

Parents Voice Notes from the meeting held on Wednesday 19th October 2022

Please note, this is a brief summary of discussions with actions rather than detailed minutes of the meeting.

Firstly I'd like to thank everyone who was able to attend the meeting. I thoroughly enjoyed talking about the school and hearing the things that can make us even more effective at supporting and educating the students.

It is quite hard to take notes and speak at the same time so the notes below are a brief summary. If you feel I have missed a point you would like to be noted please do let me know and I will add them to the notes.

Homework

A few issues were raised about homework as outlined below:

- One parent noted that their – daughters, in Year 11 and 9 were struggling with the amount of homework being set. This was particularly the case with exams/tests and homework being set at the same time.
- Year 7 homework – students are getting set homework and having assessments at the same time which is causing stress. They also noted that there are lots of assessments at the same time – and still getting homework as well – some assessments being put on show homework but only that week and not all subjects.
- Another Year 9 parent said their child is not getting very much homework.
- It was also noted that Year 9 students, as well as other years, would like more “how to revise sessions early on.”
- Finally, it was noted that a lot of homework on phones and computers so students aren't getting a break. Mixed messages when saying give them no screen time.

Response from the Headteacher:

Homework comes up in every meeting we have and we have equal amounts of complaints that there is too much homework and that there is not enough being set. It is important that homework is set meaningfully and not for the sake of it so we ask staff to set homework when it is required rather than because they think they should – it should improve knowledge and understanding or be teaching something new. Sometimes homework is set for the benefit of parents rather than for students.

ACTIONS:

- Headteacher to talk to Assistant Head for KS3 about spreading out end of half term assessments if possible.
- Headteacher to remind staff again that they should refrain from setting homework during examination time, unless it is specifically there to support revision.

Trips

A discussion was had regarding trips and visits because there had been a limited number of trips in school over the last few years. A question was also raised about whether parents can support and attend trips to support staffing.

Response from the Headteacher:

Every department has been asked to identify where they are able to offer trips and visits for students, however there are difficulties with trips; firstly to run trips in holidays staff need to be willing to give up their holidays for free to run a trip. This has reduced over time because staff are under more pressure and higher workloads during term time than ever before, and

in general, staff are more away of their own work life balance in line with the rest of society. Also, there is a lot more bureaucracy around trips which means less staff want to run them.

Secondly, if a trip is run during term time, the school can only ask for a voluntary contribution and less and less parents are paying for these trips meaning the trip has to be funded by the school which is not sustainable unless the trip is for essential course knowledge, for example Geography field trips. In school, trips also have a significant impact on cover for those left in school.

We have increased trips this year with History and Geography trips starting up again, we will continue to push for more trips to take place moving forwards.

ACTION: The Headteacher to enquire about the viability of parents supporting trips to reduce staffing requirements.

Black History Month

The Headteacher provided information regarding the activities the school was putting in place for Black History Month and also how diversity and equality were being promoted across the school, including student diversity groups and the application for the Equalities Silver Award.

A parent noted that the House Competitions were great but lots of people didn't get notification on their show my homework.

ACTION: The Headteacher to ask the Director of Houses to always put competitions on Show My Homework, saying that it is optional.

Sustainable Gardening

The Headteacher asked a parent to meet with him to discuss this matter separately and support the school based on their experience with other schools.

Performing Arts

A Parent noted that Performing Arts (PA) is not seen as a career path in the Sixth Form and that students are actually discouraged from taking it. At Sixth Form Evening, it's not even mentioned as a career path.

A Parent also asked if students could get West Hatch Performing Arts sweatshirts for students to wear as part of a uniform when doing PA, like PE have, which can form part of their uniform.

ACTIONS:

- Headteacher to discuss with KS5 Assistant Head the issues relating to the promotion of Performing Arts.
- Headteacher to consider the uniform change request.

Substitute Teachers

Parents raised concerns regarding substitute teachers and the impact they were having on students' progress.

Response from the Headteacher

The Headteacher was in complete agreement that having substitute teachers in school is not what we want. We have had a significant number of pregnancies over the last few years in particular subjects and also recruitment issues in some subjects which struggle nationally to recruit.

We have put a number of things in place, one of which is to train ex-students who have left Sixth Form and are at university and encourage them into teaching with us, which is showing some success.

We are also retraining staff within school to support in subjects where we have recruitment issues year on year.

Teacher recruitment is difficult in the current climate, particularly with our location so close to London where they are paid significantly more, but we do everything we can to train and recruit high quality staff.

This has also of course been impacted upon by Covid and we are already having significant staff absence due to the 5 days isolation rules this year.

Phones

The point was raised that sometimes students are taking other peoples phones as a joke.

ACTIONS:

- The Headteacher to remind staff to manage the exit of students more effectively so that phones are not removed.
- Parents to inform the school of the actual lessons where this occurs so that it can be discussed with the staff member.

Mental Health

A long discussion was had about Mental Health and what the school was doing to combat it. This discussion included noting that there is evidence to suggest that the more you raise mental health with young people the more detrimental it can be to their mental health.

It was also noted that emails sent with lots of links can have a detrimental effect and be overwhelming for young people.

Finally a question was asked about how we identify students with poor mental health as they often don't want to come forwards, for example with questionnaires which have been good practice in other schools.

Response from the Headteacher

We do have a significant pastoral team and many opportunities for students to be heard. The Headteacher asked for an external review recently and they noted that there is a huge amount in place but it needs to be pulled together into a coherent plan for mental health, which the school is now doing.

ACTION: Action plan to be developed by the school outlining plans for supporting mental health, including how we can support students to support themselves and also how we can support parents in understanding what we are doing and who our mental health first aiders are.

AOB

There was lots of AOB and I'm afraid I didn't manage to note them all down, however a couple of points that we will action:

- Between lessons students can't get in to the toilets because other students are in their doing their makeup etc. The school will consider how to deal with this issue.
- Mr Fell – inspirational in food tech– can we put on more extra-curricular activities for students who are also passionate about this subject?

- Buses – can we get more? Some students can't get on the bus. The school will continue to challenge and ask for support from TFL. We have a new plan for queuing which will take some time to put in place but we believe will address some of the issues
- Can we get recommended book lists for year 10 – what revision guides/text books and exam boards?
- CATS tests were put in place for students with no KS2 data but parents weren't told these were taking place. This will be addressed in the future with parental contact.