

NOTES FROM YEAR 9 PARENTS' COFFEE MORNING ON THURSDAY 21ST MAY 2015

What is going well at the College?

Parents praised the work and support provided by Mr Richardson, Head of Progress, and Miss Murray, Assistant Head of Progress.

Parents advised that they were impressed by the work set and marked by the English department.

The transition from Year 6 to Year 7 is excellent, and it is appreciated how well the process enables the students to become familiar with the school.

The options process is brilliant – very well organised. The time given to students to decide upon their choices is appreciated. The teachers are all so enthusiastic about their subjects, and make learning very interesting.

The PSHE programme is valued by parents and students. The children feel safe in College – very few incidents of bullying.

Parents are impressed by the way in which the teachers speak directly to the students at parents' evenings, and ask the students how they feel they performed in their subject.

What improvements can the College make?

Although supportive of the College's uniform policy, parents advised that there were conflicts emerging about skirts.

The College is tightening up on its policies and procedures in its pursuit of high standards and expectations and, as part of this, is insisting that all students adhere to the uniform code. Students were involved in looking at the samples and making suggestions, and many girls have said that they feel proud of their uniform, and are pleased that it looks so smart, in comparison with other schools. Mrs Bryant will talk to the students about the rationale and seek their views on the way forward.

Concerns were raised with regard to students smoking outside of the campus.

External speakers outline the adverse effects of smoking to the students, as part of the PSHE programme. Staff patrol the campus, and any student found smoking is sanctioned, and a letter is sent home to their parents advising them of the situation. Consideration will be given to extending the patrol duties outside of the College campus after the May half-term holiday. Students need to report it confidentially and we will follow it up.

Students have advised that the toilets are often in a poor state, and they are not happy using them.

The cleaners maintain the toilets throughout the day, and students are asked to report any deficiencies to Reception. Laminated signs will be produced for display within the toilets during the May half-term holiday, reminding students to notify Reception of any requirements. It is hoped that the refurbishment/new build of the College will help with the modernisation of the toilet facilities and if possible we will involve students in the consultation about the design and layout.

The Co-operative values of Self-help, Social-responsibility and Self-responsibility are promoted within the College, to encourage students to take ownership in the way in which they wear their uniform, smoke in College, use toilet facilities etc.

Students in Year 9 have become confused about their particular assessment levels.

The online tracking assessment system has been frozen, to allow systems to be updated. Subject teachers are focussed on the development of skills, based on question level analysis, enabling the students' journeys to be coherently mapped from Year 7-11. Year 9 students will have two GCSE subjects on the new revised GCSE system (Maths and English) with grades ranging from 1-9. The Year 9 full reports later this term will provide a clear idea about children's current position and progress.

New systems have been introduced within the College – structured conversations (a detailed analysis and review of Departments and Year Groups) and RAG meetings (Red/Amber/Green tracking of individual pupil progress, assigning strategies for pastoral care, SEN, intervention etc, enabling students to meet their targets and accelerate their progress).

Students sat their Year 9 exams, under exam conditions, but in one subject their papers were peer marked.

Peer-marking has been used to allow students to become familiar with the assessment criteria and is a helpful learning strategy when used effectively. However, formal assessments need to be marked by teachers. This message will be reiterated to all members of teaching staff. Mrs Bryant will look into the specific situation raised.

Parents queried the reasoning behind the recent changes in English lessons.

There have been national changes for English, notably last year when the exam boundaries were moved – the bar has very much been raised and so students are being challenged to achieve more. The College is fortunate in that three of the College's English team are trained examiners for the Exam Board. In re-shaping the curriculum, the College has arranged for students with particular literacy concerns to receive additional literacy support within their English lessons.

Homework in Year 9 could be more demanding; planners are not always signed by the teacher.

This message will be relayed to all members of teaching staff.

Parent evenings – is there scope to increase the allocated appointment time of 5 minutes?

If a parent requires more than 5 minutes with a teacher, then an additional meeting or telephone conversation should be arranged. Parents are encouraged to contact subject teachers prior to the parents' evenings if they have any concerns. Heads of Progress will encourage parents to do this via the newsletters.

Books are detailed on the library list but are not always available in the library.

This situation to be reviewed with the librarian.

After-school clubs are sometimes cancelled with short notice.

Staff are provided with an electronic message, advising that a club has been cancelled, and the notices are announced to the students as soon as they are received. We will remind staff to ensure messages are relayed.

One Tutor Group have received a number of tutors.

The situation has been unfortunate, due to maternity cover and part-time members of staff covering this particular tutor group. We will try to assign a full-time member of staff.

Where can students go to eat their packed lunch?

The Main Hall is open at break-time and lunch-time, and there are picnic tables outside, some of which are covered. If the weather is inclement, classrooms are made available for the students. After the initial rush at lunch-time, the canteen generally has spare tables available. Litter is a cause for concern, and students are therefore asked not to eat in the corridors.

