

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

Wednesday 26 November 2008

1. Action taken following issues raised at the last meeting:
 - The amount of homework set for Y8 and Y9 is now monitored closely by Heads of Year though Year Councils. No concerns have been raised so far this term but parents should contact their daughter's Head of Year if they feel she is regularly doing excessive amounts of homework
 - Cervical Cancer Vaccination – the immunisation programme has begun in school with Sixth Form and Y8 students being offered the vaccination first. Parents of girls in other year groups will be contacted directly by the School Health Services when the next phase of the immunisation programme is ready
2. Cookery and learning other practical skills:
 - Rod Harding our Catering Manager ran a cookery school for Y7 and Y8 pupils during last summer holidays which proved to be very successful and will hopefully be repeated this year
 - We continue to look at ways of being able to deliver some basic cookery in school and will keep you informed through future Forums of any progress we make in this area. We do not currently have the space to equip a full cookery room but are considering other possibilities
 - A parent raised the question of whether the girls could be taught basic practical skills such as putting up a shelf, making curtains, changing a wheel etc and this will be considered as part of our Sixth Form Enrichment Programme
3. Use of the School Website for giving information:
 - Parents suggested that more explanation could be given on the school calendar of events of which year group each event is intended for. A request was also made for school trips to be included in the forward planning dates
 - It was suggested that we include exam timetables and GCSE coursework deadlines on the website
4. Revision / Study Skills:
 - Y7 girls work on revision strategies and recognising their preferred learning styles in their fortnightly "Learning to Learn" sessions
 - Y8 and Y9 girls work on revision techniques in form time
 - Y10 cover Study Skills in PSHE lessons and are also encouraged to purchase the revision booklet which is on sale in the uniform shop and gives strategies on how to plan revision
5. Scheduling of GCSE Coursework:
 - Departments are required to identify at the beginning of each year when coursework is going to be set in their subject. We are aware that this has not always worked in practice, however the problem should be resolved in the future as the new GCSE syllabi have less coursework content
 - Most subjects allocate time in lessons for coursework to be completed
 - The girls are given this information in the GCSE coursework booklet given out in Y10
 - Certain times of year are inevitably busier than others and girls and parents should speak to the Head of Year if the concentration of coursework becomes unmanageable at any time
6. Timetabling of Lunchtime and After School Clubs:
 - Over 50 clubs and clinics are available to the girls every week at lunchtimes or after school so inevitably there are some clashes, particularly if girls are keen on sport, music and drama
 - If girls find they have a clash of activities, they can usually manage this by organising to attend clubs fortnightly instead of weekly or they can attend a sports club with a different age group if they prefer
 - There are sports clubs available every day and most days after school
7. Timing of Parent Forum Meetings:
 - Two meeting per year are held
 - The Autumn meeting is a 3.30 pm meeting and the next meeting will be held early in the Summer Term and will be an early evening meeting

8. Reorganisation of Forms in Y9:

- For the past 4 years classes have been reorganised when moving into Y9. This helps the girls to extend their friendship groups, creates smaller classes and prepares the girls for GCSE Courses where they are working in different groups for almost every lesson
- For most girls this is a smooth transition as they retain old friendships yet also make new ones and we hope that their parents encourage them to do this
- For some girls it takes them longer to settle in their new classes but it is very unusual for problems not to be resolved by the end of the first term
- If problems continue, parents are encouraged to speak to their daughter's Head of Year

9. Uniform wearing sports tops / jackets and quality of sweatshirts:

- A parent queried the reason for not allowing girls to wear sports tops / jackets / hoodies instead of a coat. The reason for this is for the girls' safety. Most of the sports tops identify the girls by name and school which puts them at risk when using public transport or walking to school
- Girls may wear coats when moving from the main building to the Dining Room, Sixth Form, Ash Grove and School House provided they are removed in classrooms
- Coat hooks are available in the main school building for girls to hang coats
- A parent had raised the issue of the quality of school sweatshirts. Y7 parents present at the meeting had not had problems with shrinkage. Y7 girls do have the option of wearing a sweatshirt or a navy school jumper

10. School Bags:

- A parent raised concern about the weight of her daughter's school bag and this was confirmed as a problem by other parents because of text books required for homework
- The girls are encouraged only to take home books they need for homework and to repack their bag at lunchtime
- Parents are also advised to encourage their daughters to use a rucksack rather than a shoulder bag

11. Parents' Evenings:

- A parent requested appointments of longer than 5 minutes or to spread Parents' Evening over 2 days
- If a longer discussion is needed, parents can arrange to see a member of staff at another time or to speak on the telephone
- Because of the number of events the staff have to attend in the evenings, it could not be feasible to increase the number of Parents' Evenings

12. International Baccalaureate

- A parent asked if the school was considering offering the IB as an alternative to A Levels
- Mrs Dunsford explained that one of the GDST schools (Royal High School, Bath) would be introducing the IB in September 2009 and she will be interested to watch how this develops
- At the moment there are no plans to introduce the IB at Sheffield but we are hoping to run a pilot of the AQA extended project with a group of Y12 this year which is similar to the dissertation required by the IB

13. AOB:

- Apologies for the clash of dates with Birkdale which affected the St Mark's concert. Usually all dates are checked to try and avoid booking concerts on the same day
- A parent raised concern about a small number of boys misbehaving on the school bus and pushing to get on. Mr Mozley will raise this with Birkdale's Deputy Head