

## Notre Dame Parent Forum

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2014

6pm in Room C10

**Present:** Neil Cully (Deputy), and 4 parents with children in Yrs 7, 9, 11 & 12.

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

The meeting opened with a welcome and prayer.

### 2. Consultation regarding School term time and holiday dates 2015-16 and 2016-17

Mr Cully (NCU) showed parents a School Terms Calendar for 2015-16 and another for 2016-17, with proposed closure dates for staff training. He explained the thinking behind these proposals.

Parents present at the meeting did not have any objections to these proposals. Nor did two parents who contacted the School by email to enquire about the proposals.

**NB** since this meeting, there have been some further adjustments to the proposals as a result of consultation with staff. The current, amended School Term Calendars for 2015-16 and 2016-17 can be viewed on the Parent Forum web page.

**Any parents who wish to express their views about these proposals can email [feedback@ndhs.org.uk](mailto:feedback@ndhs.org.uk)**

In the discussion the point was made that there is always an issue about school closure days when parents have children in other schools. NCU acknowledged this and said that we always liaise closely with our Catholic feeder schools through the Cluster and recognised that this does not completely address the problem when parents have other children at non-Catholic schools

### 3. KS3 Teacher Assessment and KS4 examination grades.

NCU explained the context to this issue whereby this year will be the last time that our School will report the progress of students in Yrs 7-9 through the National Curriculum's current system of level descriptors. This style of reporting has now been removed as a requirement by the Government and schools are being enabled to create their own method to report student progress. Furthermore with the introduction of new numeric grades for GCSEs (starting with Maths and English for summer 2017), the way we report student progress will need to change for Yrs 10 and 11 too. This will be complicated by the way in which these changes are being phased in.

Mr Leverage (TLG), who is leading on how we address these changes to reporting is very keen to consult with parents so that the final system we adopt has real meaning and value for everyone, especially students and their parents. It is the intention of the School to communicate and consult on this significant change and TLG wishes to use Parent Forum as a key consultant.

This issue will be a regular feature of future meetings and we may need to establish additional meetings to accommodate the issues which will arise. As a School we are working closely with other schools in Norfolk to create a reporting system which will have meaning and credibility for parents across the county. We are keen to avoid creating further confusion for parents by a wide variety of reporting styles.

Parents responded to this context with the following observations:

“Exam systems are a political football.” “There are changes all the time – how do employers judge different grades and levels when there are so many changes?”

We were asked to consult the students too about these changes.

NCU asked the parents what they thought of the amount of feedback and communication they currently receive from the School. These are their comments:

“Feedback re communication is excellent.”

The parents also said that they like the CMIS e-portal log in. However, with the long list of merits and homeworks recorded etc., it could be difficult to read. They agreed though that this was not such an issue if parents checked their child’s entries regularly.

NCU explained that the decision to include the recording of homework had been a direct result of parent requests, especially at the Forum, to have this information so that they were more aware of what was being set and when the deadlines were.

#### 4. Developments in ICT

On TLG’s behalf, NCU outlined a proposed initiative whereby the School might be in a position to purchase a large number of the new chrome books (a less powerful version of a laptop) for students to use at school and home. He said that these are a very cost-effective way of enabling all students to use ict in every classroom and at home too. These chrome books would have the same powerful filtering systems we use at school, providing reassurance to parents that they could only be used for educational purposes and not for gaming, inappropriate communication via social media sights etc.

Parents welcomed this proposed initiative, which, after a trial, might be rolled out to all students in KS3.

Parents had a number of questions:

“Will Google benefit in terms of data about the children – is it general data? What is the level of intrusion from Google?”

Mr Leverage’s response: ***The school will have to comply with the guidelines set out by the ICO (Information Commissioners’ Office) as they have to do at present with other data systems. Google Edu package currents meets all data security and privacy criteria outlined by the DfE.Edu package***

“What about the extra weight of the laptop and could the laptop present at temptation in terms of theft?”

Mr Leverage’s response: ***The chrome books vary in weight depending on model type but average around 1kg. The devices will cost less than an entry level smartphone and are not envisaged to pose a temptation in terms of theft. Security will also result in the device becoming redundant if it is stolen.***

Is all the software Google? Captive customers for life?

Mr Leverage’s response: ***The platform for the software is Google Chrome OS. In terms of ‘Captive customers’ we would be naïve to think that there isn’t a reason why they are providing to schools for free but there are broadly speaking three platforms for us to consider, Microsoft, Google and Apple, all who recognise the importance of the educational marketplace.***

5. Parents issues raised and ideas for future meetings.

a. One parent of a child in Yr 12 said that the jump from GCSE to A level is huge – and asked if we prepared the new Yr 12 students sufficiently for independent study. Do we build in structured study skills? NCU said that on the first day back in September a lot of advice and information was given about the School’s expectations. Individual subjects were expected to provide specific advice and guidance on study skills and time management

b. A concern was expressed by a parent of a child in Yr 7 for children coming to Notre Dame as the only one student from a primary school and how it can be quite challenging. NCU acknowledged this but said that the transition arrangements are always improving and students from the main feeder schools were not given any preferential treatment compared to individuals from single primaries. That the students from the main feeder schools, like St Francis, were only allowed to nominate one close friend to be with in their new form group. Furthermore, these form groups were constructed very careful to make sure that there was a good mix of children from different areas and backgrounds within them

c. One parent said that homework in Yr 7 could be erratic. Some weeks there is a lot and others weeks there is nothing. NCU said that we are keen to monitor homework and invited this parent to inform him with further evidence which we would then investigate and address.

d. Parents were asked if they would welcome repeating the very well-e-safety presentation from last year and also, if we can arrange to get the speaker back in, the presentation on the “Teenage Brain”. Both suggestions were welcomed positively by parents with the request that future parent forum meetings be publicised the next well in advance.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015 at 6 p.m. in C10

The meeting closed at 7.35 pm.