

# Minutes of the Parents/Carers Forum held on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2007

## Learning Resources Centre

### **Present:**

**Staff:** Mr Brownlow [BRW] [Deputy Head Curriculum] Mr Wakefield [WKE] [Deputy Head 6<sup>th</sup> Form]

**Parents/Carers:** Ms Phillips, Mrs Shepherd, Mr Jones, Mrs King, Mrs Vasudevan, Mrs Wilsher, Mrs Nevin Drummond

Mrs Roberts [APFLS.]

### **1. Welcome**

- Mr Brownlow welcomed everyone and explained that as the agenda for the previous meeting had changed the postponed agenda would be discussed at this.

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

- BRW asked if there were any matter arising from the minutes but there were none.

### **3. Parents Evenings/ Options Evenings**

- Parents commented that the start time could be an issue but BRW pointed out that staff had been at school all day so it was not reasonable to expect them to wait until 7pm and then have to be on duty at not just one but sometimes 7 separate parent's evenings.
- BRW explained that if parents had a real issue about the start time if they wrote to him he would try his best to ensure that their appointments started at an appropriate time.
- Parents commented that they couldn't see all the teachers, BRW explained that as some teachers had several classes in one year group or may have other responsibilities then it wasn't always possible but he tried to ensure that each teacher was seen at least once in each key stage. If there were some real concerns then parents could contact the school and arrange to speak to a teacher.
- Parents commented that though the appointment system at Latymer was superior to others they had encountered there was sometimes a gap between appointments and if parents saw a space why was this not allowed? BRW explained that this could cause problems with the appointment system so staff were told to see parents in the order on their appointment sheet.
- Some year 9 parents wanted to know why the parents evening couldn't be after the options evening to so advice could be sought from potential GCSE subject teachers. BRW pointed out that choice of GCSEs should be the pupils not their parents. Teaching staff would have already given pupils advice and pupils at Latymer would be able to cope with any of the GCSEs offered. If parents had serious concerns then they could make an appointment with the Head of Learning. Sometimes certain subjects could be oversubscribed but this was unavoidable.
- Year 11 options evening included presentations by staff for both pupils and parents. Whenever possible pupils were given their chosen option but for certain subjects e.g. further maths the subject teachers' opinion might be sought. Critical thinking is an extra AS level but depending on the subjects being studied is may not be a sensible option, e.g. history/politics taught the same sort of skills.

### **4. Course work / Exam preparation**

- BRW explained that coursework would soon cease and it its place would be work that would have to be completed in class under specified conditions.
- Parents noted that year 10 children had been given some advice just before their mock exams and it was felt that this was too late. BRW pointed out that Latymer staff already supply pupils with useful advice re study skills but decided to have a trial with an external company. This session was in plenty of time for the GCSEs, if it was repeated in future it would be earlier in the academic year but it was important that pupils are not out of subject lessons too often.

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

- Parents asked about language choices. BRW explained that pupils are told which language they will study in Year 7 but could then choose a second language in Year 8, available staff permitting. GCSE choices were not usually an issue.
- Some parents felt there was not enough space in the planner for homework and too much allocated to parents/teacher comments. BRW commented that it was important to get the balance right and it was felt that the current format was the best option.
- Parents were unhappy about a letter sent out to year 9 from Mr King Head of PE. The letter was not on Latymer letter headed paper, it only offered the swimming activity to boys and the pupils would be unsupervised on the way to and from the swimming baths during school hours. Mr King also referred to 'limited on site facilities.' Parents were very displeased by this comment as many of them, both past and present, had been supporters of the campaign to finance the building and equipping of the new £3 sports and dining facility. Parents would like Mr King to clarify exactly what level of facility he would deem acceptable. BRW apologised for the content of the letter which had been sent out without being seen by a member of the SLT. The activity would not be going ahead as there were ample facilities on site to accommodate all the pupils.

## **6. Evaluation of Parents Forum Meetings**

- BRW asked for the parents' view of the meetings. The school had found the meetings invaluable in terms of feedback and suggestions.
- Parents commented that they felt the meeting were very informative. One possible change was for there to be a longer period allocated to urgent matters. BRW explained that a draft agenda went out to parents in advance so that they were aware of the subject that would be discussed and prior notice of any issue that parents may wish to raise was the more sensible option to enable him, in future WKE, to investigate and provide the necessary information.
- Parents felt that they did not seem to be the best conduit of the larger parental voice as there were no means of communication with most other parents in the year group they represented. BRW suggested that the Parents Forum could be mentioned in some of Mr Garbett's letters to remind all the parents of its existence.
- WKE noted that parental input is beneficial as it can give staff an alternative view and may make them consider other options or strategies.

## **7. Thank You Mr Brownlow**

- The members of the committee expressed their sincere thanks to Mr Brownlow for initiating the start of the Parents Forum which parents felt had been a very positive move. Parents also wished to thank Mr Brownlow because they are aware that he had put many new and innovative strategies in place during his time at Latymer to not only improve the learning experience of pupils but to try and ensure their success too. The committee wished Mr Brownlow success in his new job and both him and his family, health and happiness in the future.

## **8. Possible Subjects for Discussion At Future Meetings other than the deferred agenda items - none**