

Minutes of the Parents/Carers Forum held on Tuesday 6th February 2007

Learning Resources Centre

Present:

Staff: Mr Brownlow [BRW] [Deputy Head Curriculum]

Parents/Carers: Mrs Lamb, Mrs Shepherd, Mrs Armstrong, Mrs Taner, Mr Jones, Dr Eaton, Mrs Rishi, Mrs King, Mr Pedro, Mrs Wegrzyn, Mrs Kavanagh, Ms E Theophanous, Mrs Wilsher, Mrs Roberts [APFLS.]

Apologies: Mrs Savjani, Mrs Vasudevan,

1. Welcome

- Mr Brownlow welcomed everyone and asked if there were any matters arising.

2. Matters Arising from the minutes of the previous meeting

- LILE [Latymer Integrated Learning Environment] Parents were very complimentary and commented again on how the system seems to be more reliable, a very good resource and source of information and parents commented on how helpful the work experience link for year 11 was.
- In answer to previous matters arising BRW noted that the PE department recommended that pupils should bring sandwiches on the days that they had lunchtime activities to ensure they were able to have some lunch.
- BRW informed the forum that Mr Wakefield [WKE] was organising a UCAS evening for year 12 parents, the head teacher and head of year would be present along with some guests possibly from universities. It was hoped that this would inform the parents of the process, what pupils would be required to do and by when and give details of what information/ support was on offer at Latymer and elsewhere. UCAS applications was an issue that had been raised at a previous meeting and the parents thought this was an excellent idea and would be very helpful.

3. School Trips

- Parents felt that there needed to be a more effective system in place to notify them of a change in the arrival time of pupils who had been on school trips. It was suggested that one possibility was a phone tree, parents would agree to a list of names and telephone numbers be given to participating families and a member of school staff would phone the first person on the list and each person would inform the next. It was felt that it was not sensible to change school policy on allowing mobile phones on trips just to resolve this issue. BRW will speak to Mr Ridge.
- One parent expressed concern that children were allowed to go into Harpenden when on the residential music course but parents had not been informed that this would happen. BRW said he would speak to Mr Ridge and the letter to parents could be changed accordingly.
- One parent raised the issue of CRB checks not being carried out on families when children went on foreign exchange trips. BRW pointed out that though he understood the parents concerns it was a matter of choice whether pupils went on the trip and it was not possible to carry out these checks. Some concerns were expressed that sometimes the families either here or abroad were not native speakers of the exchange countries language and this could cause a few problems. Usually parents were given the address and contact details of the family their child would be staying with and the pupils are encouraged to make contact before the exchanges. Several parents said how well organised the exchange trips were and how good it was that the visiting students were occupied on several organised trips, which reduced the burden on the host families.
- Sometimes pupils who wished to undertake an exchange were not able to do so because there were not sufficient places available and BRW said it was a first come first served policy as the school had no control over the number of potential host families abroad.
- Some parents asked if proper risk assessments had been undertaken and BRW commented that Mr Ridge [RIG] was very skilled at carrying them out supported by Mr Richardson [HRIC] the bursar and that all trips had to have been assessed and that RIG made sure that all the relevant checks and paperwork was completed before permission was sought from the head for a trip to go ahead. BRW

said they were looking into creating a 'blanket' permission letter which would mean that parents would not have to fill in the same information on numerous occasions

- One parent asked why there seemed to be more trips in certain subjects than others. BRW explained that some trips were a necessary part of the curriculum but for other trips the ruling was one trip per subject per key stage but this was only if the subject teacher felt it would be beneficial. More trips would result in less teaching in other subjects for pupils going on trips and less teaching for other pupils if their teacher was on a trip.
- Parents asked why some of the trips were organised such a long time in advance and BRW explained that due to the cost of the trips it was felt that providing parents with a longer period in which to pay the money, or for the pupils to raise some of it, was more appropriate.
- Several parents expressed how impressed they were with the variety of trips on offer, the way that staff arranged for a balance between pupils having the freedom to do as they liked while maintaining adequate supervision, the way that closer relationships between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves were formed but within appropriate parameters as these allowed children socialise, to overcome difficulties and become independent. Parents also said that the richness of the experience these trips gave the children was a gift, how lucky their children were and that they were very grateful that Latymer staff were prepared to undertake the enormous responsibility for these trips

4. Extra Curricular Activities

- Some parents felt there was not enough information available about these activities and in particular year 7 parents. BRW explained that though it was the intention to advertise all the extra curricular activities on the intranet this was not always possible as some groups/activities started part way through the years, others ceased, some groups were very good at advertising themselves and others were not. As many of the activities and groups were pupil led it was not always possible for there to be a consistent approach with regard available information.

5. Urgent Matters for Discussion

- Some year 7/8 parents felt that homework was not always marked with good feedback. BRW said that the comment driven marking trial was still taking place and this had yet to be assessed to decide if it should continue and be rolled out to other years or not. BRW said that he could not deal with unnamed cases of inconsistent marking unless parents actually wrote to him individually as he had to deal with this issue on a 1:1 basis. It was noted by some of the parents that perhaps part of the problem was the transition between the relationship a parent had with a single class teacher they could see often and that of not having, or trying to form a relationship with several different teachers that they only see infrequently. BRW told parents that year 7 pupils will still get an achievement and an effort grade with the reports that would be issued at Easter
- BRW commented that it is at GCSE and A level that very direct instructions on what would turn a B into an A were important. Lower down the school it was more important that pupils were encouraged to expand and hone their skills in producing work and undertaking research etc.
- Some parents had concerns about the teaching of certain subjects, again BRW stated that parents must write to him direct as he could not deal with these concerns via the forum
- Parents asked about changes to exams and BRW pointed out that there were always changes to exams but Latymer tried to minimise the impact on the children and resisted changing things if it was felt to be detrimental.
- One parent asked why the Year 11 prom was arranged the night before an exam and BRW pointed out that this was an optional event and would finish at 10pm.

6. Possible Subjects for Discussion At Future Meetings-none

Future Meetings: Tuesday 15th May 2007 6pm Learning Resources Room