

# MINUTES OF KS 3 & KS 4 (Y7 – Y11) PARENT FORUM

Thursday 13 May 2010

## 1. Feedback on action taken since last meeting

- a) SIMS Learning Gateway: our aim originally was for this to be available to parents from September 2010. It is now looking more likely that this will be during the course of the academic year 2010/11 as it is important that security issues regarding the information you will be able to access on your child are thoroughly checked and trialled before we launch the service to all parents.
- b) Facebook: this was again raised by several parents as an issue for discussion at the meeting with questions being raised such as: how much time should I allow my daughter to spend on Facebook per day? What is the minimum age for setting up a Facebook account? How can I monitor my daughter's activity on Facebook? The following suggestions were made:
  - Facebook states that its minimum age for setting up an account is 13. If your daughter is in Y7 and has an account, this means she has entered a false date of birth
  - Ask your daughter to show you her account and to show you that she has activated all her privacy settings. Ask her to show you what photographs and videos she is displaying and what information she is giving out about herself.
  - Join Facebook yourself and accept your daughter as a "friend". Many parents have said this is an excellent way of monitoring how long she is spending on Facebook and who she is contacting/what she is using it for.
  - Purchase monitoring software to check the sites your daughter is accessing regularly.
  - Although access to Facebook is not allowed through our school network, it has come to our attention that girls can sometimes access Facebook through their phones in school via unsecured Wi-Fi connections in the area. If we discover that a girl has been accessing Facebook and adding comments to her profile during lessons, she should be aware that she is contravening our ICT and Mobile Phone policies which you and she have signed and will be punished accordingly.
- c) Revision Techniques: Parents were reminded of the study skills and information on the VLE which the girls can access in school and from home. The VLE also has revision materials to help in the run up to examinations. Girls in Y7-9 will be doing revision related activities in lessons in the week before May half term in preparation for exam week after half term.
- d) Parking: Mrs Dunsford and Mrs Jones (Head of Juniors) have been taking regular walks around the adjoining streets at the end of school. The most congested areas are Southbourne and Westbourne Road and parents collecting their daughters by car are advised to use Rutland Park, Ash Grove and Clarkehouse Road to meet their daughters. Those collecting from Rutland Park after evening clubs are asked not to sound their horns to attract their daughters' attention. All parents are asked not to block driveways with their vehicles and to allow access to residents when required.

## 2. Class Sizes

3 parents raised the issue of class sizes in Year 7, however these parents were not present at the Forum. Our "normal" form group size in Y7 is 26 although in previous years the form group size has sometimes increased to 28 to accommodate girls moving into the area. Parents should be aware however that girls are not taught as a form for many of their subjects but are divided into smaller teaching groups for many of their subjects (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Maths, French, German, Spanish, Art and Technology) Our average teaching group size is therefore 23. This year we began Y7 with a smaller year group than normal (only 93 girls). When the Brantwood girls joined the year group at February half term these girls filled the vacancies in the year group and brought the form and teaching group size to the size they have been in previous years. When the girls move from Y8-Y9 we divide the 4 form groups into 5 smaller form groups. In Y10 and Y11 the average teaching group size is 18 and in the Sixth Form the average group size is 8.

### 3. Reports and Parents Evenings

Several questions were raised by parents about the length of Parents' Evenings, the timing and our appointments system.

- The general consensus was that in Y7 and 8 the Parents' Evenings are generally the longest because the girls study a larger number of subjects.
- Parents shouldn't feel that they have to speak to every teacher unless there is a particular issue they need to follow up.
- All parents said that they found the evening smoother and quicker if they were able to arrange their appointments early and so avoid the queues.
- Some parents asked if the appointments could be grouped so there was less movement between rooms. As the girls make their own appointments we will try to let them know in advance which teachers are likely to be in the hall, library etc.
- Y8 parents were very happy about the timing of their daughter's parents' evening and felt that staff were more frank in their comments than in Y7.
- Y7 parents commented that the November meeting with the form tutor was not very helpful, particularly if the form tutor didn't teach their daughter. Comments from the Sixth Form prefect however were seen to be very helpful regarding how the girls were setting in.
- Style of reports: parents said they appreciate the value of a proper, accurate assessment of their daughter's progress and performance rather than something bland. We are considering a new style of autumn report for Y8 next year which will give clear targets on what the girls need to work on in each subject.
- Feedback following assessments. It is the girls' responsibility to write assessment results into their planner. Concern was raised by some parents that their daughters were allowed to re-sit the same test if they didn't do well enough the first time round and this does not encourage the girls to prepare properly for exams. Although this now "mirrors" the GCSE and A level system where modules can be retaken to improve performance, teachers will be asked to ensure that any repeat tests are different to the original.
- Parents asked that exam results are not given to the girls before the exam period is over.
- Praise was given for the way in which Y11 girls have been prepared for their GCSE exams regarding study skills/examination technique etc.

### 4. Dates of GCSE modules and controlled assessments

- Dates of GCSE modules for Y10 and 11 girls are usually available in September and are issued in the booklet given to parents at the Y10 Welcome Evening.
- Y10 parents said they would have appreciated more information about the exact dates of controlled assessments and also assessments which have replaced Y10 January exams. This would help in planning family weekend activities. Mrs Dunsford will follow this up with Heads of Departments.

### 5. Motivating Teenagers

- This was raised by Y10 parents who have found it difficult to motivate their daughters to revise this year for the summer exams which have been moved before the May half term holiday. Parents commented that the girls were being given homework right up to the exam period starting and did not therefore have time to revise properly. Mrs Dunsford explained that the examinations had been moved this year following feedback given by last year's Y10 who said that it would be helpful to separate school exams before half term and extended GCSE modules after half term. This will be revised again with Y10 after the current examination period.

#### 6. Availability of stock in Uniform Shop

- Any problems regarding availability of specific items should be raised immediately they become apparent with Mrs Dunsford or Mrs White. A parent raised the problem of lack of availability of the navy skirt in the school's recommended length (no shorter than 4" above the knee). This will be followed up with the uniform shop manager.
- Lost Property. Some parents raised the issue of items of PE uniform going missing from lockers. Parents should remind the girls to lock their lockers and to chase up lost items in PE lost property (kept in Sports dept) and normal lost property (kept in the staffroom by Mrs Scalisi).
- Parents are asked to ensure that their daughters do not leave the house in the morning wearing makeup, jewellery, rolled over skirts or tights with holes in them.  
A lot of time is spent by staff first thing in the morning ensuring that the girls meet our uniform requirements.

#### 7. School text books for revision

- A parent raised the issue of whether the girls could keep additional text books at home for revision. Unfortunately we do not have enough stock to allow the girls a home and a school copy of text books.

#### 8. Margins in Maths books

- The issue of why our School Maths exercise books do not have margins in them has been raised by parents and by girls at school council. Unfortunately we have not been able to find a supplier of exercise books which have both margins and squared paper so the girls will have to continue drawing in their own margins.

#### 9. AOB

- a) Timing of Parent Forum: Several parents asked if one of the Forums in the future could be an evening meeting instead of 3.30pm. It was agreed that in future the May meeting will be a 7.00pm meeting and the November meeting will begin at 3.45 to ease parking problems.
- b) Bags: the restriction on the colour of bags has now been lifted. The girls may now use a school bag of any colour but the style should be appropriate for carrying school books.
- c) Lunches: the issue of long queues in the upstairs snack bar was raised and whether more staff are needed. This will be checked by duty staff.

The meeting closed at 5.00pm,

Thank you to all parents who attended or submitted topics for discussion.