

Parents' Forum
Minutes of Meeting held on 8th November 2011

Present

Jon Ford, Chris Keating, Gabrielle Joyce, Gill Innocent, Jane Thomson, Janie Hochkins, Sarah Pratt, Shena Johnstone, Fiona Brown, David Reed, Janine Forbes-Kiely, Mary Calvey, Sally Tottman(Secretary)

Apologies for absence

Received from Ann Gunter, Bob Darvill, John Faulkes, Liz Scotcher, Mandy Cunningham, Pat Steers, Amanda Joyce, Simon Ing, Yvonne Mitchell, Clare Williams

Minutes of the Meeting on 11th July 2011

The Minutes were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting held on 11th July 2011

Membership of the Forum

Mr Ford was pleased to report that a number of new parents had joined the Forum. They were as follows:-

Amanda Latham Brown
Sarah Pratt
Debra Gunter
Simon Ing
Yvonne Mitchell
Fiona Brown
John Faulkes
Mandy Cunningham
Jo Digby

He welcomed those new members who were present and explained that the Forum provided an opportunity for the school to receive feedback from parents on new initiatives. It also helped the school to get a feel for what it was doing well and where improvements were needed.

Parents were welcome to raise issues at the Forum. These however should be of a strategic nature and not concern a particular student or incident.

Mr Ford expressed his thanks for the contribution made by two existing members who had now decided to stand down from the Forum:-

Philippa Jacobs
Peta Star

Matters Arising from the Minutes

School Uniform

Mr Ford outlined progress with finding suitable skirts and girls' trouser for parents to buy through the school uniform shop. He explained that the supplier initially chosen was unwilling to take returns but that other suppliers were being sought. Mrs Hochkins asked whether the school could order a range of sizes from the supplier so that students could try these for size before ordering. This would avoid the problem with returns. Mr Ford would look into this but reported that in the meanwhile the KS4 office would, on request, give details of suitable items from M & S, Next and other stores.

It was noted that the Uniform shop at Sackville school sold items which might be suitable for Imberhorne students. Mrs Thomson undertook to obtain a uniform list from the Sackville School web site.

Update following on from the meeting:

The following day after the meeting, samples of a skirt, girl's trousers and boy's trousers arrived from Price and Buckland. The KS4 team were happy with the design, colour and material of the samples which have now been passed to the KS3 team for consideration.

The skirt and trousers are of a good quality and appear to be durable. All three items come in three lengths and a range of waist sizes. This does unfortunately make them rather expensive (£15.00 - £18.00 depending on the size) and there is a £3.95 postage charge which further increases prices. However there is a free returns label. If adopted the uniform can be ordered directly from the supplier via the internet or where it isn't possible to have access to computers, parents can apply by post.

Cashless Catering

Mr Ford outlined the current situation with the introduction of cashless catering which was going live on Thursday 10th November.

Those present confirmed that they were happy with the new arrangements. It was felt that there were a number of advantages for parents, namely that they would be able to see what choices their children made and that they would have no cash to spend on unsuitable food on the way to or from school.

Mr Ford agreed to investigate whether there would be the option to put a daily limit on spending and said he did not want to encourage the banning of certain food items.

Update:

A £5.00 daily limit has been set by default. This can be changed upon request via amelmoe@imberhorne.co.uk

Mr Ford confirmed that there would be emergency provision at WL for students who had no credit. However, the alert system would be useful in helping parents to know when to top up their child's account.

Mr Ford suggested the new system be reviewed at the next meeting of the Forum.

Sports Hall

Mr Ford briefed those present on progress to date with fundraising activities for the new Sports Hall.

He first thanked parents for their contributions to the fund raising efforts, in particular the 3 Peaks event which raised £7,500. A recent Race Night had been very successful, raising £1,600 and a Quiz and Auction was planned for 25th November. He noted that several members of the forum were also very actively involved in the fundraising committee and expressed his thanks for their efforts.

Later in the year, a whole-school fundraising event was proposed. This would possibly take the form of a sponsored walk with other sporting activities such as a marathon which would be linked to the Diamond Jubilee celebrations. The timetable would be suspended for one day with students who completed the walk being presented with a Diamond Jubilee commemorative medal.

The forum supported this proposal and the following points were noted:

- the walk should be of a reasonable length, possibly allowing for a picnic lunch and entertainment at some stage of the day.
- In terms of sponsorship, parents should be told the target for fundraising and given an indication of how much would be raised depending on the different levels of sponsorship.
- The medals should be purchased by the school and given to all participants regardless of what they raise.
- An element of competition between year groups/ form groups (with a reward for the most sponsorship) might increase the amount raised.

A further fundraising opportunity was offered by a scheme whereby supporters could pay to have a brick engraved and laid in a path to the new sports hall. A sum of £30 per brick was suggested and considered acceptable. In addition, local businesses could be invited to pay a more sizeable sum to sponsor a plaque on the Sports hall. This proposal could be publicised on a Facebook page at the appropriate time.

Mr Ford then gave a brief update on the planning process.

He reported that Planning permission was now being sought. Furthermore, due to WSCC only allocating £1.3 m to the project it was being submitted as a 2 phase project; the second phase allowing for the construction of extra classrooms, drama and performance space.

He explained that he was working hard to try to get extra funding from WSCC to help reduce the gap in funding. He sought the opinion of the forum as to whether the scope of the project should be reduced to take account of this gap in funding, meaning no drama and performance space.

The forum felt that the school should go ahead with the entire project as originally envisaged and that fundraising efforts should continue with this in mind.

Other business

Use of E-mail communication

Mr Ford said that it is now very easy for parents to email individual teaching staff and they often do so. However he felt it was important to try to establish some guidelines so as to ensure that parents receive an appropriate and speedy response but that teachers were protected from unreasonable increased workload and possibly unfair criticism.

Mrs Johnstone commented that she had found it very convenient and effective to email staff direct and that she had received a prompt reply to recent queries. However, Mr Keating said that he had been required to intervene in some situations where undue pressure was being placed on staff by direct email contact.

In discussion the following points were established:

Ideally parents should contact the Head of Year when they had any concerns or problems. If not available, they would be passed to the Pastoral Support Assistant.

Emailing staff direct was useful if a parent wished to pass on information or make a specific enquiry.

Ideally an automated email reply should be issued when a member of staff was away for any period of time.

Staff would be advised not to reply direct to any hostile or critical emails from parents but to refer these to their Head of Department or to the Head of Year.

With regard to pupils emailing teaching staff, this was a more complex issue and could raise safeguarding concerns.

The guidelines were that students and staff should only communicate by email about work. No social contact should take place on email and social networks should not be used for contact between staff and students.

Canteen

Mrs Innocent said that it would be helpful to have healthy and low fat food items identified on the daily menu in the Canteen to assist children in making healthy choices.

The proposal was supported by those present and the following suggested:

A low fat option of the day could be identified
A flag system could be introduced to highlight the more healthy options
Such information could be displayed on the Plasma screens.

Mr Ford agreed to discuss these ideas with the Catering manager.

Detentions

Mrs Innocent expressed concern that there appeared to be some inconsistency in the criteria for setting detentions, citing an instance where a student was give a detention for bringing the wrong equipment.

Mr Ford explained that while the behaviour policy governed most issues, it was not feasible to expect total consistency as this could stifle a teacher's personal approach to classroom management. He agreed however to discuss the matter further with the Senior Management Team.

Family Photographs

Mr Ford supported a request for siblings to be photographed together but observed that parents might need to help in transporting students when they needed to be at the opposite site.

The intention would be to organise this for next year. He would give an update on this proposal at the next meeting of the Forum.

Pensions Strike Action – 30th November 2011

Mr Ford advised the Forum of the possibility of school closure on 30th November should large numbers of teaching staff opt to strike over the pensions dispute. The school might remain open just for sixth form student lessons however.

Parents requested early notification and Mr Ford confirmed that they would be notified as soon as the position was clear.

Update:

The Governors asked Mr Ford to make a decision and inform parents by Friday 25th November.

Olympic Torch route

In response to an enquiry, Mr Ford said that he was aware that the route of the Olympic torch was likely to be close to the school. Once the route was formally announced consideration would be given as to how the school could be involved in the celebrations.

Spelling Bee

A parent referred to a recent Year 7 Spelling Bee for which students had collected sponsorship. Mr Ford said the money should be sent into school and would be gratefully received.

Transition to sixth form

Mrs Calvey expressed her satisfaction with the smooth transition from Year 11 into sixth form and observed that information for both students and parents had been very good.

Mr Ford thanked her for her comments.

The meeting then concluded at 8.25pm