

**Notre Dame Parent Forum**  
**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2015**  
**6pm in Room C10**

Present: Neil Cully (Deputy Head teacher) and 4 parents with children in Yrs 8, 9, 10 & 11.

1. Apologies: Brian Conway (Head teacher), Tom Leverage (Deputy Head teacher) one parent of 2 students (Yrs 8 & 10).

2. **Matters arising:**

- **Consultation regarding School term time and holiday dates 2015-16 and 2016-17:** No further submissions had been received since the last meeting and therefore the School would be going with these dates over the next two school years.
- **KS3 teacher assessments and changes to KS4 exam grading:** NCU reported that whilst we were happy with the proposals outlined at the last meeting, there was no consensus locally or nationally and everyone seemed to be waiting for the outcome of the forthcoming general elections and possibly policy changes from the new government. Therefore, for the time being, we would continue to use the present system of assessment and reporting at KS3. However the new number grading system, as far as we know, will be continuing as is due to be phased in from the beginning of next academic year.
- **Developments in ICT:** the trials of the chrome books were continuing and the Governing Body had not yet taken a decision to proceed with the proposal of purchasing sufficient numbers to equip students in whole-year groups with a chrome book each.
- **E-safety parents' presentation:** NCU reported that following the success and very positive feedback from the e-safety presentation last summer, we are now running an e-safety sessions at each of this year's parents' evenings. NCU said that this initiative arose directly from requests made via Parent Forum.

3. **Parents' experience of ePortal:**

- It behaved differently on iPad to other access points – hopefully Bromcom will avoid this? NCU would enquire.
- Parents really welcomed that teachers were recording the setting of homework work on eportal– but this took up a lot of space on the report and wondering if these could be filtered so that the other comments made by teachers could be easier to identify. NCU would enquire
- How many parents are set up for receiving info electronically? What about parents who do not have access? What % are signed up and how many use it? NCU to enquire.
- This could be reported into Newsletters
- A suggestion was made that the School could advertise that Bromcom is smart-phone friendly to encourage a greater take up of parent access of their child's page of current progress – Smartphone usage is greater than laptops, iPads etc.

- The comment was made that the web site does not currently enable parents to access info specific to year groups e.g. DoE, Exams etc. Is this all on the website or could it be on ePortal's replacement? NCU to enquire.
- A suggestion was made that we need an app. For Bromcom rather than having to type in www..... Has Bromcom got an app? NCU to enquire.

#### 4. Views on the website

The following points were raised by parents:

- A suggestion was made that we could use sixth formers as a way of keeping the content of the website up to date.
- A further suggestion was to make more use of automatic delete feature e.g. for news events.
- Some parents liked the scrolling calendar feature that was on the old website. It was noted that the Calendar tab doesn't contain information about, for example, "Parent Forums", suggesting that we are not using this feature fully.
- The search feature on the website is not very intuitive and is a bit hidden.
- When you go into Main Menu it is then difficult to get back to the Home Page.
- The inclusion of the names and contact details of senior and middle managers was welcome but parents said that it would be good to include the names and contact details of all the teachers.
- WisePay is welcomed by parents but can be a little inflexible sometimes e.g. for trips. It will only allow certain set payments at specific times. Can this be improved?
  - **Response from our Finance Team:** we able to put an amount of £50.00 in for parents to select from on request and the parents then have another option besides the set instalment amounts. However, we are unable to give one parent a 'variable' option to enable them to put their own amount in. Also, if a trip has instalments, we need a certain amount of money paid by a particular date by parents in order to cover the instalment charged by the travel company.
- It was suggested that one reason why some parents don't pay up front for school dinners is because it makes the students feel over rich and so they spend on snacks etc. Is there a facility where you can vary the amount e.g. could Wisepay credit the account on a 'trickle system', maybe £2.50 per day into the line account from a £20 deposit?
  - **Response from our Finance Team:** unfortunately there is nothing at the moment to state when a students' account is running low. They depend on the student/parents checking their account regularly. It doesn't mean to say that this would not be a feature for future development by WisePay, but alas not at the moment, although it seems a simple request by parents, the technology behind this would be huge. Their child can check their balance at any point by the reval machines located in St. Mary's and Vivas and parents can check the balance at any point on line. This is more of a parent/child issue really in telling their child they have a limit of say £2.10'ish' to spend each day. Students can buy a meal deal for £2.10 by buying both a meal and pudding at the same time. This is generally a few students out of the 1,400 that are having a problem with overspending and they tend to be in the lower year groups.

5. **Ideas for future meetings:**

- Parent Questionnaire – it was suggested that this could be used to gather ideas by including a textbox at the end of the questionnaire inviting suggestions for future parent presentations.
- Attendance errors – some parents have been contacted when it would appear that their child is not in school because their form tutor has marked them absent. However the child has been in school doing an event, e.g. First Aid course & exam, but this has not been communicated to the form tutor. Therefore could the School make sure that errors like these are minimised?
- A parent of a child in Yr 11 asked for some guidance to be made available about when/if there will be study leave this year and after what date, at the end of the exam season and sixth form induction, they can book holidays with confidence.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2015 at 6 p.m. in C10

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm.