

Parent Forum

Monday 3rd June 2019

College staff: Mr D Rainey, Headmaster, Mr J Cutting Associate Assistant Principal,

Overview:

The parents' forum meets to discuss aspects of Ambrosian life and plans. Operating in partnership with parents; our school is an extension of the care and attention that is given to our pupils at home. Communication is very important to us and one way in which parents can meet the Principle in an informal relaxed setting is by participating in the parent forum. The process enables parents to give school leaders feedback on proposals, acting as a sounding board for new ideas and initiatives. This enables the College to develop new approaches to both academic and pastoral aspects of college life. This two way communication is an invaluable medium for the leadership of the College and it is also an opportunity for parents to have a voice within the College.

Mr Cutting, Associate Assistant Principal, is responsible for Parent Engagement and is the point of contact regarding Parent Forum.

Minutes:

The event was led by the Principal who commented on each of the topics below and then invited parent questions and observations. Comments ranged broadly, the notes below are a summary of key themes.

Teaching & Learning

Issues were identified with low level disruption in one particular core group and intervention took place, led by a senior member of staff supporting the subjects concerned. Where necessary parents attended school for persistent offenders and the situation was monitored closely. As a result, data shows a significant reduction in the number of pink slips being issued in those subjects affected since before the Easter break. No issues were raised in non-core areas with 1 particular subject highlighted as a hot spot.

Music provision and opportunities for Music and Drama extra-curricular opportunities.

Head of Drama has been increased to a full-time post from September, which will increase the availability of extra-curricular opportunities. The aim is to have a 2020/21 production in addition to inviting GCSE and A Level Drama students to have an evening where they perform their exam pieces prior to the exam deadlines.

In addition Head of Music, Mr Phillips has devised a programme for 2019/20 to include daily opportunities in form-time to take part in music club along with a planned schedule of performances throughout the academic year. There is currently extra-curricular music every morning between 9:00-9:30 (see newsletter). In keeping with the changes to Drama it is our intention to offer a music production each alternative year alongside inviting GCSE and A Level Music students to have an evening where they perform their exam pieces prior to exam deadlines.

Parent-teacher communication & points of contact.

The channel of communication remains unchanged in that the first point of contact for any concerns should be the form tutor, via telephone or email. If the query relates to a response from Parents' Evening we ask that you contact the school office and update our support staff who will direct the query to the relevant member of staff who will respond via email or phone. If an issue can not be resolved with a member of teaching staff then you should contact the Head of Department, details which you can find on our website.

House point criteria and rewards/ positive comments in the planner.

All staff have been consulted regarding the expectations in terms of issuing house points. However, it is accepted that there has been a variation in the number being awarded by staff up until this point.

Activities week participation is now based on rewards in relation to the number of house points accumulated.

In addition, we introduced a KS3 and 4 presentation evening in recognition of the good work the pupils have sustained throughout the academic year.

Finally, Heads of House regularly celebrate achievements in assemblies, reiterated in our school newsletter. We welcome entries from home regarding external achievements of our pupils so these can be celebrated within the school community and our intention is to include them in our newsletter for wider circulation. Please email such events to Behaviour@st-ambrosecollege.org.uk

We have recognised the need to increase positive comments in the planner we will introduce a house points chart to complement the credit chart displayed in the school planner. This will appear in the new academic year 2019/20.

It was agreed that college would have focus weeks to encourage the allocation of house points in an attempt to raise the profile/normalise.

Staff changes & supply

Staff absence has been particularly challenging at times this year. When necessary, we have prioritised GCSE and A level exam classes to ensure pupils could fulfil their true potential in their final year and to secure success in public exams. The college has brought in subject specialists to cover but it has meant that some classes have had several teachers this year which has understandably impacted on consistency & momentum.

The support shown by parents of this strategy was accepted and appreciated.

Staff absence will always be a challenge and we are satisfied with the quality of staff we have been able to bring in so as to minimise gaps in learning.

Is there A Head of Year?

We operate a Head of House system for our pastoral team. The form tutor is always the first point of contact regarding such issues and they will refer any concerns to their respective Head of House.

Communicating progress throughout the year

Progress reports are issued three times per academic year, in addition to a full written report. We are in the process of rolling out the Parent Portal whereby you will gain access to your sons academic and behaviour progress more regularly. In addition all subjects will have 'trackers' on the front of exercise books, compulsory from September 2019 so parents can use this to check progress at home. There will be further developments in the use of parent apps including MILK.

Rigour of work in Summer Term & summer

We are looking at next year's calendar with the possibility of moving internal exams later in the year. However, at 3rd Year, GCSE content is still the focus for the remainder of the term apart from Activities Week. If you feel that there is an issue with the level of challenge or 'winding down' after the internal exams, then please contact the relevant Subject Leader. There is no expectation for staff to set work over the summer other than to fill gaps in knowledge/understanding identified through key assessments. We want the students to have a break.

Extra-time at GCSEs?

Depends on individual need but if boys get extra-time now and this is due to being tested and is typical, then this will be the case for GCSEs as long as the diagnosis remains in place.

D of E – can more participate?

This is an extra curricular provision ran by volunteer staff and numbers are limited by staff and weekends available. We run Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards and endeavour to accommodate as many pupils as possibly. In addition the cost of taking part in the award is significantly lower than other local providers to reduce the barriers of participation. Parents present weren't aware of boys not being able to participate and didn't see this as being a particularly pressing issue.

Business as a GCSE option

This came through 4 times in our recent curriculum consultation. There currently isn't the capacity within staff but our curriculum is reviewed year on year. We want our curriculum to reflect the boys' desires and ambitions so it will be considered for following years, but could impact on provision elsewhere. Our curriculum vision/policy is currently being revised.

We will look at bringing in relevant KS4 enrichment opportunities in the absence of a Business Studies GCSE.

Combined Science as an option to allow the boys another subject choice.

Combined Science has been introduced for the current 2nd years. Curriculum plan for current 3rd Year is already in place with the Triple Science route.

Sessions on 'how to revise'.

Currently offered to 1st Years through 'Activities'. Also forms part of the 4th and 5th Year programme through assemblies and external support. Students have found this to be very beneficial. It is accepted that the current 3rd Year haven't had the sessions the current 1st and 2nd Year students have had so we will ensure that this is a priority early in 4th Year. A parental support session will also be provided. Mr Groves has been working with a company called Elevate.

AOB

Whole class detentions – this is not a sanction we support. If a member of staff issues a whole class detention, the relevant subject leader should be contacted.