

Notes from WHHS Parents' Forum: Tuesday 19th June 2018 @ 18:00

Attendees: K.Murphy (Chair, Community Governor), K.Chaplin (Parent Governor), A.Roll (Principal), A.Boot (Deputy), E.Dodds (Staff), T.Buzzard (Head Boy), L.Green (Head Girl), T.Busby, J.Williams, K.Crockett, G.Willis, Mr & Mrs Adkins.

Items Discussed

1. Head Boy & Girl Update

Feedback from pupil forum indicated that students had been unhappy about the MS block, a number of classrooms are still out of service. Pupils were keen to return to their usual classrooms. The plans for the refurbishment of the block were available at the meeting. Pupils have not yet seen the proposed plans. Mr Roll would like the students to look at the social area and provide their thoughts. Entry to boys' and girls' toilets will be different so they can be supervised easier.

Action: Proposed Plans to go to pupil forum

Pupils do not like the food at the café. Although the cafe has made improvements, focusing on healthy options, pupils would like more. They would like a nice meal on a plate and weekly or daily theme would be good. Mr Roll stated that monthly meetings are held with AIP (catering supplier).

Discussion:

- **Is it worth having a thumb print account at school in the café, to make it easier for pupils and parents?** This was previously considered, but systems were very expensive. Schools are under increased regulation over the biometric data due to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and some schools are removing systems.
- The catering contract is due to go to tender next year, part of the process will include suppliers offering payment systems.
- Payment systems would make it more flexible for parents and pupils e.g. if pupil doesn't want to eat packed lunch they have option to tap into prepaid account as a back-up.
- School have been discussing Free School Meal (FSM) students to make sure those with a meal token actually use it and the student eats. They have been looking at how to ensure the pupil uses the token to purchase a balanced meal rather than junk food such as chocolate. Parents have been asked to support this by signing up to food purchase expectations: a substantial meal, consisting of appropriate main, pudding and fruit. Alternatively parents can opt out, explicitly stating if they wish their child to have complete freedom of purchase.
- **Why is lunch so late in the day?** There are four lessons in morning and one in the afternoon, this is to fit in with the 2-week rolling timetable. Breaks are built in to ensure pupils can access food, to accommodate a later lunchtime.

Head boy and girl are thanked and leave.

2. Previous Actions Update

Actions from 12 th March 2018 Meeting	Responsible	Status
To continue effective communication with parents regarding flood damage repair and pupil arrangements	SLT	Ongoing
Confirmation regarding study leave and revision planning	SLT	Complete
Letter to parent explaining what Parents' Forum is and how to participate	Governors	Complete
Advertisement and notice of forum dates via platforms such as social media local community groups	Governors	Complete

Agenda items to be communicated* in advance of the meeting so that Leadership can provide a comprehensive response	Parents	Complete
AOB to be added to the agenda	Governors	Complete
Theme topic to be identified and parents informed prior to next meeting	Governors & SLT	Complete
Pupil forum feedback to be presented by Head Girl and Boy	SLT	Complete
Forum minutes and actions distributed	Governors	Complete
Investigation and practicality of opportunities for parents to contribute to school activities such as career talks	SLT	On-going
Old information to be removed routinely from the school website	SLT	On-going
Follow up of option choices concern	SLT	On-going
Parent workshops to be identified and provided	SLT	On-going
New useful information available on the website to be advertised on social media	SLT	On-going

Discussion:

- All governor actions have been completed
- The school website has been updated and old items removed
- Mr Nelson has worked on option choices and queries
- **Parent questioned follow-up of option choices** - Parents have not heard back from school regarding year 9 options and whether the pupils had got what they had selected. This limits parents' ability to support their child and prepare them in the subjects for next year.
- It was identified that this was also the case for year 8 pupils who have picked their options this year. There has been no confirmation from school.
- The option evenings were held in February and March, since then there has been no feedback to parents.
- It was noted that if there were option block issues Mr Nelson would have had conversations with those affected.
- Parents ask for clarification on Year 8 and 9 options evening. **ACTION: Parents to be sent confirmation about option outcomes for their child.**
- **Is the change in selecting options in year 8 happening just at WHHS or in other schools?** Many schools have now changed to this system.
- **Will a change of school tie be needed for year 9 as there doing options early?** It was confirmed that a new tie would be needed, but in acknowledgement that this was school led, the school has purchased them. Pupils will be given the new ties from school, parents may be asked to provide the old tie in exchange so that they can be reused.
- The school is regularly updating social media account (Facebook) to keep parents informed and are trying to improve online presence.
- A letter about tonight's Parents Forum was sent to all parents, did you receive it? Parents had not received the letter, this is reliant on the pupil providing to parents – this is not always effective. Parents would like a variety of communication methods to be used e.g. emails, text, website and social media.

3. Pupil Mental Health

Ms Dodds presented the forum topic.

- The school takes a proactive approach to pupil mental health and raises pupil and staff awareness. Referrals are made by the school directly to mental health services e.g. students suffering with anxiety etc.

- Reach4Wellbeing is a Worcestershire NHS service that the school refers pupils to. Initially there was a timely response as it was a new service, however this has now become much slower due to demand on service.
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are backlogged, Reach4Wellbeing was introduced to help alleviate the back log. Reach4Wellbeing can refer into CAMHS to override/prioritise the lists for those that desperately need access and support from CAMHS.
- The pupils also have access to Kooth - a confidential helpline any child can use. Kooth can locate a child with suicidal thoughts and threats and call police in to trace and support if required.
- Kooth has been into the school and held talks with all year groups to raise awareness of the service. Students have been accessing in and information cards are available in the school.
- The school nurse, Caroline Nicholls, runs a drop in centre at WHHS. There is a text service available so that pupils can ask for her support and arrange to meet her in school. She signposts to Kooth and outreach services and can inform the parents if appropriate.
- There is planned training for all staff to increase awareness – Prime group are coming in to help teachers learn to identify signs of stress in students, so they can provide early support to prevent escalation.
- Mental Health First Aid staff training is a three hour course understanding signs and symptoms – this will be cascaded down to school staff.
- All the information for these services are on the school website.
- **Has there been an increase in pupil stress levels because of the new exam process?** This has been about the same albeit in the media that it suggested it has been heightened. Mr Blout recently took some targeted students on a stress buster day trying to find a balance on work/rest.
- It would be helpful to parent if school provided guidance to them on how much their child should revise. Some subject areas already provide this but it varies depending on the curriculum lead.
- **Is Reach4Wellbeing accessible for Birmingham pupils?** This service is available to all WHHS pupils regardless of where they live.
- **What are the timescales once you have made a referral?** Times have varied but appear to be getting longer as the organisation's lists are getting longer. The target at nation level is 16 weeks from referral to allocate an appointment.
- Birmingham pupils can also access PAUSE drop in which is part of Forward Thinking Birmingham (FTB) service. This is located in Digbeth.

4. Agenda Items Received from Parents

Use of Social Media

- Email received from parent regarding use of social media in Independent Learning Challenge (ILC) set by teacher. The ILC was to design a Facebook page – this was set for year 8 pupils some of which were 12 years old. Facebook accounts require an individual to be 13+, this potentially disadvantages the younger pupils and encourages them to access social media when they are below the required age. It was also felt that this may be contrary to parents' wishes regarding accessing social media sites.
- Parents regulate usage of social media, some do not allow their child to have a Facebook account etc. The school should not be encouraging pupils to engage with social media given the potential negative impact reported in the news.
- Mr Roll would like to look into this particular case further and would like further information including what subject this ILC was directed for. **ACTION: To clarify with the parent further details and for Principal to investigate.**

- Parents discussed the addictive nature of social media and felt that a school should avoid asking students to use their phones in lesson. Some pupil awareness has been arranged 'Life without likes', which discourages students from being on their phone all the time.
- **Does pupil access to phones need to be limited at WHHS?** In lesson times all phones must be kept in students' bags. Students are permitted to check texts, plays games at break times only. Restricting phones further was suggested to be resource intensive; the staff did not feel it was a big issue in the school.
- Pupils are not allowed phones out in lessons unless explicitly requested by the teacher for a specified purpose. Pupil assemblies have covered expectations associated with mobile phones.
- Parents wanted their child to have access to their phone because of independent travel safety. There was also a need for some pupils who have electronic bus tickets.
- A local school did try to ban mobiles but students ignored the rule – the school was forced reverse the rule.

5. Communication with Parents - Resources

Recently the maths department requested that parents purchase a directed revision book to support the pupils' learning. Letters were sent to parents and it was highlighted at parents' evening - only a third of parents bought into this.

- **Is there anything we can learn from the lack of support and do better regarding communication?**
- Letters do not always make it to the parent and emails are not always constantly checked. Different parents have different needs and there should be a variety of communication mechanisms e.g. text, email etc.
- Some of the information received is confusing – it was unclear what needed to be purchased for which pupil, when parents asked the child they were also unsure. Information needs to be clearly associated with pupil groups.
- **Would online payment options make it easier for parents to purchase items?** The school already have parent pay in place, however some parents were unaware of this and how to access it. **ACTION: To provide information to parents on parent pay.**
- The school felt that texts are expensive and preferred to use email as it is free. Social media is also free and the school is trying to use this more. To send a text to all parents it is around £150 each time. The school may need to reconsider whether they use texts more if they are a better communication method. The school needs to look into cheaper texting systems to see if this is possible. **ACTION: School to look into alternative texting systems.**
- Some parents could not remember receiving a letter/email re: texts books. The opinion is that text messages are better, parents use all. Social media too needs to be used more. Don't just use one type of communication.
- **Does the school have a hardship budget for those who can't afford the books?** Parents are asked to let the school know if they have any difficulties and the school will support them.
- It was suggested that the reference study books information be put on the school website with links and ISBN number for parents to click on to make it easier. **ACTION: all the required book specifications to be put on the school website.**

6. Contribution of Parents in Careers for Waseley Pupils

Parents had suggested at the previous meeting that they would welcome the opportunity to support the school with careers talks etc.

- Parents will be written to and asked to identify any support they can provide with respect to careers. **ACTION: Letter to parents regarding careers support.**
- There is new guidance on careers in schools, the leadership team are currently identifying a careers lead. There are changes to work experience and exposure to employers for all year groups. Parents could support with mock interviews.
- Parents' employing organisations may be able to provide opportunities, some send professional into the school to do talks.
- School is working with an enterprise person who is a link for outreach and careers.
- School is working to increase the number of companies who will send representatives out to the school – increasing careers and interviews support.
- Local Authority used to provide security checked personnel/organisations, but no longer provide this service. Schools are having to start this from scratch, if parents have links with companies that have secure checks they should let the school know.
- Currently there is no work experience organised by the school. Next year there will be formal work experience for year 10 pupils.

7. PARENT WORKSHOPS

Parents were asked what type of workshops they would like to see offered at the school. Revision workshops were identified the main one, so that parents can support their child and understand expectations. **ACTION: Curriculum leaders to plan workshops for parents, which include revision, early on in the academic year.**

8. AOB

- Psychology teacher and English teacher for year 10 pupils are leaving. Some pupils are concerned because no clarification has been given over replacements. What can parents relay to their child.
- A new Psychology teacher has been appointed.
- No appointment in English made as there was a surplus of supply, this can be absorbed within the current staffing. Year 10s will be allocated an existing English teacher who is experienced in delivery of English GCSE.
- The school attempt to provide consistency of allocated teachers from year 10 to 11, but this not always possible.
- **How often are the Parent Forum meetings?** Meetings are termly, parents will be reminded on social media and websites. Parents found it useful seeing it on the Rubery Community Facebook page. **ACTION: Date reminders to be circulated to parents each term.**

Meeting concluded.

Recommendations for action

Recommendation	Responsible
MS Block refurbishment plans to be shared with pupils	SLT
Parents to be sent confirmation about option outcomes for their child	SLT
To clarify with parent further details regarding social media ILC and for Principal to investigate.	Governors & SLT
Advertisement and notice of forum dates via platforms such as social media local community groups	SLT

School to look into alternative text messaging systems	SLT
All the required book specifications to be put on the school website including ISBN and links	SLT
Letter to parents regarding careers support	Governors & SLT
Curriculum leaders to plan workshops for parents, which include revision, early on in the academic year	SLT
Date reminders to be circulated to parents each term	Governors & SLT

***Agenda items can be communicated to the Parents' Forum Chair (Kristina Murphy kmurphy@waseleyhills.worcs.sch.uk)**