

MINUTES

St. Olave's P.A. Form Rep Meeting

Date: Wednesday, 7th February 2018

Location : Main School Library

- **Attendees :** Mr Budds (Assistant Head), Arumina Saha, Antonio Saporito, Baoching Liu, Bisi , Brid Nunn, Charlotte Rutter, Charmaine Yip, Collette Gebbett, Elizabeth Garnham-jong, Fiona Lane, Gauri Grover, Harbi Kaur, Helen Huille, Ingrid Macpherson, Jane Bryan-Brown, Jenny Byrne, Justine Grant, Lara Clayden, Lin Limbrey, Martine Magnan, Rachael Peek, Rinku Chibber, Sarah Eldridge, Shiela Ruhomaulu, Sue Watts, Tiffany Barradell, Valli Puppala, Xiaohong Zhang, Winnie Leong and Chris
- **Apologies:** Charlotte Machado, Francesca Ludicello, Haleh Ryall, Helen Patel, Narinder Gill, Olga Evans, Paula McCabe, Pauline Skerrett, Sangeeta Mead, Sarah Cassidy and Seema Singh.

Questions for the school

1) Supporting Year 13

Following the tumultuous year experienced by many students in Year 13, parents would like to know if there are any plans to support the boys' mental well-being prior to their final A-level exams, such as Mindfulness sessions.

Answer:

- Mr Budds acknowledged that there is a lot going on for Year 13s – UCAS submissions, A levels, current Year 13s are going through reformed A levels, so more challenging at the moment.
- Access to Mindfulness sessions: Mrs Maxwell runs a 10 week programme after half term – all of Year 13 were offered invitations to participate but none chose to take up a place
- A Sixth Form Wellbeing talk was offered free of charge for Wellbeing week from teenage mental health expert, Alicia Drummond – sign up was so limited (single figures) that the talk was cancelled
- Mr Haines also runs the Year 13 lectures on Friday's which have a focus on 'Happy Lives' which also support a good mindset – these sessions are mandatory for Y13
- PSHE programme – also support offered on 'Revision time management', and there is also a mentoring programme
- **Mr Budds also mentioned an App called 'Headspace' which is readily available for all to download.**

2) Entrance to Cambridge University

How many Year 13 students applied for Cambridge in the last few years (2015, 2016, 2017 entries), how many got offers, how many got in?

Answer:

- 2015 – 33 Cambridge applications, 15 Cambridge offers, 13 went to Cambridge
- 2016 – 62 Cambridge applications, 28 Cambridge offers, 24 went to Cambridge
- 2017 – 69 Cambridge applications, 27 Cambridge offers, 21 went to Cambridge
- Uptake can sometimes be lower than the offers, if students fail to get their grades or if they choose not to take the place (as occasionally happens).

3) 6th Form

- i) **Broader range of subjects** -with such a large sixth form why does the school not offer a broader range of 'A' levels such as Psychology and Politics, Business etc?. It looks like the only new subject is Economics.

Answer:

- Economics is not the only new subject. There is also Classics and Further Maths
- There has been virtually no expressed interest in the subjects in question – Psychology, Politics, or Business studies.
- Costs to run new subjects in terms of teaching and room availability. There would also be an impact on staffing and rooms as they are both at capacity levels across the school.
- Mr Budds felt that the St Olave's offer compares favourably to 'BASS' (Boys' Academically Selective Schools) providers.

- ii) 6th Form **uniform** policy

Would it be possible to relax the strict uniform policy? While understanding the desire to maintain a formal working environment, majority of the students will be going to university where there is no dress code. In addition most work environments are more casual than the traditional suit/shirt/tie. The students are at an age where they want to experiment with their individuality – brown shoes/boots, crew neck jumpers, hair colour, piercings, jewellery etc

Answer:

- Mr Budds and the SLT, feel that the uniform policy allows for individuality around 'Suit, ties' etc, as it is left to the individual to decide colour, design etc.
- This question was also raised through the 6th form school council, with SLT, and the decision is to work with policy we have as this projects the chosen image for the school around smart, business wear that has a more formal approach.

- Lots of discussion around 'brown shoes' and viability, with decision being made to stick with black polished shoes which works for most.
- iii) School policy -not allowing the wearing of scarves and gloves around the school. This cannot be good for their health particularly for those who have classes off the quad : many students are feeling the extreme cold weather in school. Could the school re-think this policy for the sake of keeping the students warm this winter.

Answer:

- There is a 'summer code' and albeit no formal 'winter code'
- With the extreme weather at the moment, if there are any pupils who for medical reasons need to wear any extras then discuss with form teacher, or the school will otherwise take a general view to permit clothing to keep warm if weather conditions become very severe.
- Suggested thermal vests etc as undergarments

4) Consultation

Can a summary of the consultation be provided and what is the next step

Answer:

- Results of consultation are being collated, and several themes are coming through.

Themes:

- Good that there is much more parental transparency
- Good that 9's and 5's are now being counted in the new points system
- View across those who responded that 64 points is too high
- Chairman of the admissions committee is in discussion with the Governors over the next week, with final decisions being made by 28th Feb, with a view to sharing the decisions by 1st March

5) Homework & Self studying

There appears to be too much of homework and self-study and less of teaching. Are the teachers doing the job?

Answer:

- Yes, absolutely the teachers are doing the job.
- Up to GCSE there is a more 'spoon fed' approach to teaching within the school and less opportunity for independent study
- Years 12 and 13 – Sixth form is a transition to life beyond the school, and it is important to cultivate 'self-directed' learning
- The school seeks to create a balance in Sixth Form study of different styles of learning.

- Some departments deliberately set work to be done prior to the lesson so that initial exposure to topics is independent, and lessons act as consolidation/extension. Often there are great gains to be made with this approach in terms of how much progress is achieved in class, as well as in terms of pupil autonomy.

6) Exercise books/sheets of paper

Why are the pupils having files instead of books? Is it to make carrying 30 sheets of paper instead of 30 books for the teachers?

Answer:

- The decision has nothing to do with ease of transportation for teachers.
- Sixth Form study is more often about files and notes than exercise books, although some subjects do still use exercise books in the Sixth Form
- There are some files and notes up to GCSE, where the school is 'taking the stabilisers off', so getting pupils ready for Sixth Form.
- Again the transition to notes is a kind of preparation for university study, as well as a means of ensuring that handouts and printouts (of which there are more in Sixth Form study) and pupil work can sit side by side in a file, rather than being chopped up and glued into books.

7) Curriculum

When was the last curriculum review and how often are they carried out?

Answer:

- They are carried out annually, with the Governing Body, where an audit of subjects is undertaken to ensure that St Olave's offers a broad range of subjects
- The last curriculum review where change happened was in 2012, when Spanish, Theatre Studies and Astronomy were cut from the curriculum.
- Question asked: why are there differing boards of OCA, Edexcel etc, and that answer was that the faculties have looked at all boards and have settled on the ones offered in order to choose the courses most suited to pupils' interests, abilities and aspirations, and to get the best learning outcomes.

8) AS Level

What is the rationale of studying an AS level in the sixth form which will be dropped at the end of the lower sixth? Regardless of the academic ability of the students, is it not in their best interests to concentrate on three A-Level subjects supplemented by a more expansive elective programme? Is it all about UMS points? Many other comparable local schools have restructured their Sixth Form offering following the introduction of linear A Levels with pupils now just concentrating on three A Levels.

Answer:

- This is a 'hot topic' at the moment and won't be fully agreed until there is a new Head appointed
- Mr Budds questioned if UMS points actually meant UCAS points?

- It is about the right offer for A levels to support pupils' interests, abilities and aspirations and several models are out there. Some schools offer 3 A levels in both years, (3-3), some do 4 subjects in year 12 and drop to 3 in year 13 (St Olaves 4-3), and Henrietta Barnett and Queen Elizabeth's Barnett (similar schools to Saint Olave's) support 4 subjects from Year 12 through to 4 A levels (4-4).
- 3-3 denies the option of a change of direction post AS
- 4-3 protects our at risk subjects, and offers a degree of breadth for students

9) Year 10 & Year 11 - importance

- i) Are the boys aware and been told that Year 10 is the crucial learning year for GCSE?

Answer:

- Yes.
- The boys know and teachers know and tell the boys that year 10 is critical, hoping also some maturity sets in during transition from 10 to year 11.

- ii) How does the half GCSE or Short course works? What does it mean? Will this be taken into account when calculating the points for 6th form entry? Will they be awarded the full grades or is there a threshold eg the best that can be achieve is eg 'C' or the equivalent

Answer:

- Yes you do get a grade out of the half GCSE (RS)
- It is not a full GCSE so the mark can't be put in your total 'points pot'
- You can take it as a full GCSE

- iii) As year 10 and year 11 are the crucial years, is it possible to have 3 parent teachers meeting instead of 2 especially in Year 10. By the time we have the second meeting or receive the second report we are almost to the end of the learning year, will there be sufficient time for catch up if the boys are in trouble or below target?

Answer:

- There are 3 interactions over year 10 and 11 with parents, pupil and teachers.
- Year 10 – parents evening is the start of the summer term
- Year 11 – parents evening is at the start of November, with a further year 11 interview with a senior teacher/parent/pupil in February, following the mocks
- There are also 2 interim reports in Year 10 - one in Autumn and one in Spring
- School feels this is the right balance and if there are any concerns then these should be directed to the individual teacher or the Head of Year

- iv) English GCSE - Will the novels/play studied in year 10 be revisited in Year 11 (esp. An Inspector Calls as the students seem to have covered it in a short period of time and do not have many notes)?

Answer:

- Yes, novels/plays will be revisited
 - Each student should have comprehensive notes in good time for their revision
 - Speak to the individual teacher if any concerns
- v) Would it not be logical to have GCSE mocks before the Christmas break instead of after - if the boys are not prepared, it will give them a shock and hopefully sufficient time to revise during the Christmas break?

Answer:

- The autumn term is particularly long (15 weeks) – pupils are generally very tired by the end of it, and pupils will not get the most out of the exams if they are exhausted.
- Mocks have always been straight after Christmas as it is felt this is a good time as the majority of the course of study is completed. If they are held too early in the Autumn term then there could be insufficient course coverage for these exams to be effective as mocks.
- It was also felt that pre-Christmas the school calendar was too busy with Festival week, cabaret, concerts etc which would mean a massive logistical 'setting up' and 'setting down' of the exam conditions i.e. desk and chair layouts
- It was acknowledged that this year Christmas was less than two weeks, which didn't feel adequate, but the term time is set by the Local Authority and not the school.
- It was also acknowledged that the Christmas break should be a balance of revision and family time – some parents felt this was harder to achieve with some of the uncertainty of admissions into Sixth Form.

10) Year 7

- i) **Geography** -can the teacher recommend any means to help students study / practice and prepare for IPM?

Answer:

- Yes, Mr Budds felt that that should be happening for all IPM's via the individual teachers.

- ii) **KS3 CGP subject range** - can subject teachers recommend revision books in the CGP KS3 , or from any other educational publishers?

Answer:

- Yes, there are a range of study books available, some via sQuid
- Please deal direct with individual teachers.

- iii) **French Club** - French is new to some boys: is there any possibility for a French club that will enable the boys to learn the language?

Answer:

- Mr Budds thought this was a great idea and will take this up with the MFL Prefects to see if this is something that they could set up for junior years.

- iv) **Choice of Foreign Language** - there isn't a lot of choice with foreign languages. Previously, there was a choice to take Spanish. Why has that changed?

Answer:

- Mr Budds mentioned that there is still German, French and Latin offered as a foreign language.
- The choice to remove Spanish was in 2012 was financially driven, and the A-Level demand was low.
- A parent questioned if that was accurate as this parent felt there was a high interest in Spanish with up to 60 students wanting to take at GCSE, so could not understand how the 'demand was low'. School data shows that the number of students taking Spanish at GCSE in any cohort was in fact much lower and the A-Level uptake was consistently the lowest or second lowest in the curriculum, never rising into double figures.
- A parent also questioned if the Spanish option could be looked at again for GCSE/A-Level. Mr Budds advised that the topic could be discussed by the next Curriculum and Personnel Committee of the Governing Body.

11) Homework / Virtual Learning

- i) Could parents have a session to access the virtual learning environment on school's website?

Answer:

- Mr Budds agreed that this was a beneficial idea, and asked if parents could raise this on the Parent's questionnaire which will be going out in the middle of February.
- ii) Can the school organise means of finding out what homework is set and when they are due? For example, some schools use 'show my homework'.

Answer:

- Mr Budds answered that a representative from 'Satchel' (the company who produce 'Show My Homework') had visited the school on 2nd Jan to present a demonstration of the system to all teaching staff.
- Heads of Faculty and teachers in all departments discussed after the presentation and fed back to SLT that they did not feel this system would work well for St Olave's.
- Planners should be used for all boys to update homework and when homework is due, as this works currently, and should be signed by parent/pupil and teachers.
- If there are any particular concerns in any classes re homework, then please contact the relevant teacher or form teacher

12) IPMs

- i) Set up - can there be a week set aside for the IPMs instead of randomly and no homework set in that week in order for pupils to have adequate revision. Currently, homework and IPM revision go alongside which appears stressful.

Answer:

- A parent in the room mentioned that in Year 8, there were 10 IPMs in one week and felt this was too much.
 - Mr Budds mentioned that monitoring and timetabling IPMs over 10 different subjects and 10 different teachers was not logistically feasible.
 - Mr Budds clarified that there is a natural tendency for IPMs to happen 2/3 weeks prior to any half term.
 - Update: the number and frequency of IPMs is currently under review by faculties
- ii) Syllabus/Revision books – can the syllabus and/or suitable books be told to the boys one weekend in advance so that they can be better prepared.

Answer:

- Mr Budds answered that this would depend again on which year group and which subject
 - For exam subjects, teachers are good at reiterating the syllabus and revision books so that should be happening.
- iii) can the IPM papers be sent home, in particular the Maths, so that the parents can see the mistakes?

Answer:

- In recent years this has not been practical for the school in exam classes, as there are a limited number of test papers to draw from in reformed subjects with new specifications, but the situation will ease as time goes by and as the specifications bed in. The school's current position is also based on the fact that different classes might use the same IPM at different times, and if they are in the public domain and get back to pupils who have not yet taken them, then it compromises the fairness and validity of the assessment.
- iv) Several IPMs are set in one week and the students are given lots of homework to hand back in the same week. Could this not be better co-ordinated so the students can spend their time revising for the IPMs rather than trying to meet homework deadlines. This would also help to relieve some of the pressure off the students, especially those in the more senior years.

Answer:

- Initially this was felt that it was question i) rephrased. However, there was a parent in the room who said that in Year 12, her son had had 4 IPMs in one week as well as 12 pieces of homework to hand in, and that the student was struggling to complete both.
- Mr Budds felt that this did appear to be over the top and far larger than average – and asked was this a one off or a regular occurrence. He reiterated if students are concerned they should talk to their Head of Year or Form Tutor

13) Any action taken by school.

Some Year 9 boys are taking stuff from Year 7 boys and hiding them. One of the boys in Year 7 has had trainers taken, and he later found them thrown over a wall in the PE changing room. Mr Kenward has been notified but we are unaware if any action has been taken

Answer:

- Mr Budds assured those present that if Mr Kenward is aware, he will have followed this up as far as is possible and is very experienced at doing so, but it is hard to 'pin down' this kind of behaviour.
- Mr Budds reiterated that older boys should be more responsible and have mutual respect for all students and that this was a message which was regularly reinforced in school assemblies.
- Mr Budds will follow up with Mr Kenward to confirm the actions from this issue
- A parent at the meeting raised the issue that her son had a valuable tennis racquet taken on the last day of the term. This equipment could not be secured within the current lockers, and had been deliberately stolen as a consequence.
- Mr Budds will discuss further with the PE Department how belongings can be kept secure when the boys are playing rugby/football etc.

14) Lack of intervention by a particular teacher

Answer:

- Mr Budds felt it would be inappropriate to comment on this particular question as it contained several allegations about the working practices of a named member of staff (hence the removal of the full question from the minutes) and asked why it had been included in this open forum, commenting that it was not helpful, reasonable or fair to raise unverified allegations of this sort in this context which were potentially damaging to that member of staff.
- Mr Budds reiterated that the school has clear protocols in place to raise concerns of this kind, and any issue similar to this should be dealt with immediately through Mr Rees, Mr Espejo, or Mr Budds direct if you have not had a reasonable outcome with an individual teacher. Questions of this kind should not and must not be raised through the Form Rep meeting.

15) SIMS notification

How do teachers /school ensure that SIMS (the School Information Management System) is up to date with the latest timetable? It seems a teacher did not realise there was a class and did not turn up. That teacher has told the boys on previous occasions to get on with their work should she be late. On this occasion the boys decided to do their own revision although some wanted to go to inform Reception. They were told in future if they do not inform Reception, they will be giving a detention. What is the correct procedure, and is this express or implied?

Answer:

- Mr Budds commented that there had been some staffing challenges due to illness and that there had been some timetable changes due to this. He trusted this was just a 'settling down'

period for this particular issue as pupils and staff familiarised themselves with the revised timetable.

16) Voluntary Fund

What is happening to the voluntary fund that the school have received? How is the money spent and where? What is the total in this pot? Can the school provide clarity on it?

Answer:

- Mr Budds acknowledged that there was a considerable amount (£1.4m) in the voluntary fund and that part of this sum would be spent in a programme of classroom refurbishment across the school. He further clarified that £350,000 of this figure was a committed balance solely for use on school trips.
- A letter will be sent to all parents detailing the renovation works and acknowledging that this money will be used for the purpose it was intended. A letter has now gone out to parents detailing, classroom refurbishment, painting, safety issues around the stairwells, external fencing, lighting, toilets etc
- The building has also been listed as a **Grade II** building and one parent suggested there could be extra grants via English Heritage. Mr Budds will look into this.
- This question raised a lot of emotions about parents supporting the Voluntary Fund in good faith hoping that the money would be used appropriately within the school during the time that their children were at the school.
- Parents of Year 13 pupils felt that they had probably contributed the most over the last 7 years and their children will not benefit as much as those who are remaining, as they are finishing in the school this summer. Some also commented that they had been contacted extensively to encourage regular contributions.
- Year 13 parents (who have had students in the school from year 7) have asked for an acknowledgment and apology about the mishandling of the fund particularly as they will have contributed the most and seen no benefit.
- They feel (along with other parents in other years) that they have been giving money under false pretences, and some year 13 parents stated that they lost Drama and Spanish during their time in St Olave's due to funding, when there was apparently money to support these specifics.
- Parents have asked if any money from the fund has ever been spent and what that was, and could there be an independent audit of how the fund has been managed. Mr Budds will discuss with the new Business Manager when they are in post.
- A late suggestion by a parent post the meeting suggested that maybe the Voluntary Fund and PA funding should be amalgamated to become one PA fund that is transparent. The current PA set up and funds are fully auditable and transparent.

17) Appointment of Head and Business Manager

- i) Is there any progress regarding the appointment of a permanent Head? When is the starting date likely to be? Will the process involve some of the pupils? (I suspect so but it would be interesting to know how they will do this.)
- ii) Is there any news on the appointment of the Business Manager?

Answer:

- There are discussions taking place with the Governing body and with the Diocese about recruiting the new permanent Head. There is a real desire to get this right and the process will not be rushed. This is a work in progress and is a priority, but with contracts etc, a September appointment would not seem likely (Update: the earliest realistic date when a new Head might take up the post is January 2019).
- Business Manager – there have been some very credible applicants, interviews will be taking place shortly, and the school hopes to have someone in post after Easter. (Update: Mrs Liz James has been appointed and will take up the post in April 2018)

18) On-going Investigation

What is the status of the ongoing investigation? Is there a date Bromley Council is likely to complete the investigation? When is it likely to be reported on? When will we get the results?

Answer:

- Christine Whatford has now met with everyone who requested to meet her, and has been collating information since November.
- There is not yet a definitive timescale of when the report will be finalised and published, but Mr Budds did state that the report is 'Bromley's report' and not 'owned' by the school. He is under the impression that the report will be made public by the council. Parents do hope that the report will be publicly made available so that everyone can see its findings.

19) Short Xmas holiday

It was not even 2 weeks long. This is not enough time to recharge after a long and arduous term – why was this? N.B. other state schools had longer (perhaps using inset days)

Answer:

- Previously mentioned about the length of the Christmas break – not a full two weeks and for Year 11's straight into mock GCSE's.
- Mr Budds recognised that it was shorter than previous years, after a long Autumn school term, but that the dates are set by the local authority, Bromley, and not the school.
- When asked why other secondary schools in the borough had a full fortnight, Mr Budds mentioned that the others are all academies and have greater power of self-determination of term dates.
- Parents asked what benefit 'Academy status' would have for the school, with Mr Budds answering that a lot of the perceived benefits were notional now that capital funding grants appeared to have dried up – there was some push back about why would the school might want to convert, with a parent asking would the parents be consulted about any change. Mr Budds replied that it would be a matter for the governing body to discuss and determine.

20) Infestation – has there been infestation of rodent/rats in the school and, if so, has this infestation been eradicated?

Answer:

- Mr Budds stated that there had been isolated incidents of rodents on site on and off over the last few years, but that it could not be deemed an infestation. He advised that pupils could help minimise further rodent incursions by disposing of all food properly and keeping lockers clean.

21) Toilets – the toilets are in poor shape; is the school going to mend or replace some faulty ones?

Answer:

- This will be picked up in the refurbishment of the school from the Voluntary fund.

22) Lunch time queues –

- i) Would it be possible to create an early lunch pass for those boys doing lunchtime clubs or music rehearsals? Often the boys go to the cafeteria after their club and find that there is no food left, or there is simply no time to eat. At other schools children attending lunchtime clubs have early lunch passes. Would this work at St Olaves too?

{This subject has been raised in Jan 2015, Oct 2015, Oct 2017}

Answer:

- Early passes would be impractical owing to the volume of students who would need a 'pass' as they are involved in clubs etc, and that most students do in fact join a club/study period over lunch
 - Mr Budds mentioned that a colour coding approach might work on particular days, but an audit would need to be taken of numbers involved to assess feasibility.
 - Follow up: after an audit by Heads of Year showed that on all days at least 50 boys would want and have the right to go to the front of the queue under such a system (and over 90 would have this wish and this right on a Wednesday!) it was felt that there was no practicable way to make this system run.
- ii) Sufficient hot food - a parent said that their child has to rely on even just cake occasionally as the son has been missing out on hot lunch due to long queue and/or the hot food finished by 1pm. What can be done to ensure that there is sufficient time given to ALL the students for queuing and finishing their meal and also there is sufficient quantity prepared for ALL.

Answer:

- Mr Budds asked if this was a particular day. He commented that it is impossible for the catering manager to predict what will 'sell through' more quickly on any given day, and that to provide an overrun of 'contingency stock' would prove wasteful.
- Mr Budds is surprised that 'there is only cake' as on the numerous occasion where he has arrived late for lunch service (sometimes past 1.15), he could always find some hot food albeit sometimes particular options had already sold out.
- On no occasion had he ever seen "only cake" for sale.

23) Interim Leadership Team

– some parents would like to thank the interim leadership team for doing a great job of being more positively communicative, open and modern and to support them in continuing that process of listening, responding and connecting in a more human way with the students and parents.

Acknowledged by Mr Budds.

- **Any other business**

- **Spring Ball** - All class reps were asked if they could support/co-ordinate names from each of their respective classes for the Spring Ball.
- **6th Form Room – removal of some tables and chairs at the entrance of the room.** – Mr Budds had told the 6th Formers to keep that table /area tidy but it was still a 'rubbish' collection point. He is happy to return them provided the 6th formers are willing to keep the area tidy and clear of rubbish.

- **Date of next meeting & meeting close.**

Wednesday 9th May at 19:45.....please keep this date free...