

Minutes of Parents' Forum, 26 March 2018

45 Parents/Carers attended

1. **Welcome from Mr Millar, recap on last Parents' Forum**

Mr Millar welcomed all to the meeting and summarised the topics discussed at the previous meeting, minutes had been circulated to all Parents/Carers via Parentmail and are available on the website.

Friends of SCWA, meeting after Easter, volunteers needed. Planning quiz night/fish n chip supper

2. **Actions from previous meeting**

- **Continue to push 1:1 devices:** Digital champions had been appointed in each subject area to share ideas with colleagues and support training. Mr Millar stressed that chromebooks were just one learning tool within a range used within the classroom. The window had now opened for Year 8 Parent/Carers to order Chromebooks and details were available on the website.
- **Show My Homework:** Mr Millar informed the meeting that weekly reports were being printed for subject leaders to monitor the setting and marking of homework. Follow up action with staff was being taken where necessary. Academy leaders have emphasised expectations around homework feedback. Parents should contact their Heads of School if they have any issues.
- **Planners:** Mr Millar confirmed larger-sized student planners had been ordered, as requested by parents at the previous forum. A parent had suggested local business advertising would help pay for the additional cost of printing. The Academy had followed up on this suggestion and information on advertising costs within the planner will be published in the newsletter
- **Lockers:** Mr Millar was awaiting a response regarding whether it was possible to have external lockers
- **Toilets:** The Academy has plenty of toilets available and continues to monitor break and lunchtime provision. Please liaise with your child's Head of School if there are any individual concerns.
- **Mobile phones: Mr Millar confirmed he was currently** consulting with staff on the proposal for a wider Academy ban. With exception of 6th Form, students are not to use the phones on campus anywhere unless under direction of teacher in the classroom. The wider parent body would be consulted and information will be published in the newsletter.
- **Greenwich consultation on our DSP provision:** Mr Millar informed the meeting that a consultation had opened via the Local Authority on a change to the Academy's Designated Special Provision. Currently visual impairment and moderate learning difficulties at SCWA. There is a growing

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need for provision for students with ASD so propose to change MLD to ASD. There is a survey on the Local Authority website for anyone who wishes to express their views.

3. Questions submitted from Parents

The themes suggested by parents for discussion at this Forum are Supply Teachers, monitoring of teaching & learning and Humanutopia.

3.1 Supply teachers

Mr Millar explained that the Academy was funded on a per pupil basis and that 75-80% of the funding is spent on staffing. The Academy was fully staffed to deliver curriculum. Cover Supervisors are employed by SCWA to cover lessons in cases of temporary sickness. As staff members, the cover supervisors know the Academy procedures, rules, systems and children. This was hugely beneficial as generally teaching is all about relationships. It was not possible to use cover supervisors for long-term sickness, the Academy has to use agency teachers. It was not possible to go into specific details but the Academy has experienced a period of serious long-term illness for staff and/or their families and has had to employ more agency staff than it would normally. The situation will improve after Easter as staff return from absence. In response to questions from parents, Mr Millar clarified the following:

- The Academy cannot recruit another permanent member of staff to replace a person who is off sick.
- less teachers left this January than the previous January. Some staff have left to join another Academy within the Trust.

Action: Mr Millar agreed to look into retention figures for previous years.

- The Trust HR Department were excellent and the Academy did not struggle to recruit staff. There were a variety of reasons why staff left: promotion, relocation, family circumstances. What is a concern, generally, is the number of staff leaving the profession.
- Reassurance was given that the Academy has retained a lot of high quality teachers and has good leadership development programmes to retain staff.

One parent raised concerns about the supply staffing of her daughter's Year 9 Maths class. Mr Millar agreed that the situation described was not good enough and a meeting took place immediately after the Forum with the parents.

Another parent queried whether budget restrictions meant the Academy could only recruit young, inexperienced teachers as there was a perception that the majority of staff were very young and this parent felt that some did not always demonstrate the appropriate professional relationship with students, wanting to be 'mates' rather than the teacher. Mr Millar disagreed and said the profile of staff is a blend of experienced and new teachers. The Academy had PGCE students for training placements; Teach First staff, straight from university; but also have teachers in their 3rd or 4th year and many that have been at SCWA for a considerable period of time. It was explained that, though young in the particular parent's view, a teacher who is 30 years old often has 8 years of teaching experience.

3.2 Teaching & Learning

Two senior leaders, Ms Fida and Ms Loughlin, who lead the Teaching & Learning Drive Team delivered a presentation to parents.

- The Academy offered all staff a wide variety of professional development opportunities: in house through subject meetings and school meetings. Good and outstanding practitioners shared their expertise weekly, through 15 Minute Forums, Half Hour Hits and, Pedagogical Pearls. These were all ways in which staff were made aware of consistent messages and best teaching practice.
- External Opportunities include: Middle and Senior Leader Development Programmes, Exam Boards, Middle Years Programme. There is a coaching culture within the Academy: the Grow Model.

- Ms Fida and Ms Loughlin then explained how teaching and learning was monitored on a regular basis throughout the Academy both formally and informally; the bespoke support plans and the tailored professional development plans. They explained that different levels of teachers are observed more regularly and that documenting all monitoring activities is moving to a central system utilising google forms

A parent queried how support teachers were supported?

Subject leaders advise them on curriculum, Small School leaders support with behaviour for learning.

Class work is set by the subject leaders in cases of long term sickness.

Mr Millar explained that where it was possible, short term contracts were offered to good agency staff but this was not always appropriate.

A Parent raised the model followed by the NHS who have a temporary staffing bank and asked whether the same model can be applied to teaching? Mr Millar explained it was not financially viable, the Academy employed a number of Cover supervisors to cover temporary absence and the Trust employs improvement advisers, specialists in maths, Science, English, MFL and primary teaching. They come in and work directly with students, running masterclasses and support to departments.

A parent asked whether monitoring information could be made available to parents?

Action: Mr Millar said he would consider how general monitoring information might be shared, though explained that there were reasons why this might not be appropriate.

5. Humanutopia Update

Ms Croft, Associate Principal, updated the Forum on the recent Year 9 'Who Am I' workshops which had just been completed. She said it was a very powerful experience. Students were now in the process of applying to become 'heroes' and will help deliver workshops with Year 7 after Easter. Students will attend next Forum to share experiences.

Ms Long, Head of Ashdown, provided feedback, saying students were now starting to think about reflective skills.

A Parent expressed great support for the initiative, saying how positive it had been for her daughter. She described how her daughter had received a phone call from another student who had previously been unkind, apologising for her behaviour.

Ms Croft explained that the project was an ongoing programme being rolled out across Academy over time.

6. IBMYP

Ms Croft and Ms Jones delivered a presentation on an exciting new curriculum development being introduced by the Trust: the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IBMYP)

The programme is for Key Stage 3 students and focuses on learning different skills through themes and concepts. The skills will help students in their Key Stage 4 studies as exams are much more rigorous and course content requires more in-depth knowledge.

There will be ongoing staff training after Easter and two days at the end of the academic year 19 and 20 July have now been designated for staff curriculum development training. Students will end the year on 18 July.

In response to questions Ms Croft confirmed that the MYP is not replacing the national curriculum but is looking to bring out skills within the existing curriculum that strongly embeds knowledge within a model of global, national and key concepts and other skills, planned and taught explicitly in every unit.

The programme will start with Year 7 and Unit plans will be written to start in September.

Building the programme takes two years; teachers will scaffold it up.

The MYP is an internationally recognised programme and, hopefully it won't be interfered with politically. It is changing the approach to teaching and the Academy and Trust are confident it will be extremely beneficial to students in terms of outcomes and preparing them for future life, education and careers.

7. Stationers' Presentation

Mr Millar passed on the Chair of Governors' apologies as he was unable to attend the meeting. The Stationers' briefing would be included in the next Forum.

8. Next Parents' Forum

The next Forum would be held after the May half term break and the date published in advance. Topics for the next forum would include September timetable & curriculum, CCF, as well as themes suggested by parents.

Mr Millar thanked all who attended.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm

ACTION POINTS

1	Mr Millar to look into staff retention rates for previous years.	D M R
2	Mr Millar to consider how the monitoring of teaching information might be shared.	D M R
3	Students to be invited to speak about Humanutopia experience	A C T
4	Academy items for next Forum: Timetable & Curriculum for September CCF The Stationers' Company	