

GEORGE STEPHENSON HIGH SCHOOL

MINUTES OF PARENTS' FORUM MEETING

Monday 03 October 2016

Present: Clare Atkins, Christine Anson, Robert Ayre, Julie Beck, Andrea Brownless, Lisa Bryden, Anne Burke, Ian Cook, Sara Fraser, Amanda Griffin, Jeanette Maghie, Candy Mellor, Sharon Nisbet, Kate Ross, Lisa Stobbs, Julie Thompson, Helen Tovey, Karen Turner, Helen Welford, Rachel Westwood, Carol Whiting, Adele Willcock, Helen Williams, Theresa Allen, Steve Tyson, Tracey Anderson.

Apologies: Karen Blake, Peter Douthwaite, Ian Wilkinson.

1. Welcome and introductions

Tracey Anderson welcomed new members to the Parents' Forum and thanked existing members for their continued support. She explained the role of the Parents' Forum:

- To develop and improve dialogue between parents and the school.
- To continue to make whole-school improvements which benefit the academic, social and emotional progress and well-being of our students.
- To raise staff awareness of the needs of students and parents.
- To raise the profile of the school in the wider community.

Parents were reminded that if they had any individual concerns about their child they are advised to contact the school (Guidance Manager in the first instance) as necessary rather than waiting until the Forum meetings to air those concerns.

2. Issues arising from the previous term:

GSHS Issues and Initiatives

Curriculum developments

- New Curriculum Leader for Performing Arts - Ms Brookbanks
- Increase in curriculum time for Performing Arts in KS3
- New Curriculum Leader for P.E. - Mr. O'Dea
- New Curriculum Leader for English - Mrs. Bell

School Environment Update (summer works programme)

- A-block window replacement programme
- C13 Drama Studio complete refurbishment
- Safeguarding improvements:
 - Evacuation Route Widened – enlargement of the physical space to evacuate students and staff into the tennis courts
 - Pedestrian Fence – segregation of students from moving vehicles (cars, wagons, others)
 - Automated Gates – installation of new electrics system
 - Automated Doors System – school building doors now automated and inaccessible at certain times during the day to safeguard students and staff
- Fire risk improvements - installation/replacements of emergency lighting and smoke detectors throughout the school.
- Yard furniture – seating for students at break and lunchtimes
- Art Classrooms – new installation of commercial ventilation system
- Various decorating projects around the school

School IT updates

- C1 refurbished as a new media studies computer suite
- Library computer suite fully refurbished
- Wireless Access Points now installed in every classroom so WiFi coverage everywhere in school is much improved
- New Firewall and internet filtering/monitoring system installed to help improve security & online safety of students

Extracurricular activities

TUESDAY AFTERNOON

Photography

Act2Cam

Mandarin

6th form led activities

MONDAY AFTER SCHOOL

Choir

THURSDAY AFTER SCHOOL

Stem Club

Plus:

- Wide range of sporting activities
- Radio Loco
- Performing Arts
- Competitions, trips and visits
- Youth Council opportunities
- Study and outward bound residential trips
- After school study support sessions for Y10 and Y11
- Mentoring for some Y11 students

Parents' issues

Science GCSE courses

Some parents wanted to know when the decision would be made as to which GCSE science course their child would be following is going to be made (dual or triple award).

ACTION: Tracey Anderson to pass on query to Andy Williams (Curriculum Leader: Science) to respond to. Individual parents asked to contact science department with any further queries.

School Transport

Some Y7 parents concerned about overcrowding on the scholars buses and wanted to know if the school had any say over bus provision. Tracey Anderson explained that although the scholar's buses are very full, unfortunately it is not a fact that travel capacity on the scholar's buses and student numbers are linked. The local authority is the provider of the scholar's buses and they have as many buses as their finances will allow available to all North Tyneside schools.

We have been extremely fortunate to have secured the number of scholar's buses we have – 2 doubles in the afternoon and 2 doubles and 1 single in the morning. It is most unlikely that this provision will be increase in the next few years. We have checked with the drivers as to the number of students getting each bus and confirmed that these numbers are within their health and safety numbers and so far they are.

ACTION: parents advised to contact school transport at the local authority (0191 643 8726; Email hometoschooltransport@northtyneside.gov.uk) or Tony Nelson (0191 203 3925) at Nexus (selected providers for scholars provision) themselves if they are still concerned.

Extracurricular activities

Question about whether the current activities programme is on the website yet. Tracey Anderson confirmed that this is being worked on at the moment as we have had experienced some technical difficulties with the website.

ACTION: Tracey Anderson to ensure that information is updated as soon as possible, and to develop further communications with students re. opportunities (e.g. via year group twitter feeds and student email).

Communications

Query about ParentMail – has it been set up for new Y7 parents and previous issues sorted for existing parents? New Y7 parents who signed up at the 1:1 interviews in July have been connected. Remaining parents will receive a reminder shortly.

ACTION: Tracey Anderson to check that information has gone out to new parents to sign up. Individual parents asked to check to see if they have received any message this term (they should have received a test message).

Mixed ability teaching

Some parents expressed concern about the move to mixed ability teaching in science (GCSE) and in Y7. Tracey Anderson explained that we have made the decision to move to this in science for educational and aspirational reasons. (Andy Williams, Curriculum Leader: Science, has contacted all parents by letter with the rationale behind this). As for Y7, we have had mixed ability teaching in Y7 before for part of the curriculum and have made the decision to move to this for all subjects this year, again for educational and aspirational reasons. The highest performing schools locally use this approach and there is substantial educational research to show that it raises achievement across the board (for example schools in Finland are amongst the highest achieving in the world and do not stream/set students at all). The school can assure parents that we will monitor student progress and achievement (as we always do) rigorously across the year and ensure that teachers are meeting individual needs of all students whilst maintaining a culture of high challenge.

ACTION: Tracey Anderson to pass on parent views to the Senior Leadership Team.

Y11 English exam preparation

A question was asked about an initiative in Y11 English lessons where students experience a regular carousel workshop in different groups to focus on various aspects of the English language exam. Tracey Anderson confirmed that this was something that was done last year with Year 11 choosing a set question/area of the exam they wanted to focus on. The English department wanted to start this earlier this year so that everyone had a chance to access the various writing styles of the language paper and have a chance to produce a timed response in these sessions too. The department are focussing on this up to Christmas and will then rearrange groups again closer to the exams. The concept is based on an extremely successful approach used with A-level English students over the last two years, resulting in the best A-level English results the school has ever achieved this summer.

ACTION: Tracey Anderson to pass on comments to Helen Bell, Curriculum Leader: English for feedback.

Information guides for parents

Query about whether these have been issued this year. Tracey Anderson confirmed that they have been issued to students via form tutors.

School catering

One parent asked if the school could provide additional tables/chairs in Giorgio's for lunchtimes.

ACTION: Tracey Anderson to inform Business Manager and school catering of this request.

Y11 Mentoring Programme

Comments made about how positive this programme is (from existing Y11 parent and a Y11 parent from last year).

ACTION: Tracey Anderson to pass on positive feedback to staff involved.

3. The Year Ahead

School Improvement Plan

Tracey Anderson outlined the following:

At George Stephenson High School we agree that our '2 lengths' (our core aim) are:

'To provide the best possible educational experience for all'

To ensure we are successful in achieving this we have identified the following as our '5 keys':

Excellent Teaching – Innovative, reflective, evidence based, and collaborative

Positive and Supportive Relationships – Safe, Happy, Attending and Achieving

A Personalised and Enriched Curriculum – Academic success, personal development, inspirational experiences and preparation for life beyond George Stephenson High School

High Aspirations - High quality tracking and interventions, enrichment opportunities and pathways guidance

Strong Partnerships – Teaching School, Parents, Business, Education and Community

Achievements so far:

- Our best ever A Level results - 100% pass rate this year (48% A*-B and 70% A*-C – all above national)
- A record breaking 93% of our students secured a place at their first choice university with the rest securing their second choice or getting into university through clearing.
- 40% of our students are going to a Russell Group university.
- Excellent GCSE results again this year– 70% A*-C in Maths and 75% A*-C in English with 65% achieving A*-C in English and Maths
- Improved attendance
- Very low exclusion rate
- Improved reputation – now over-subscribed (over 1200 students)
- Outstanding Ofsted Report
- Teaching School
- National and international reputation for innovative teaching and learning

4. Parent Focus groups

Tracey Anderson asked members of the Forum to let her know if they would be interested in setting up any smaller Focus groups this year. In the past we have run Focus groups to look at home learning, school food and young peoples' health education.

5. Any Other Business

Parental Engagement Opportunities 2016-17

Tracey Anderson highlighted the variety of parental engagement opportunities (above and beyond the calendared parents' evenings) on offer this year:

- Y7 workshops (Maths, English, Science, iLearn, e-Safety) for parents, October Parents' evening
- Y7 Parent Meeting on Assessment (November)
- Y7 iLearn - Transition into Humanities evening (June)
- History - History lectures
- MFL – Parents into Spanish evening (November)
- Y7 MFL reading scheme; Y8 parents Languages Roadshow (January 2017)
- Health & Social Care - Xmas party events for parents and toddlers (December 2017)
- Science – STEM events, including Y7/8 Project Based Learning showcase event in June.
- Geography, Business, ICT, Media – course guides for parents
- DT & Art – exhibition of art & design work, fashion show (summer term) Xmas craft night for children & parents
- Performing Arts - show case events for parents; Aladdin (Spring Term)
- PE - gymnastics show (January); student parent/tennis tournament (Summer Term)

6. Date of next meeting

Monday 16th January 2017