

Parents' Forum
Minutes of Meeting held on 11th July 2011

Present

Jon Ford, Pauline Jones, Bob Darvill, Gabrielle Joyce, Gill Innocent, Jane Thomson, Janie Hochkins, , Kay Probert, Shena Johnstone, Clare Williams

Apologies for absence

Received from Chris Keating, Janine Forbes-Kiely, Jacqui Peadon, Pat Steers, Liz Scotcher, Amanda Joyce, Philippa Jacobs

Matters Arising from the Minutes of the last meeting

School Improvement Plan

Mr Ford provided an update on progress with the School Improvement Plan.

- 1) Improving School Attendance – improvement to 94% attendance, (an improvement of one category).

Initiatives to improve attendance were being led by Mr Keating and included raising awareness in assemblies, rewards systems, competitions and the availability of information for parents through online reporting.

- 2) Raising attainment in MFL – The position of Head of MFL had been filled; now a shared role. The School's status as a Language college continues this year; £120,000 has been allocated by WSCC to spend as Language College chooses. However there is uncertainty about next year's funding. It is possible that the Local Authority may attach limitations on how the funding is used in future and this could influence the decision to remain a language college. Mr Ford advised that Primary School outreach work would not continue next year.

A parent asked how academy status would affect funding for MFL. Mr Ford explained that this was still a matter for conjecture and that no decision had been made about academy status. He did add that the Importance of Language college status was more than just academic; it also provided the opportunity for international links.

School Uniform

Discussions then focused on uniform issues and in particular skirts and trousers for girls. Mrs Jones, Head of KS4 noted that fashions change frequently and it was never possible to foresee changing trends. She emphasised that relationships between staff and students were important and explained that uniform was a means of managing behaviour. Parents could help prevent confrontation by ensuring uniform was correct. She displayed a sample of a suitable skirt which was not elastic, had a back pleat and was lined. As to skirt length, some of the parents felt the sample shown was too long. However it satisfied the school's requirement for a hem which was a maximum of 3cm above the knee.

A sample of girls' bootleg trousers was also displayed. Mrs Jones explained that trousers that were tight or in a clinging style were not suitable, particularly at KS4.

There are samples of suitable garments on the school website to help parents; together with a list of features which are not acceptable. (n. b. Our current supplier of uniform will not accept returns and consequently we are seeking a new supplier of skirts/trousers who will)

It was noted that the school could not prescribe a particular make or supplier and therefore if parents chose to buy a polo shirt from a supplier other than the uniform shop, the school would provide a badge.

Finally Mrs Jones confirmed that the school would be happy to recycle uniform. She invited parents of Year 11 students to return unwanted uniform so that it could be reused for needy pupils.

Cashless Catering

This will be introduced on 10th November 2011 and will involve a system called ParentPay which allows parents to put money on their child's account, by debit or credit card. In addition to purchasing food, it can be used as a means of paying for school trips. There will still be the facility to send cheques into school and cash payments can be made at various shop outlets. If lost, replacement cards will be charged at £10.00.

Students can register by Biometrics, Card or Pin number. However the use of pin numbers is to be avoided due to the likely delays caused by the keying process. The school prefers using a biometric finger scanning method (not finger prints).

Parents and students will have to opt into the system and those who choose not to use the finger scanner will be given a swipe card. Parents can log in to ParentPay online to see what their child has bought and can limit spend and choice if they wish.

Mr Ford confirmed that the Canteen staff are happy with the new system. He also gave his assurance that no KS3 students would go hungry if they had no credit. While they would not be able to have an 'overdraft', Mrs Cook would make arrangements for them to have something to eat.

Sports Hall

WSCC had agreed to provide £1.3 million; with £200,000 to be raised by the school. It was noted that the school had originally sought £1.8 million. It was not possible to say at this stage whether the lesser sum of £1.5m would be sufficient to meet all the school's requirements.

Mr Ford reported that many donations were being made through the virgin money giving site in response to the request for sponsorship for the 3 peaks 3 heads event on 16th July.

Overall £55,000 had been raised to date (11th July) – There had been 114 donors, 25% of whom were not Imberhorne staff, students or parents. One forthcoming fund raising event planned was a Spanish Language day which would teach holiday Spanish to parents and their children.

A possible additional fundraising measure under consideration was for an additional £1.00 to be added to the cost of all school trips and events taking place during 2011/12. Mr Ford explained that this would be a voluntary surcharge; parents would be able to opt out of this if they did not wish to contribute.

Other business

Lunchtime arrangements for eating packed lunches

Concern had been expressed over the need for students to eat packed lunches while sitting on the floor of the Hall at both Windmill Lane and Imberhorne Lane. It was felt that the cleanliness of the floor was sometime an issue, in particular at Windmill Lane and was therefore unhygienic.

Mr Ford emphasised that chairs were available for students in the Hall at Imberhorne Lane and that there was no need for them to sit on the floor.