

# **Parent Forum**

## **Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

### **Attendees:**

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

### **Parents:**

### **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 Principal and other members of the college leadership team in an informal, relaxed setting is by participating in the parent forum. The process enables parents to raise issues, 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 where appropriate. Comments ranged broadly - the notes below are a summary of key themes.

### **Why choose SAC for Sixth Form? What differentiates SAC from the competition?**

Parents had the opportunity to attend 6<sup>th</sup> Form Open Evening in November where this was explained at length by the Principal, AHT Director of 6<sup>th</sup> Form and the students themselves. We have a rich history of academic excellence and a 3 year upward trend of ALPS 'red hot' – ALPS is a progress/value added measure evidencing that the students continue to build on already outstanding GCSE results. Our official value added score of 0.15 for 2017/18 is up from 0.12 in 2016/17. We hold an outstanding grading by Ofsted.

In addition to academic success the college offers enrichment in the Edmund Rice tradition developing the whole person through opportunities for ERI, immersion and a breadth of enrichment opportunities from sport, Duke of Edinburgh to the Arts etc. Pupils learning environment is disciplined with a focus on developing independent study in preparation for further education. Through close tracking pupils are informed of their progress against targets and are afforded the opportunity to take advantage of structured intervention throughout their A-level courses. Coupled

with high quality teaching staff the college facilitates the highest outcomes that encourage boys to flourish both inside and outside of the classroom.

### **Are there arrangements in place for Easter Revision sessions**

At present there are no formal plans to host revision sessions at Easter but we are looking at a variety of options to enhance revision opportunities for students ahead of external exams e.g. the creation of revision packs and materials for all subjects to be available and accessible online which will include past paper questions etc.

The results from those subjects who did not host revision sessions last Easter, namely Maths and History, confirm exemplary results can be achieved without this additional resource. As a college we wholeheartedly believe our boys are best served by ensuring maximum effort in all lessons throughout their course which will result in them being able to achieve their full potential. Our staff & systems are thorough in tracking boys' attainment/progress. Necessary intervention will take place throughout the duration of their courses.

In response to the enquiry raised regarding parents paying staff for Easter revision Mr Rainey explained a number of reasons as to why this suggestion, although well intended was problematic including ethical implications concerning those who can and cannot afford to pay as well as charging parents for covering the curriculum. A number of parents confirmed they would not be happy to pay for covering gaps in learning and that there is the possibility of disadvantaging pupils who might not be able to afford to take up this provision. The variety of views on this matter evidenced that such an approach wouldn't be feasible.

A parent asked about what stage the preparation of revision packs was at. Mr Rainey stated that some departments were further along than others and that it was only asked of subject leaders a fortnight ago. We will aim to have them ready for the February half-term.

### **Have plans been finalised for 5th Year study leave?**

Not at this point. We will review where departments are up to with course completion/ revision during next term & potentially into the summer term. We will formally recognise study leave as in keeping with previous years marked with an assembly/service of Thanksgiving and a period of study just before the exams commence.

### **Could the Head of Chemistry organise specific intervention for particular classes/groups?**

On completion of the mock results an analysis of data intervention will be put in place for boys whose progress is a concern. This will cover a range of subjects & Mr Elwell, as Head of Chemistry, will review intervention needs across all Chemistry groups and boys will be targeted as necessary.

### **Continuity of teaching due to staff absence is of real concern in some areas.**

The college recognises that having a variety of teachers isn't ideal. We are satisfied with how we have managed situations where staff absence has arisen & the 5<sup>th</sup> year students have had specialists in their subject areas all year.

In response to a parental concern about the qualifications of teachers and curriculum coverage, Mr Rainey re-emphasised that all 5<sup>th</sup> year groups have had specialists this year. We will analyse data and course coverage post-Christmas.

### **Are there plans for a Parent/Student MIS portal?**

Yes. We are looking at ways in which we can use Progresso, (MIS) more effectively in a number of areas and this may include reports to parents and parental access to other behaviour/rewards data. We are also investigating how Progresso & MILK can speak to each other more effectively.

There has been good progress in this area and should be up and running very soon.

### **Is EPQ compulsory in Sixth Form?**

For students who choose 3 subjects, EPQ will be compulsory in Lower 6<sup>th</sup>. We are looking at the possibility of offering a choice between EPQ & Core Maths depending on subject choices but this will depend on staff capacity. Core Maths would be in both Lower & Upper 6<sup>th</sup>.

A parent asked what Core Maths was worth in terms of points/accreditation.

Mr Rainey explained that EPQ wouldn't be timetabled in A2 and the current Upper 6<sup>th</sup> situation was different. Issues have been ironed out for current Lower 6<sup>th</sup> who are on track. Mr Rainey will confirm Core Maths accreditation.

### **Please could we have more parents evening in the 5th year. One in January doesn't seem enough, especially if there are issues with the Mock results. Could we at least see teachers again where there are issues/intervention is required?**

Currently, directed time for staff facilitates 1 parents evening each year. Pending consultation with professional associations, it may be possible to include a 2<sup>nd</sup> evening for 5<sup>th</sup> year in future year groups but it hasn't been included in the directed time calendar for staff this year. Unlike other schools we do allow staff to communicate via email with parents. Where there are significant concerns, boys will be allocated a mentor who will liaise with parents about progress & needs in all subjects.

Parents can contact Mr Groves and all intervention strategies for all boys after mocks will be communicated home and appropriate meetings arranged.

A parent asked about how we identify students for intervention. Mr Rainey explained the Progress 8 measure ensuring that it means even boys attaining a combination of grades 6/7 could still be targeted if they came in on high KS2 scores. The tracking against 6<sup>th</sup> Form entry of 60 points was also used. Where there are difficulties in only 1 or 2 subjects as opposed to across the board the responsibility lies with subject teachers/leaders to complete the intervention.

Waves of targeted intervention involving all members of SLT and additional staff was identified as a successful approach last year.

### **Could the Mock results include valuable information such as: Grade (number), grade boundaries (to understand how close they lie to the next grade), raw %, Class/year rang?**

We will look into the possibility of providing the grade boundaries in each subject. There won't be consistency across subjects with the boundaries varying year on year but we will look at how we can inform parents of the grade boundaries for each subject.

Mr Groves will look into devising a sheet with this information to go alongside the Mock certificate/results.

Parents agreed that this would be very beneficial. It was also requested that the new criteria for Attitude to Learning be included with reports as well as being made available on the website. Mr Rainey stated that he would look in to this and informed parents that the descriptors were in student planners.

A debate opened regarding timing of parents being informed of mock results. It was agreed that the boys should have the experience of opening the envelope themselves but that an additional copy would be sent for parents, recognising the continued importance of parents working alongside school with intervention and other support.

### **We were unaware of the agenda for the 6th Form evening - we did not anticipate having to select 4 subjects to visit !**

Mr Rainey will look into the correspondence relating to this years 6<sup>th</sup> Form Open Evening & consider the format as well as checking if a parent voice was completed for the evening.

Mr Rainey acknowledged that this approach might be limiting for boys whose interests are wider and are totally undecided on options as well as noting the formats used in other colleges. We will review and explore all options ahead of next year's event.

### **What are the entry requirement for 6th Form and does Maths / English count for each exam ?**

Our Admissions Policy for entry into the 6<sup>th</sup> Form is 60 points based on Attainment 8. In addition, students are expected to achieve at least a grade 5 in both Maths and English Language.

### **When considering 6th Form for our son, we would like to know who the subject teachers will be and if this will be the same teacher for the two years**

This will not be known for some time. For example, numbers of groups won't be known until the deadline for choosing 6<sup>th</sup> Form options passes. We can provide information with regard to who will be teaching 6<sup>th</sup> Form subjects but won't be able to be precise as to which groups/blocks until the summer.

### **We were very disappointed with the focus and interest in cricket last year. M's year had 2 fixtures and hardly any practice. Whilst I realise St Ambrose is a rugby school it would be nice to see some other sports get some more attention.**

Mr Rainey has spoken to the relevant staff about this matter surrounding the reasons for the lack of 4<sup>th</sup> year fixtures and we endeavour to remedy this situation where possible for summer 2019. Due to extenuating circumstances including the two prior to mocks parents did not want boys playing matches, cancellation by other schools to name just some issues last year. Mr Groves has also spoken to the relevant parent regarding this issue.

We are not solely a rugby college and we are proud to offer an extensive extra curricular sporting programme all year round including Basketball, Cross country, Water polo, Senior football, Swimming, coverage of which is published in the weekly newsletter.

**I do have a concern about the use of supply teachers when a teacher is away for a period of time. Consequently where the syllabus has not been completed due to running out of time!**

We are satisfied with how the school has managed situations where staff absence has arisen. We are not currently aware of any cases where the syllabus has not been covered and are happy to investigate further should parents or carers identify such concerns. Subject Leaders monitor curriculum coverage and Learning Programmes are available on our website so parents can gauge where students are up to in each subject area.

Additional points raised connected with the issues above:

- 6<sup>th</sup> Form direction and vision e.g. positive move with the suits and more freedom but in comparison with other post-16 providers there is a feeling from some parents that our current culture isn't helping with the boys' maturity.
- Some parents are unhappy that the list of topics for the mocks was changed at late notice and after much preparation had taken place.
- Question about curriculum coverage if it's a 3 year GCSE. Should the course be finished by now? Mr Rainey explained that although we choose options in 2<sup>nd</sup> year it doesn't necessarily mean that all subjects start the GCSE course at the beginning of 3<sup>rd</sup> year. For example, some continue with skills/content from the KS3 curriculum which might be essential before beginning the GCSE content. Mr Rainey added and some parents agreed that for the current cohort the specifications and textbooks may not have been ready at the beginning of the courses in some subjects. Mr Rainey stated that only Technology & Further Maths are going through the 9-1 course for the first time so things should settle. 5<sup>th</sup> year isn't a full school year so beginning courses at some point in 3<sup>rd</sup> year ensures that the months missed at the end of 5<sup>th</sup> year are covered.
- References for other 6<sup>th</sup> Form colleges. Mr Rainey advised to put in writing for the attention of the Head of House & to be specific where colleges have asked for predicted grades.