Issues arising from the previous term

• GSHS issues & initiatives

Curriculum developments:

Year 7 Health Week (January)

Health week was the first week back after Christmas with study skills that continued throughout the whole half term based on mental, emotional and physical health. We had a whole year group 'rave' work out with glow sticks, a healthy breakfast with alternative food and drink for the whole year group and many workshops designed to create positive body image, exercise and mental health issues.

MFL week (January)

A week of Portuguese themed activities across all year groups combined with interesting Portuguese cuisine on offer in the canteen. The MFL department is keen to raise awareness of different languages as well as French and Spanish.

Numeracy week (February)

All students completed numeracy themed registration activities during the week and had numeracy in all other subjects as a starter at least once in the week. In addition, Year 7 students dressed their tutor room doors as a number or a famous Mathematician. Year 8 students took on 'The Big Challenge' where they had to make all the numbers from 1-100 using only 1,2,3,4 and 5. All the Maths teachers took a number of Year 8 students back to their Primaries to help out for a morning or afternoon (they all loved it!) and Year 9 & 10 students got involved in mathematical puzzles & songs. The Numeracy Teacher Hunt Extravaganza had a great reaction from the students! All the Numeracy Leads (staff in each department) wore a number every day. This was an answer to a Numeracy question (at least one for every subject) which was cross curricula and students had to find out which teacher matched which question.

Reading Week & World Book day (March)

For Literacy/Reading Week this year we celebrated some of the greatest words in history, looking at books, speeches and song lyrics that have changed the world. The texts chosen were put up in various places round the school. They were from a wide range of subjects and speakers/writers, but all are similar in having influenced the world in a significant way. We asked students to reflect on how words have and can change their world, in a variety of ways:

KS4 BTEC Drama students interpreted some of the texts and presented them to Year 6 students at feeder primary schools.

KS3 tutor groups created Word Art using the texts as inspiration.

All year groups explored a different text in tutor time.

Y9 workshops - selected students to take part in workshops focusing on the spoken word, Rap, performance poetry etc.

Staff/students were asked to Tweet their own inspirational words - could be a book read, a song lyric, even words of wisdom from a loved one.

No Pens Day - all teachers encouraged to deliver lessons that focus on reading and (particularly) writing. Students encouraged to discuss ideas and reflect on learning without writing anything down.

Y11 Super-Learning Day (March)

In March we provided another fantastic motivational session for all Y11 students and some 10 students. The focus for Y11's was on preparation for the exams – self-confidence and self-esteem as well as time management and balancing out their busy lives. For the 10 students there was a focus on self-belief – inspiring young people to believe that they can achieve anything in life. The sessions were delivered by an external company called Live n' Learn – this is the 5th year we have worked with them and they were just as good as ever. The Y11 session was just one part of their 'Super Learning Day' – a carousel of English and maths mock exams alongside the Live n' Learn session.

Y11 Exam Ready sessions

Year 11 students have now experienced two intense exam preparation experiences in each of Maths, English and Science, where they have been taken in detail through an entire exam paper in each session by their teachers – an experience called a 'Walking-Talking-Mock'. Feedback from students and staff involved has been really positive.

Extracurricular activities:

Y11 mock exam results day (January)

All of Year 11 received their mock exam results in an official envelope to mimic the 'real' experience they will face in August. This was followed up with discussion with their form tutors to help focus them on what lies ahead and their priorities.

Holocaust Memorial Week (January)

Y9 involved in activities, assemblies to all year groups by 6th form students Jamie Chambers and Sophie Anson who went on a visit to Auschwitz.

Holocaust Memorial Activities 2017 included registration activities for all year groups and a full Y9 curriculum day. The SV from the registration activities was that the activity which impacted most upon students was the Key Stage 3 students watching the short film "Refugee." Refugee is a 12 minute film, made for children which is told backwards about a white, British family who are fleeing some unknown terror. The students said that it made them realise how countries ignoring the Jews and their plight in Nazi Germany prior to the start of the war is just like what is happening now with refugees and that humanity hasn't really learned its lesson. Also, according to Anya, the HMD liaison worker for the North East, we were the school who did the most to remember the day as all students through the registration activities and assemblies would have taken part in some act of remembrance and then we had the Y9 day on top of that- she was also very impressed with the quality of the activities and the use of our student ambassadors in what we did.

The Student Voice from the day was overwhelming positive – one student said that it was the most important day of his school year and he would not forget what he had learned. In terms of student comments and reflections, the Holocaust Memorial tree that we made is in the library and on the luggage tags are what the most important thing students learned as well as the thing that they will take away with them/promise to do to fight injustice.

Y11 Ford Castle experience (March)

A group of Year 11 students took part in an outward bound/revision/team-building weekend experience. This is something we have run for the past few years and has been very popular.

Sporting success

Several sporting achievements were mentioned. In particular our Year 7 footballing girls reached the Level 3 School Games tournament after winning the North Tyneside tournament which is an amazing achievement in itself but they actually finished 4th overall. They also took part in a 5-a-side football tournament as part of the School Games programme. Two teams entered the competition, and both did really well – one of the teams went through to the semi-finals where they beat Valley Gardens 1-0 in a close game to reach the final. In the final against St. Thomas More the match finished 1-1, so both teams were declared joint winners and both went through to the next round to represent North Tyneside in the Tyne and Wear finals.

In addition the Year 8 girls Rugby Squad got to regional finals, our Boccia Squad qualified for National finals, KS3 girls and boys qualified for the regional trampolining finals, our cross country squad that qualified for regional finals, the Indoor Rowing Squad reached the regional finals and some of our elite athletes worked with Katie Storey as part of the Sky Sports for Living Project.

Aladdin (March)

There were three fantastic performances in March – the first production under the direction of our new Curriculum Leader for Performing Arts, Katie Brookbanks.

The students performed to a packed hall full of primary school students for their dress rehearsal on the Monday followed by three nights in a row to a paying audience. The performances were the culmination of months of hard work behind the scenes – auditions started back in September followed by hours of rehearsal time after that, including a trip to see the show in the West End for inspiration. The enthusiasm, dedication and commitment the students (both on and back stage) showed was incredible, and what a talented group they are. It was a massive team effort, and the final result wouldn't have been possible without the creative talents of the Production Team of staff & students. Rehearsals began after Easter for next year's production of Grease.

Golden Ticket number 2! (April)

The second Golden Ticket winner of the year (winner receives a £50 Eldon Square voucher), was one of our older students, a girl from Y10. 95 students in total were presented with a Golden Ticket (all staff are given one Golden Ticket to present to a student of their choice for something exceptional they have done in school and one winner is drawn out of the hat). One more to come at the end of this term.

• **Parents' issues**

6th form support & intervention

A parent of a Year 12 student mentioned that her child had commented on the fantastic amount of support and intervention students receive in Year 11, particularly after school sessions in different subjects, and that it would be appreciated if that same level of support could be offered in Year 12. Tracey Anderson explained that we do have a Head of 6th form and a 6th form Learning Mentor who run an enrichment programme and Study Lessons for all students where personalised support is offered.

ACTION: Tracey Anderson will pass on these comments to the 6th form team and Curriculum Leaders for consideration going forward.

Rising school roll

A discussion was had about the current situation of the school being over-subscribed in several year groups and some children in feeder primary schools not being guaranteed a place next year and in future years. Ian Wilkinson explained that we have a Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 228 in each year group and that children in feeder primary schools who do not live in our catchment area would not be guaranteed a place – we are expecting several appeals again for places in next year's Year 7, as we experienced last year. We are wary that we need to tailor our transition activities to account for the fact that there may be children attending those who have not been offered a place in September. Ian meets regularly with the primary Headteachers and discusses the situation with them. At this time, and for the foreseeable future there are no plans to increase our PAN or make changes to the catchment area.

Communication – ParentMail

Some queries about ParentMail were raised:

1. Very few messages from us as a school via ParentMail – why don't we use it more?
2. Polite request that when we use ParentMail to ask for payments for trips etc. that we include more information/a more polite message rather than just a demand for a specific payment of money by a certain date (as has happened recently for the ski trip) apparently?

ACTION: Tracey Anderson to pass these comments on to the relevant staff in school. Ian Wilkinson reiterated that we still don't have 100% sign-up to ParentMail hence the reason that we still use paper letters as well. We will also be encouraging the new Year 7 parents to sign up when we meet them for the 1:1 interviews in July.

Parent Evening scheduling system

Positive comments/feedback on this on the whole. One issue highlighted was that if you ask it to auto-fill your appointments it doesn't leave 5 minute gaps which is advised.

Steve Tyson explained that we would need to select the system to enforce the 5 minute gap rule to avoid this happening which would potentially restrict the number of appointments parents can make, therefore we have chosen not to do this.

Old & unwanted uniform

A suggestion was made that we ask students/parents to donate any old unwanted school uniform/PE kit so that we could send it to a school in need, for example in Africa. Tracey Anderson confirmed that we usually ask Year 11 students before they leave to donate any of their uniform so that we can create and maintain a stock in school to help out disadvantaged students (which we will continue to do).

ACTION: Tracey Anderson to include a request for old & unwanted uniform to all parents in our annual letter home to parents reminding them of our expectations for September, and to also explore possibilities of becoming involved in a scheme to send uniform overseas.

3. Parent voice 2016-17

Steve Tyson (Assistant Headteacher) gave a presentation which summarised the development of Parent Evenings over the last five years and the key messages arising from analysis of the parent questionnaires we ask parents to complete at these evenings.

See attached slides for details.

4. Communication developments

Tracey Anderson shared some information about an App which allows teachers to set home learning online for students and also allows communication with parents on a variety of issues (MILK). We are currently looking into this and are running a small scale trial of it with a selected group of students/parents. Feedback from the Forum was wholly positive.

ACTION: Tracey Anderson will update the Forum on any further developments.

5. Any Other Business

Tracey Anderson shared the sad news of the loss of one of our longest-serving staff, Mrs Shelia Hall, teacher of English & Drama, recently. Sheila was an inspirational teacher and also the Director of all of our productions in recent years. She will be greatly missed by all students, staff and parents.

6. Date of Next Meeting

Date to be confirmed for September 2017 (start of next autumn term).