

Notes of Parental Consultation Meeting Tuesday 30 January 2018

1 Welcome

Mr Smith welcomed parents to the meeting, and expressed how pleased he was to see more parents present. Staff and parents introduced themselves. Mr Slavin, the Chair of Governors, said how pleased he was to be in attendance.

It was noted that this meeting had been marketed through MILK, school comms, social media, pop up on the website. Parents/carers suggested that it would be helpful for the school to consider a change of the name of the Group so that more parents understood that this is an opportunity of a school to listen and to take advice.

Action: Mr Smith and Mr Slavin to discuss and agree an alternative name for this group.

2 Notes from previous meeting held on 28.11.17 were discussed:

Parent View:

The school has received over 1,000 responses from parents/carers with 97% of parents/carers being in support of the school and would recommend St Benedict's to other parents/carers. Mr Smith encouraged all to look at the results on the Ofsted website for more details.

Homework:

Following the last parental consultation meeting, this issue has been discussed in school in terms of the regularity and the setting of homework, etc. Mr Smith asked parents if there were further thoughts regarding homework.

One parent of two students in the same year group in school had noted that one child received more homework than the other. The parent recognised that they were in some areas of different ability, but that nevertheless there was a disparity.

Action: Mr Smith stated that he would look into the setting of homework and quantity of homework in relation to ability sets.

ISC / Library:

This facility is available to students most evenings. The school has looked into this in relation to the new Campus.

Plan on a Page:

Strategic priorities for 2017-18 were discussed. Mr Bridgman had attended the last meeting and had spoken about the curriculum review and proposed timings to the school day.

It was recognised that the students who fail to make expected or hoped for progress are the students who are "disadvantaged". Some of the students on the SEND register don't make the appropriate rates of progress. Mr Slavin, Chair of Governors, is working with a range of providers both within and beyond school in relation to disadvantage, and in particular child poverty. The meeting recognised that disadvantaged students do need to be a continuing strategic priority in order to close the gap between them and other students.

Currently, the governors' are revisiting a 3-year development programme. Lots of work going on in the background. Governors are very involved with the school and there is more monitoring than ever before. Mr Smith stated that he is pleased to recognise that the governors are very hands on and monitor progress against the priorities, e.g. data, SEND. Individual governors are now linked to different subjects in school and they monitor progress within departments. Mr Arins, parent and member of staff, stated that Mrs McMinn is his link governor and visited on Monday this week to look at the Languages department subject development plan and preparations for Ofsted.

Mr Slavin confirmed that the school and the governors have a multi-layer approach to planning and monitoring, i.e. the plan on a page, and governors working with the leaders of the school to develop the priorities for the school to ensure they are fit for purpose, etc. The plan also takes Mayfield School into account and encourages our ethos to reach out to them. This will give opportunities and benefits for both schools as we move forward to sharing the new Campus Whitehaven site. Mr Slavin went on to state that St Benedict's is open to the community, we are not just focussing on our own school community. We are building on the bottom layer and what the students get on a daily basis and what they leave us with. We are broadening our scope and vision.

The school is outward facing into the community and there will be an absolute insistence that the buildings and facilities are open 24/7. Developing the bigger picture is really important.

It was noted that governors do not have a lot of sub committees: Finance / Data and Standards. Mr Slavin invited parents to think about putting themselves forward to be a governor of the school. There are some vacancies at present for parent governors and expressions of interest would be most welcome.

Budget:

The school has a deficit but progress towards repayment is ongoing.

There are some significant challenges, including post-16 provision in terms of the breadth of the offer (21/22 subjects) – some classes are as small as 4 students and some classes have 25-26 students within one subject. A financially viable situation for an A level class would be 19 students per class. A priority for the school is the growth of the 6th form and getting good numbers through the door, but also to recognise that the entry criteria is appropriate. A balance needs to be struck in admission to the 6th form.

Admissions:

Mr Smith reported that the school is still massively over-subscribed for September. Allocation letters are due to go out on the 1st March 2018. There were 34 appeals last year for Year 7 entry. For 2018 entry the school has received 367 applications for 200 places available in the school. The school is over-subscribed in every year apart from the 6th form and there is an admissions cap on the current Year 7.

Concern expressed at the cost of music lessons:

Mrs Lowrey discussed this issue with parents in some detail in order to give context and background to this issue.

Mrs Lowrey spoke about the peripatetic music service and costs of tuition. Last year was particularly difficult owing to the service offered being challenged owing to staff illness within the music service itself. Unfortunately, some lessons could not be delivered. A different method of paying for the lessons has been introduced but this is proving costly to parents – costs have risen to a point where some parents cannot now afford to let their children take peripatetic music lessons.

GCSE Music after school was promised by the music service to support students, but this has not yet happened.

Mrs Warneford, teacher and parent of two students at the school stated that she cannot now afford to let her daughters carry on with music as it is proving too expensive. Another point was noted that the students who give their musical services to school events after school and at evening events, give these willingly and yet now are being disadvantaged as a result of not being able to afford music lessons.

Action: Mrs Lowrey to continue to look at cheaper costs from the service.

Mr McQuirk, governor and parent of a student at the school, asked if we could share costs and staffing with other schools. Travel between schools for this purposes could be difficult. Mrs Lowrey explained the situation for primary schools, who are eligible for grants in order to support music provision; however, secondary schools are not eligible for grants.

It was noted that out of 22 students taking part last year in music provision, only 4 students are left in the school band and the rest of the band is made up of teachers. One parent asked how many of the 22 were “PP or disadvantaged” students, and asked if funding be diverted for music lessons for these students. Mrs Lowrey stated that she is hoping for a GCSE Music commitment. Mrs Warneford commented that Performing Arts department may do the music module through their work.

Mrs Lowrey is meeting with the music provision service on the 25 February in order to continue this discussion, and invited parents along to the meeting if they wish to take part.

Action: Parents interested in attending the meeting please contact Mrs Lowrey at school.

3 Curriculum Consultation: Feedback from Mr Smith

It was recognised that there has been an extensive consultation period regarding the above and that whilst a final decision has not been made yet as information has to go formally to the Governing Body, Mr Slavin was happy for Mr Smith to give parents at this meeting a flavour of the consultation conducted and feedback received.

Students have been consulted via the Student Leadership Council and also through a survey in their ICT lessons. The school has also been careful to engage with the teaching staff over a period of time – there have been meetings and briefings where Mr Smith has discussed this. Detailed meetings and optional meetings for staff have also been conducted by Mr Bridgman, Assistant Headteacher i/c

Curriculum, where staff have been able to meet and to give their views. Different models of operation have been looked at.

Governors have also been monitoring progress through this process. Teachers and associate staff and professional associations have also been consulted. Mr Smith confirmed that parents/carers have also been consulted with. 8 parents have contacted the school regarding the proposals via a dedicated email address. Some parents requested not to change the start time or the finish time of the school day, and some parents endorsed the changes to invest in staff development for the students. In respect of staff feedback, one member of the teaching staff has said that the proposed changes will comprise childcare provision for their child. Staff professional associations have indicated that they have no issues with the proposals at all. The consultation ended on 19 December 2017. The Governing Body is due to receive formal feedback on the consultation at their meeting next week (8th February). Following the meeting the school will be able to inform all parties of the decision. Mr Slavin confirmed for parents that the information to be received at the meeting will be fairly interrogated and discussed.

Action: Formal notification to all stakeholders once the Governing Body meeting has taken place on 8th February 2018.

Indicators noted below of what may happen in terms of the changes to the timing of the school day and the curriculum to be provided:

- Start time for the school day to most likely remain as it is. This is mainly owing to the fact that some of the staff who have children avail themselves of childcare from 8.00am and an earlier start would compromise this and therefore the arrival of staff to work.
- Whole school CPD for staff has been built into the proposal – this means that there would be some differing finishing times – for 2 days in the week students will potentially go home earlier and allow the school to create these CPD opportunities for the staff.
- Finish time of 3.25pm Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday
- Finish time of 2.30pm Thursday and Friday for students only.
- Mr Smith informed the meeting that we have advised the school bus providers that we will look at different timings and following whatever happens in the Governing Body meeting, we will formally confirm arrangements.

One parent at the meeting stated that they liked the new proposal and more lessons / learning time for students as a result, going from 5 lessons per day to 6 lessons per day. Several parents commented they preferred the one-week timetable. Mr Smith explained why it had been necessary to move to a two week timetable for the past two years.

Curriculum:

Main area of discussion has been 6th form.

Reduction in the curriculum time given to ICT/Computing is a potential outcome. However, it was recognised that ICT and Computing are important skills and they will not be disappearing from the curriculum offer, but that it will be a slimmer offer.

The content of computer science from KS4 will be more academic.

The school will therefore still be offering Computer Science at KS4 but for probably the most able, but it will also be an offer at post 16.

Mr Smith stated that he does not want to prop up Computer Science with all the courses that are available within this subject currently. The options process will be refined to provide some bespoke learning pathways that Year 9 will be asked to opt into – the top 25% of students will be offered to take up the EBacc.

The offer will include less time in KS3 and not as full a range of courses for Computer Science in KS4. Therefore there will be a reduction, but to improve the quality of what is left. Making the step to an academic approach rather than a vocational approach will be important.

Post-16:

The Senior Team and governors are keen to promote the breadth of provision.

There are no proposals to stop running courses. The offer will remain as broad as in the past.

French and German were offered last year, but there was no take-up for these subjects.

Reduction in taught time for A levels – getting harder and more content within the courses. Teachers have said they need more time.

Discussions have taken place as to how many A levels students should do – 3 or 4? – if lessons are of 55 minutes in length could we do 5 or 6 lessons per week? 6 lessons per week would increase the wage bill by £60-£70K. If students studied 5 lessons + 1 lesson – students would get 5 taught lessons, but a sixth lesson where the teacher would direct the learning and students would be independently learning. Traditionally students study 4 lessons and drop one subject at the end of Year 12.

Mr Smith explained the A level system and the recent de-coupling of subjects / AS levels. The most able students would be able to study 4 A levels – however the standard offer would be 3 A levels and the EPQ. EPQ is an independent qualification in an area that interests the student and offering this would make more cohesive provision for this. EPQ is a differentiator. Mr Arins pointed out that students can gain their UCAS points via an EPQ if they are average students and this is really helpful to them when it comes to university entrance.

Recent feedback from some students has indicated that they have had their university place confirmed because of the extra things they do in school apart from their learning, e.g. Student Leadership Council, charity work, etc.

Mrs Warneford asked if those students who are able to do 4 A levels could also do the EPQ. Mr Smith responded that this would be the case and that the offer for Further Maths would remain also. Mr McQuirk asked if opportunities for the EPQ involving charity work, etc. could be realised via utilising the early finishes in the proposed timing of the school day. Mr Smith confirmed that this could be the case. It would also be an opportunity for the “hard to reach students” to stay in school and do extra work.

5 Campus Whitehaven update (Mrs Lowrey)

- Mrs Lowrey showcased the plans for the Campus and gave a detailed overview of the timeline and work regarding the Campus included some detailed analysis of where everything will be situation on site and in the new school buildings.
- Wates are contracted to hand over the complete build on 8 December.
- The project is on schedule at the moment to hand over the building on 17.8.18, even though building work has fallen slightly behind schedule.
- We want a September opening but still waiting for confirmation.
- Spent £10.8m of the project funding so far.
- Ordered broadband service today and complete refit with new kit for IT services throughout the school will be available.
- Flooring has been ordered.
- Fixtures and fittings to be confirmed.
- It was confirmed that it has been written into the overall contract that work for local companies is agreed.
- Mr Smith confirmed that St Benedict’s and Mayfield have worked really closely together on the project including both governing bodies working together.
- Analysis of the associate and support staff services have been undertaken for both schools and all arrangements have been properly worked through in order to avoid redundancies and through staff natural wastage and retirements, etc.
- St Benedict’s in charge of the catering provision and providing this to Mayfield.

6 Cost of Music Tuition (Mrs Lowrey)

Covered in matters arising above.

7 Confirmation of next meeting

Tuesday 13th March at 5.00pm

Tour of new school to be arranged via Mrs Lowrey.

8 Any Other Business

Any issues parents who wish to make Mr Smith aware of, please contact the school via Mrs Green, PA to the Headteacher, on 01946 692275 or jean.green@st-benedicts.cumbria.sch.uk.

Mr Smith stated that if there are key members of staff parents wish to meet at these meetings, please let him know.

Mr Smith closed the meeting by thanking all for attending.

The meeting closed at 6.40pm.