

Parent Forum, 6 February 2020

Many thanks to all who attended the Parent Forum on 6 February. The subject for this meeting was 'communication' and the discussions fell under three broad categories. These were:

- 1) reporting and pupil progress feedback
- 2) marketing, messaging and operational parent communications, and
- 3) catering and estates.

The next meeting will take place early next term. If you would like to propose any items for discussion, please get in touch.

Caroline Petryszak

Minutes of the Parent Forum Meeting, 6 February 2020

Present: Caroline Petryszak (Head), Amanda Wilmot (Director of Marketing and Admissions), Anne Headley (Director of Finance and Operations), Chris Bailey (Head of Junior School), Michele Langhorn (Assistant Head, Staff Development and Wellbeing), Deirdre Newham (Chair of Governors) and parents of girls from across the school.

1. Reporting and Progress

All agreed that the current combination of reports and parents' meetings work well as key communication of their daughters' academic progress. Information evenings, curriculum summaries, open events, teacher letters and one-to-one meetings further supplement this information. Mr Bailey, Head of Junior School, spoke of his plans for 'Open Classrooms' after Class Assemblies from the summer term, which will give parents of our younger students more frequent access to their work and classroom environment.

Issues raised: the location of the junior school parents' evening and the 'rushed' feeling of some of the senior school parents' evenings where staff have a large number of parents to see.

Action points: the junior school senior team will review the location of the junior school parents' evening, reverting to classrooms or the Dining Room as necessary; the senior team will look into the possibilities of streamlining the system for parents' evenings, though the constraints were discussed at the meeting.

2. Marketing and messaging

Parents appreciate the quality of the marketing material and the information provided in the newsletters. The differences between the fees collection (GDST) and extras (NHS) was discussed and parents were pleased with social media traffic and information-sharing generally. The use of SIMS Parent app was also discussed, as was the use of Evolve for trip permissions and information.

Issues raised: multiple platforms make it difficult for parents to easily access information and, for junior school parents, Firefly appears to be a particular issue; mobile optimisation of the website and Junior and High News was requested and parents asked for the addition of times in a Junior School key dates; email is often not the most useful when communicating 'urgent' information (eg cancelled clubs).

Action points: school to look into the issues raised, including the possibility of setting up text or WhatsApp groups for 'urgent' communication and a working group to discuss a central repository; times to be added to Junior News; more information will follow.

3. Catering and Estates

Parents were generally very happy with the school lunch offer and several have already sampled breakfast in school. They were reminded that all parents are welcome to join their daughter for lunch, too (by prior arrangement) in order to see the lunch offer and catering operation in practice. Pupils are encouraged to bring in favourite recipes from home and, if practical, they can be added to the menu choices; they are allowed to ask for second helpings if they are hungry. Vegetarian food is always available and allergies and intolerances are catered for.

Issues raised: parents were concerned about congestion in the school car park at the beginning and end of the day, by other parents parking and driving in an inconsiderate manner and the misuse of the disabled parking bays. Junior school parents requested an alternative to biscuits for early morning meetings.

Action points: junior school parents have been reminded about courtesy and safety in the car park and parents are encouraged to park in the back car park if they are not in a rush; the school will revisit the possibility of a reversed one-way system to improve traffic flow, although this option has previously been declined by the local council; the catering team will provide alternatives to biscuits for early morning functions.

4. Other

The school proposed the idea of an increased number of information sessions, seminars and lectures for parents on a wide variety of themes, including pedagogy, child development and mental and physical health. These will be rolled out in the coming months, but if you have any particular requests or suggestions, do please get in touch.

Caroline Petryszak, February 2020