

Parents' Forum, 6 February 2018

Parents were welcomed to the first Parents' Forum. Approximately 50 were in attendance, many more than had confirmed. The Forum will meet each term and its aim is to provide an opportunity for more parents/carers to engage and be involved in Academy life than previously possible under the Small School Associate Governorship model.

A number of parents/carers had submitted questions in advance of the meeting which Mr Millar and Academy Leaders addressed:

1. Module 1, Timetable and IT

At the start of the autumn term, Mr Millar and Academy leaders had met individual parents/carers to address their concerns over the new timetable and the IT issues which had impacted students during the first week.

For the benefit of all present, Mr Millar explained the reasons for reorganising the timetable and the IT issues which had affected its smooth delivery at the very start of the academic year. Parents received assurances that the Small School model was immensely important to the Academy and the Trust and would remain. However, at KS4 students needed to be put into the most appropriate set, studying with students of similar ability in order to maximise progress. Mr Millar said that students could expect timetable changes going forward as the Academy assesses students every 6 weeks and may move classes or teachers in the best interests of the students.

The Academy was already working on next years' timetable and this will be discussed at a future Parents' Forum.

A parent asked Mr Millar to explain setting. Particularly with the Reformed qualifications, students need to be in classes with those of a more similar current ability. Not all students who start in Delamere will take triple science at KS4; option choices may mean they take combined science (*of equal value to triple science*), so setting has to be there to enable students from all three of the KS3/4 Small Schools to access the most appropriate provision.

2. 1:1 Devices

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Mr Millar explained that the Academy had undergone a huge transformation in terms of IT in the past 18 months and now uses Google and Google classrooms. All teaching staff now have devices which they can take home, this was not previously the case.

Mr Millar accepted that there was inconsistency across the academy in use of 1:1 devices for homework and lessons and there was a training need for staff, some of whom lacked confidence in using the new technology. The Academy has identified 'digital champions' within each subject area to run bespoke training sessions with department colleagues to help improve confidence and usage.

A parent asked why the Academy was 'forcing' everyone to buy laptop?

Mr Millar responded that the Chromebooks were a Cloud based device, particularly designed for younger year groups. The Leigh Academies Trust has introduced the opportunity to purchase them across many of its schools with the same external company.

Mr Doyle, Head of 6th Form explained that Arden students can bring their own, or access through the scheme, whatever device is most suitable for their course e.g. MacBook, laptops or chromebooks.

There was mixed experiences from parents/carers in the room - some students using them all the time whilst others said their child didn't use it at all. One parent, whose daughter uses her chromebook all the time, had told her mother some of her friends don't like using their Chromebooks in lessons. Ms Long, Head of Ashdown, said recently she had dealt with two incidences of students not wanting to use their Chromebook and that it was worth any parents who felt the devices were not being used, raising it with their Small Schools so they could look into it and respond.

In response to a question from the floor Mr Millar gave assurances that sets of Chromebooks were available in the Academy for student use and that lack of chromebooks was not a barrier to learning.

3. Show My Homework

Mr Millar acknowledged that there were varied reports from parents and inconsistent use of the online tool. The Academy was able to monitor and track staff usage through the system and this was being carried out. The Academy was also considering alternatives for the future e.g. via an App.

Parents raised the issue of planners being used to record homework. Mr Millar explained that the smaller size planner was introduced last year at the same time as Show My Homework. A number of parents expressed the view that these were too small. Mr Millar asked for parents' views on whether the planner should revert back to the larger size, as this had just been discussed by the Academy Leadership Team. The forum unanimously agreed in favour of the bigger size. Mr Millar agreed to change the planner size back with immediate effect.

A parent queried how much homework a Year 8 child should receive on average? Mr Millar said he would run reports and report back through the newsletter on homework expectations.

Post meeting note: Marion Jones received an email from a parent suggesting the Academy offers advertising spaces within the planner to help recoup costs. The Planner production company has confirmed it will be possible and the Academy will action.

4. Lockers

A parent had raised whether students could have lockers. Mr Millar said lockers could not be installed as the Academy was a PFI building and there was no room for them and it would come at a substantial cost.

Mr Millar was asked to clarify 'PFI' which he duly did.

A parent asked whether external locker banks could be installed. Mr Millar said he would look into this. Another parent asked whether 'coat rooms' could be created. Mr Millar said it was not possible.

5. Dress Code

In response to one parent's question about uniform, Mr Millar said the Academy were not relaxing standards of dress code.

6. Lunchtime Arrangements

A question had been raised about lunch times and queues. Mr Millar confirmed that there was more than sufficient time for all students to eat their lunch. Queues worked well. There was strength to the current system but Academy Leaders are reviewing for next year.

7. Toilet Facilities

One parent stated that there were not enough toilets available for students to use. Mr Millar confirmed that there were lots of toilets available for students to use. Please talk to Small School Head if a problem.

8. Admissions/Banding

Mr Millar explained the why RBG no longer administered the banding system. He confirmed the Academy, along with Corelli and our new school Leigh Academy Blackheath, were the only schools in Greenwich to continue to operate the system this year and planned to keep the banding tests going forward in order to ensure a truly comprehensive intake. Mr Millar reported that the Academy was massively oversubscribed for the 270 spaces in Year 7.

9. Any Other Business

9.1 Mr Millar announced that the Academy will be running stress workshops for Year 11 next half term. Parents/Carers should liaise with their Small Schools if they felt it would be of particular benefit to their child.

9.2 Mobile Phones

Mr Millar sought the Forum's views on use of mobile phones in school as the Academy Leadership Team were considering whether to extend their use entirely when on site. The Forum was largely in favour but wanted clarity on sanctions. Parents felt that it would be a 'battle' and some were not willing to have to come to the school to collect a confiscated phone.

Mr Millar said that he had not yet consulted with the staff body but it would be useful to have an indication of the Forum's opinion. On a show of hands, the majority of those present were in support of stopping the use of mobile phones anywhere when on the school site, other than under teacher direction for learning in a lesson.

10. Items for Next meeting

- Humanutopia how students engage with their own education and improve their self esteem. The project is being sponsored by Stationers' Company & Leigh Academies Trust,
- A member from the Stationers' Company would talk about the company and its sponsorship of the Academy.
- IBMYP - International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme
- Response to questions/topics suggested by Parents/Carers

A Parent suggested the Academy could offer younger year groups the opportunity to visit Stationers' Hall. Mr Millar agreed that this was desirable.

Progress 8 and Performance Tables

Faz Rahman, Associate Principal, gave a presentation to explain how schools are now held to account by the Government, curriculum reforms, the grading system and performance measures.

Mr Millar & Mr Rahman reassured parents that the Academy was driven by doing things in the best interest of its students and not by League Tables. The Pathways system was introduced last year to guide students onto the next stage of their studies. Students received a lot of advice and guidance. A lot of subjects are compulsory within the 'buckets'. The Year 8 Pathways Evening on 6 March (*now re-scheduled to 13 March due to snow day closure*) would clarify the process for parents about to begin this phase.

In response to a question Mr Millar said it was impossible to compare last year's results to previous years. The course content and exam assessment were not the same. All students achieved a set of qualifications that have enabled them to go onto their next stage. Mr Millar said that the progress measures are really good for low ability students as it evidences success. He said it didn't matter what Small School they attend, all students should receive an outstanding education - Sherwood, Ashdown and Delamere.

In response to a question, Mr Millar clarified the setting process.

A Year 8 parent queried why her daughter was still on the same level. Mr Rahman explained that there were currently no levels in Key Stage 3 but the depth of content and criteria gets harder as students progress. Mr Rahman used a swimming pool analogy of remaining on the surface of the water as the pool (of knowledge, skills and complexity) becomes deeper. The Trust is introducing the IBMYP next year and this would be explained at a future Forum.

Mr Millar thanked all who attended and encouraged feedback through Marion Jones. The meeting closed at 8.20pm

Friends of SCWA volunteer: Imogen Adams-Stiell, Delamare

Feedback

Marion Jones: A number of parents gave verbal feedback to me as they left, all of it positive 'really interesting', 'I learnt so much', 'when is the next one?' 'thank you for giving up your evening for this' 'it was great'.

'We appreciated the invitation and communication lines opening up to parents. At least one of us intends to attend the future forums..... We wondered whether you had ever thought about opening up the opportunity of allowing businesses to advertise in your Newsletters or even in the new Planner that was discussed last night for the next academic year. No doubt committing to the larger, much better, planner that the pupils had last year, will be a financial burden on the school at a time when your budgets have been drastically cut. If businesses could pay for advertising in it (say a few pages at the back available for businesses to advertise in at a cost), we wondered whether this could go towards paying for the outlay of providing the planners to the pupils.'

Fatos Fida/Katrina Long

Thought it was really well received lots of happy parents as they walked out.

Erin Sudds

From the parents I spoke with this evening and on the way out, the feedback was unanimously positive re the Parents' forum. They appreciated the chance to hear updates about the academy and felt reassured by what was said. I've asked them to email their feedback to Marion but my sense is that the evening was a success.

Steffan Ball , I may have even signed up a couple of Sherwood parents to the Friends of SCWA as I was walking out!

Action List

Meeting request	Dr Sarah Chase requested individual meeting with David Millar
1:1 Devices	Academy to continue to provide teacher training through department digital champions to improve staff confidence in using IT for lessons/homework assignments.
Homework	Academy to monitor and track staff use of SMHW Academy to provide guide on average amount of homework by year group
Planners	Larger size Planners to be ordered for 2018/2019 Academy to seek to recoup some of the costs by offering local business advertising
Lockers	Mr Millar to enquire whether external lockers are feasible within the PFI contract and report back through newsletter.
Mobile Phones	Academy to consult with staff and then take to parent body for wider consultation
Stationers Hall	Academy to consider trips to Stationers' Hall for younger year groups
Future Agenda Items	Humanutopia The Stationers' Company sponsorship IBMYP - International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme 2018/2019 Timetable