

Minutes: St Olave's PA Form Reps meeting

Date: Thursday 9 May 2019

Location: Main school library

Attendees from the school: Mr Budds (Assistant Head), Fatima Zahra, Zey Kagan, Sangeeta Mead, Arumina Saha, Baoching Liu, Elizabeth Garnham-Jong, Charlotte Rutter, Sarah Cassidy, Tiffany Barradell, Rinku Chibber, Martine Magnan, Seema Singh, Malini Rajendran, Laura Covill and Winnie Leong

Apologies: Haili Cui, Bisi Akpomuje, Charmaine Joshua, Manish Vadukul, Harbi Kaur, Sue Watts, Brid Nunn, Vicky Meeham, Colette Gebbett and Justine Grant

Q1. Brexit

What is the school's strategy for Brexit and are teachers (of EU origin) leaving? How many teachers are from EU and holding EU passport?

Answer: Mr Budds

We don't have any members of staff with EU passports. This is, therefore, not an issue at present. We will monitor the situation. The future of Britain with respect to its relationship with the European Union remains uncertain.

We will not experience a shortfall in teachers as none of our teachers currently hold EU passports, including those teaching European languages.

Form reps: There was some discussion around the benefits of having native speakers as foreign language teachers. However, there was also much support for the current teachers based on their excellent ability to teach these subjects.

Q2. Mugging

What actions were taken or steps have been taken by the school after the mugging involving a sixth form student, on Park Avenue, where he was robbed of his mobile?

Answer: Mr Budds

Brid Nunn asked the question in her capacity as school governor. I will read out the response I sent her:

"The incident took place at lunchtime on Wednesday 13th February. We were notified of the incident that afternoon and Mr Espejo sent the following message to all staff on the same day before the end of the school day:

Please could you highlight to students that a mugging took place at the junction between Park Avenue and Sevenoaks Road earlier this afternoon, the police have been informed and have advised that pupils should be mindful of how they are travelling and to beware of their surroundings.

Mr Haines spoke with one of the boys affected, and with another boy in the Year group who had been with the two boys whose phones were stolen to gather information and to verify that they themselves were okay.

For Years 7 - 11 the incident was discussed in tutor briefing the following morning (Thursday 14th February) and the importance of sharing advice with pupils on how to stay safe in public was emphasised; that same morning the Sixth Form had an assembly with a section dedicated to staying safe in public and highlighting what had happened. Practical advice was offered in terms of how to minimise vulnerability, particularly when off site at lunch time as a Sixth Form privilege (which is when the incident happened), as well as the need to be vigilant. I emphasised availability of support for those affected.

I made a follow up call to the families of both boys who were mugged (the boys themselves were not in school, for obvious reasons) to see how they were doing, to explain the availability of counselling support after so upsetting an incident (which has been sought by those affected) and (very much as a lower priority relative to the previous two) to make practical arrangements in terms of notifying teachers/dealing with work missed owing to absence. I was also able to speak with one of the boys on the phone at the time, albeit the other was resting after a sleepless night."

Parents and students were notified of the incident at a level that we felt was appropriate. Mrs Maxwell sent a message to all parents regarding the incident advising them that "*staff have reminded students of the needs to be vigilant and stay safe. Please could you also reiterate this message.*"

We have also conducted site risk assessments and have evacuation policies in place as well as methods of monitoring onsite intrusions.

There are ongoing initiatives to promote awareness of crime and mugging and how to prevent it.

Q3. School trip arrangements

Year 7 will have Boulogne day trip on 22/5, to arrive at school at 5am and finish late (7-8pm?). The next day, 23/5, they will have Classics/Maths trip to Roman Villa in Kent. The boys will be very tired on 23/5 and will not learn and enjoy the trip as both the trips will be starting very early at 8:15am.

Subsequent question (from one of the form reps): could the school do anything about the scheduling of a biology trip that clashed with Oxbridge Open Days?

Answer: Mr Budds

Unfortunately it is impossible to satisfy everyone in making booking arrangements. The centre (that is used for the biology trip) had already been booked before the Oxbridge Open Days were announced. This year, unfortunately the dates clash. The booking for the centre that is used for the biology trip is usually later than the Oxbridge Open Days.

Regarding the Year 7 trips, there are reasons why this happened this year. For next year, we will make every effort to try to ensure this doesn't happen again.

Q4. Mandarin as a language option

Mandarin class is getting very popular in many secondary schools, will St Olave's consider the option of introducing Mandarin as a language option?

Answer: Mr Budds

We will be conducting a curriculum review next year and will seek the views of all stakeholders—parents, staff, parents and pupils. As with any decision regarding the possibility of additional subjects, the school would have to consider the cost implications as well as the potential dilution of interest in other subjects, some of which are already running at a low level of uptake. For classes to be cost-effective at A-Level, there need to be a minimum of 14 to a class.

Suggestion from a form rep: could alternative languages such as Mandarin be offered as a twilight option as happens at Newstead Wood?

Answer: Mr Budds

I am due to discuss various matters with my counterpart at Newstead Wood and will discuss this as well.

Q5. Pedestrians crossing on Sevenoaks Road

Could the school please suggest the use of reflective coats during winter months?

Answer: Mr Budds

Students receive regular reminder regarding the importance of being consciously visible when crossing the road. Whilst the uniform policy specifies a plain dark coat, we will be happy to recommend reflective flashes on coats in the interests of pupil safety in the winter months..

Q6. Goddington Lane – One-way System

Could the school please ask the Council to make Goddington Lane a one-way system and to install light and mirrors?

Answer: Mr Budds

We could ask but it is unlikely that we will be successful; the anticipated feasibility and desirability of this from a council perspective is, we believe, limited.

There is streetlighting and there is a mirror on Goddington Lane; there is also a speed limit of 20mph. Pupils and parents should not be using Goddington Lane in any case unless with prior permission, or on open days etc.

Further questions from form reps: what measures does the school have in place re: road safety awareness? There was much discussion about how the Year 7s and 8s are sometimes less aware of this.

Answer: Mr Budds

We have a road safety officer who visits the school regularly and students are advised in assemblies and via other routes to be careful on the roads outside the school.

Further suggestion from form reps: perhaps this could be part of the Year 7 induction Year 7s.?

Answer: Mr Budds

This is definitely possible. I will share this idea with Mrs Maxwell and Mr Wearn, who will be the Head of Year 7 next year. Mr Budds has been advised that the borough Road Safety Officer, Val Currie, delivers a powerful PSHE lesson to the whole of Year 7 on the importance of road safety.

Further question from form reps: could we install a Zebra crossing in the area outside the Park Avenue gates

Mr Budds stated that even if we were to obtain council permission for such a crossing, there would be large potential cost implications (upwards of £20,000). The single greatest hazard to which pupils are subject outside the Park Avenue gates remains parents who drop their sons off and then undertake three point turns immediately in front of the gates. Parents have been repeatedly asked not to do this in front of the school gates via Mr Rees' newsletter and other means.

Q7. Catching up on missing lessons

Students missing classes due to music and sports – is there another way of catching up with the topics missed, apart from relying on fellow students?

Answer: Mr Budds

Students are able to ask teachers. Students should always ask teachers and they will be provided with relevant advice and/or resources, such as worksheets related to work that they may have missed. They should borrow books on the relevant subject from a friend and ask to share notes.

Q8. Grammar School Funding

What is the current situation of grammar school funding and what is the shortfall? What are the plans to bridge the gap?

Answer: Mr Budds

Is this a system-specific or school-specific question? In terms of grammar schools, we have proportionally fewer boys from backgrounds that attract additional funding (e.g. free school meals or special needs).

As a school, we have also lost the additional c£300,000 a year that came from being a specialist Maths and Computing school.

As to specific plans to bridge the gap, the largest item in terms of our running costs is staffing. Maximising timetable efficiencies can create savings for the school and the school is working hard to do this. This can be done, for instance, but exploring the allocation of staff to specific duties e.g. whether it is the best allocation of resources for a highly qualified teacher in a particular specialist area to be supervising Small Hall studies. We also need to achieve financial efficiencies through optimising pupil-teacher ratios without detriment to the quality of teaching and learning.

The general approach is to limit costs and explore other ways of bringing in more revenue. We are exploring lettings opportunities and other initiatives.

There is, of course, all the funding work that's driven by the PA.

The voluntary fund has also proven a crucial income stream for the school, albeit the percentage of parents contributing has diminished over the last 18 months, with associated impact on the amount of funds raised via this route. Governors and SLT are mindful of the historic sensitivities around the administration of the voluntary fund and are working on a way forward which recognises parental concerns.

Q9. Activity week

*Too many school trips during activity week, could these be staggered?
Can these be done outside the activity week; this will mean there's no point having an activities week?*

Further question from form reps: If there are trips on four out of five days and if the child doesn't want to go for two out four would that be acceptable?

Answer: Mr Budds

There are occasionally students who opt out of voluntary trips, but it is rare in Activities Week, and the boys who do so are felt to miss out on valuable experiences and opportunities – not just for learning, but to socialise with their peers in a different context. The school is always keen to support those who feel that they cannot participate owing to financial hardship and is committed to ensuring parity of opportunity for those who have such need. Those who do opt out of particular trips in Activities Weeks are given something meaningful or enjoyable to do like joining another activity with another year group or class taking place in the school e.g. joining a samba class or watching a visiting theatrical company perform.

Q10. Parents' evening

Could there be a bi-annual parents' evening?

Answer: Mr Budds

There are limits on the amount of "directed time" during which schools can ask staff to be present for evening events, and to double the amount of parents' evenings would breach these limits. So the short answer is "No".

We have a responsibility as a school to honour directed time requirements; addressing issues of staff workload and wellbeing remains a high priority at the school, and the issue is frequently in the headlines, is at the forefront of the agendas of teaching unions and is enshrined now within the new Ofsted framework.

For Year 11, there is an additional pro bono one to one interview in the Spring term as well as an 'options' evening in February. Colleagues are always ready to respond to specific concerns or questions raised by parents.

We also hold additional parents' evenings for students who have the greatest need in Years 11 and 13. These were pro bono and outside of directed time. If this was upscaled across the entire year group that would be unworkable.

Q11. Progress via email

Are teachers happy to update parents on progress via email?

Answer: Mr Budds

If the question is around regular additional data drops, then the answer is "No". However, colleagues are very willing to engage with parents and respond to reasonable enquiries and concerns.

Any other business

- Laura Covill shared initiatives by the PA to build a GDPR-compliant database of parent volunteers and encouraged form reps to ask parents in each form to confirm they were happy to have their data stored on the database.
- A question was raised around the departure of Mr Davis– there were concerns that his departure was pre-study leave for exam classes and it was a difficult time for students. Mr Budds responded to say that the school prioritised provision for exam classes in the wake of his departure.
- Winnie thanked Mr Budds and all the form rep for another successful year and to those who will be leaving St Olave's, a very big thank you for all the years of being a form rep and to those returning, see you next academic year.

Date of next meeting & meeting close

- TBC but likely to take place earlier in October before half-term on a Thursday.