

# Minutes of the Parents/Carers Forum held on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2007

## Learning Resources Centre

### **Present:**

**Staff:** Mr Brownlow [BRW] [Deputy Head Curriculum] Mr Oxenham [OXN] [Head of ICT]

**Parents/Carers:** Ms Phillips, Mrs Lamb, Mrs Shepherd, Mrs Armstrong, Mrs Taner, Mr Jones, Dr Eaton, Mrs Rishi, Mrs Vasudevan, Mr Pedro, Mrs Kavanagh, Ms E Theophanus, Mrs Wilsher, Mrs Roberts [APFLS.]

**Apologies:** Mrs Wegrzyn,

### **1. Welcome**

Mr Brownlow welcomed everyone and explained that the agenda for the meeting had changed because of an urgent matter for discussion but the agenda items would be deferred until the next meeting. The school were concerned about pupils using certain internet sites and wanted to make parents aware of the dangers and to ask parents what information/support they would like from the school and how they were dealing with this issue at home. OXN would be giving a brief powerpoint presentation to the forum and then there was to be a general discussion. BRW asked if there were any matters arising.

### **2. Matters Arising from the minutes of the previous meeting**

- A list of the extra curricular activities is now available on LILE [Latymer Integrated Learning Environment] but BRW pointed out that the list is likely to change and both the music and PE department use the intranet homepage and their own noticeboards.
- Parents' feedback to BRW with regard to both the Oxbridge and year 12 UCAS evenings was positive and BRW that these would be now be annual events.
- School trips-BRW said that Mr Ridge would be recommending phone trees should now be used though not necessarily for Cwm trips, as timings were usually very accurate.
- BRW noted that the trips into Harpenden by children who were on the orchestra course would now be mentioned in the letter to parents
- BRW explained that CRB checks of host families on exchange trips would not be workable and as these trips were not compulsory parents may choose not to allow their child to take part. He also noted that though it was unfortunate that some children were unable to take part in their preferred exchange trip, especially the one to France because the school was quite small, trying to establish relationships with another school was not feasible.
- BRW explained that though teaching unions were opposed to their members continuing to run school trips Latymer staff were still prepared to do so but these would continue to be limited to an average of one trip per key stage to minimise disruptions for both the pupils and staff on the trips and those who were not. BRW fed back that staff were pleased to have their efforts acknowledged by parents and also Mr Ridge's pleasure at being thanked for his excellent risk assessments.
- BRW confirmed that many trips would continue to be organised a long time in advance as facilities, instructors and accommodation had to be booked, it ensured the costs were more favourable and allowed parents a longer time to pay and sometimes time for pupils to fundraise for the more expensive trips.
- BRW mentioned that he had so far received 72 completed questionnaires from year 7 parents about assessment etc, and he would be compiling the results and this would be made available to parents.
- BRW confirmed that Latymer would not change its established curriculum for a fashionable whim e.g. teaching Mandarin Chinese but only if it were felt the change would be in the long term best interests of its pupils.

### **3. Internet Sites**

- OXN highlighted the kind of sites, which could be a cause for concern and these are termed as online communities. He noted that both youtube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) and myspace ([www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)) were allowed in school and this was because they were useful educational tools. He gave a demonstration of both sites but explained that both these and other sites could also be dangerous because

- they could lead to personal identity fraud
- the information that pupils entered would be in the public domain
- these sites could be used for online bullying

- they could be used as a medium for unsavoury/dangerous people to misrepresent themselves and created opportunities for them to meet and exploit vulnerable young people.

OXN explained to parents that it was possible to report misuse of or inappropriate material on these sites and demonstrated how to do it.

- BRW informed the parents of some of the schools concerns and the strategies they currently employ. The SLT felt that the school needed to be proactive and so do the parents to reduce any possible risks. The SLT and staff felt the best strategy was to educate children about the possible dangers, give them guidance and advice and to teach them the sensible way to use these sites as banning them was not the best, or a realistic option. The SLT wondered if parents would benefit from this information too. Pupils were only to access either youtube or myspace in school, not any of the other online communities but they were aware that as fast as they could block pupils from gaining access to other sites pupils could often find a way around these blocks. Pupils were advised to maintain a certain amount of anonymity and to limit access to their 'space' to people that they actually knew.
- BRW asked those present what did they think the school could do to inform parents and what did they think parents could do or already did do at home?
- Parents expressed concern about children being possible prey for paedophiles, or unwittingly infringing copyright laws. Parents asked if the school had a mechanism for checking what sites children access and BRW and OXN confirmed that they do as they can scan user areas but they cannot watch all of the pupils all of the time. Parents did express the need for them to be given the same information as their children and admitted that they found it very difficult to supervise their children's use of computers 100% of the time. Some parents were concerned about possible bullying via the Internet in terms of their own children being potential perpetrators or victims and felt that the promotion of respect for each other both at home and at school would be a good strategy, especially if parents and staff model appropriate behaviour. Parents pointed out that often their children's computer skills were far in advance of their own and this was a problem for them.
- BRW thanked OXN and the parents for their input and explained that this would be discussed further at school and parents would be informed of the outcome.

## **5. Urgent Matters for Discussion**

- Parents asked if pupils knew how to report something private or of concern to an adult and BRW explained the systems currently in place and that all pupils were made aware of them.
- Parents asked if the school would consider providing a mentor who would perhaps deal with emotional and social issues, BRW noted that there were Heads of Learning, [HOL] Deputy HOLs, form tutors and also Mrs Meadows who undertook this role.
- Parents asked if there was any truth in the rumour that uniform was to be brought in for the 6<sup>th</sup> form and BRW said that there were no plans to do so.
- Parents asked if the school would consider offering Spanish as an option and BRW explained that this was not possible as pupils already had a choice of 4 languages, issues around the logistics, staffing and timetabling another language would also preclude this.
- Some parents asked if there could be an after school club for an alternative language but BRW pointed out that staff already provided a vast array of extra curricular activities, that the person running the club would have to be highly qualified and fluent in the language to meet the needs of Latymer pupils and if they were paid it would cause ill will amongst the staff who provided their services for free.
- Parents asked about the possible provision for community languages and he noted that Latymer did not wish to overload students and there was provision for these languages around the Borough.

## **6. Committee Changes**

BRW asked forum members to check when their term of office ended. He explained that Mr Wakefield, Deputy Head responsible for the 6<sup>th</sup> Form, [WKE] would be joining us at the next meeting and taking over from him from September. Parents would be asked if they wished to join the forum and as before names would be drawn out of a hat, if current forum members wished to do another term of office they were welcome to put their names forward.

## **7. Possible Subjects for Discussion At Future Meetings other than the deferred agenda items – none mentioned**

**Future Meetings: Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2007 6pm Learning Resources Room**