

Parent Forum Minutes

May 22, 2017. 7:30 – 9pm South Wing Hall

1. Welcome and Introductions:

- Zoe Judge, Deputy Headteacher
- Mark Chapman, Chair of Governors
- Wendy Sloane, Link Governor Communications

2. Follow-up from last meeting – reiteration that personal issues to do with individual children should not be brought up at the Forum. Please bring these to governor surgeries or contact the appropriate staff via other avenue/ email.

3. Discussion topics from parent/carer emails:

- **Toilet Policy Update:** Ms Judge confirmed that the trial period of locking the toilets during lesson time has been stopped and that the toilets are open all day. She said:
 - The purpose of locking the doors during lesson time was a) to prevent students moving around the school during lesson time, when they should be maximising their potential to learn, b) prevent the abuse of the facilities as well as c) safeguarding issues.
 - The online questionnaire allowed the opportunity for students who have a medical problem to let school know of their individual situations.
 - The situation has improved, the toilets are now being used as they should be and the staff are able to monitor their use, and many parents were unhappy with the toilets being locked. Thus they are no longer locked during lessons.
 - There will be investment in the facilities before the start of the new academic year, which will include reconfiguration
 - **NEW SYSTEM:** has been introduced: if a student needs the toilet during a lesson, they will approach the teacher, who will sensitive to their needs but will ask if it is essential and that next time there is an expectation that the student ensures they use the facilities during break time. A **toilet lanyard** will be issued and returned on the student's re-entry to the classroom. She explained there will be no shame or embarrassment attached to this process.
 - **FUTURE:** Students, parents and staff will have the opportunity to evaluate the new system in the next academic year.
- **GCSE study leave?**
 - Some schools started study leave before Fortismere did on Thursday 24 May. Certain subject's exams commenced before study leave e.g. geography, English, Maths, French
 - For some students, this means having an exam in the morning followed by a lesson in the afternoon.
 - It was pointed out that some Yr 11s were not attending school as they wanted to revise. Others found lessons helpful as they allowed further questions to be asked of teachers or to work on past papers.

- It was proposed that next year there is a longer study leave period in the run up to the exams for students to either revise or attend lessons.
 - The DofE want study leave used sparingly as not all students can self-manage their time.
 - It is not possible to have a separate policy for each individual
 - After half term, students can continue to access their teachers
 - Ms Judge stated a) the importance of routine such as revision being undertaken at school and having a 'break' at home, to achieve a work/ life balance and b) last year Fortismere started this programme and achieved their best ever results
- **C3s to Yr 11 students before GCSEs - fair to their studies?**
 - Ms Judge confirmed that policies need to be implemented equally. Yr 11s should be exhibiting appropriate behaviour, so staff will challenge them if need be. It is important to maintain high standards of Behaviour For Learning.
 - From December 2017, Yr 11s will be able to revise during C3s or given the option to attend a revision lesson
- **Use of external supply teachers**
 - Concerns were raised regarding frequent use of external supply teachers, particularly in Yr7. Issues relating to their teaching ability and managing challenging situations or pupils were discussed.
 - Ms Judge responded that where possible internal staff covering lessons is the preferred option, however due to financial constraints there are less staff to use flexibly. The school has considered cutting back on planned absences but this impacts on the number of school trip offered, training off site. Staff illness is not predictable and often occurs at peak times in the wider community.
 - Longer term staff absence requires the provision of specialist agency staff
- **Leave of absence policy for medical/ dental appointments and music exams**
 - Ms Judge will clarify the policy
 - Authorised absence should be obtained via the appropriate teacher
 - Parents pointed out that they have been communicating this via email but do not receive timely responses
- **Few school trips, especially abroad - why are they mainly linked to language learning?**
 - In the last year 30 trips of single and multiple days were arranged, including science and geography field trips, sports and city outings. There is a College focus day near the end of term. Many trips are circular based versus holiday period based e.g. no skiing trip recently
 - There is a conflict regarding the need to enrich the students' experiences and requiring teachers in the classrooms
- **Pastoral care**
 - Some parents are concerned regarding the availability of pastoral care - is there enough? There were reports of inconsistent responses to issues when tutors were emailed and there have been significant delays in arranging 1:1

meetings. It was mentioned that APS have a deputy head who is the main contact for this.

- Ms Judge stated that at Fortismere an Assistant Head is responsible for pastoral care. School is reviewing this. She clarified that parents are asked to first contact the year tutor and then the Head of College – who will have received training in managing a range of issues.
- **BFL.**
 - Parents would like to see the Consequence Policy being applied consistently. In C4s appropriate work is not always provided
 - Ms Judge spoke about how school will consider building in an appeal process for C3s. Reasonable adjustments will be made. At present, Mr Johnson is the Behaviour Management Lead. If it has not been possible to contact him Ms Judge asked parents to speak to their child's Head of College. Parental and student voices are heard and the policy will be reviewed. The purpose of the policy is to create the appropriate environment for school and to encourage the student back in to the classroom promptly. Staff receive annual training and there is training for new staff in the induction programme.
 - School will consider shorter detentions for lateness
 - The BFL policy is currently under extensive review as all the points raised at the Forum will be fed back into it.
- **Music ensembles**
 - Lack of Y7 ensemble provision was raised by parents and acknowledged by the Head of Music. The benefits of ensemble work are well researched. There has been a delay in parents being contacted by the admin department of the music service.
- **Poor communication regarding the Head**
 - Parents were disappointed that emails are not responded to in a timely manner via the PA headspa@fortismere.org it was felt that there should be a 48hr holding/ acknowledgement email sent with a response within 72hrs.
- **Appointment of New Headteacher**
 - The Chair of the Governors explained the timing and process of the appointment and the complexities were discussed.
 - Several parents have been involved in this process before and offered their support.

4. New topics for discussion – TBC – please send them in to parentforum@fortismere.org.uk

5. Date of next meeting – agreed x 3 per year. New date TBC

6. AOB - None