



St. Olave's Grammar School Parents' Association Form Reps Meeting

Autumn Term - Thursday 12th October 2023 7.30-8.30PM

1 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Welcome all Form Reps to the first Form Reps meeting for this academic year. Thank you to all who have taken the time to submit their questions within the requested timeframe and emailed their RSVPs as courtesy to other attendees.

2 Questions for the school

2.1 Appreciation

2.1.1 From 9N - *Kids seem to like their form tutor Miss Prestipino.*

2.2 Transition

2.2.1 From 7B - *Thanks to the school for such an excellent transition to secondary school. My son in particular really appreciated the March taster and July transition days. He has settled very well. As a parent I have also appreciated the meetings/clear information. Finally a thank you to the PA for organising the quiz night last week. Best wishes, A parent*

Appreciated that it was a smooth transition and it is nice to hear it went well.

2.3 School Houses and Merits

2.3.1 From 7B – My son showed me an excel sheet of merit certificates students already achieved in year 7. It seems like there is a big gap between Harvard and the other houses. Some kids already reaching points like 51, 50, 48 etc. Harvard is also the over all winners for the last 4 years apparently. Are the kids in Harvard chosen accordingly with the admission test results, like top scores? And as I am new to school, I was wondering if it could be explained how these merit certificates are given and why there is already a gap between Harvard and the other houses? Thank you

The students are not in any way allocated to each House according to the admissions test results. They have been allocated in each house according to their expressed preferences in terms of Modern Foreign Language.

Mr Budds has spoken with the teacher concerned re merits in 7H who has rightly recognised the high achievement of pupils through rewards but recognises that other teachers typically take a slightly more conservative approach to multiple merits. Work is currently ongoing as a school to ensure greater consistency around the issue of rewards such as merits in Key Stage 3 and commendations in Key Stage 4.

2.4 Homework

2.4.1 From 7B - It was noticeable that one week the homework was given late by at least 3 subjects (i.e a day later or so on teams). It can make it a bit harder for the boys to stay on top of it when it all comes together at once. Obviously realise that it is very difficult for the teachers juggling so many classes etc! *Having said that I been really impressed by what is set. It has been thoughtful and I've seen my son enjoy doing it!*

Pupils have a homework timetable which staff are required to follow. Teachers are required to set the homework verbally in class; some may choose to also write it on the board for the pupils to copy down; teachers may also share the resources for the H/W on Teams or post it on Teams as an assignment to be completed and submitted via Teams (but it must always have been set



verbally in class in the first instance to allow boys to ask any questions of clarification). Please let Mr Budds know if H/W timetable is not being followed or if it is not being set in class.

The HW timetable is shared with pupils by their Form Tutor for them to enter into their planners (and also posted on the year group team as well). It is not shared directly with parents.

2.4.2 From 9M - How long should the teacher give for homework submission? Twice for biology students were given 3 days notice to submit homework. Sometimes it is difficult if there are other tests and other homework deadlines.

Homework submission timing – Teachers are asked not to set H/W for completion overnight; any notice to complete homework beyond 24 hr is considered reasonable time for pupils to complete it. It is advisable to do the homework on the day it is set whenever possible in order to prevent HomeWorks building up and becoming unmanageable.

2.5 School Communication

2.5.1 From 7C - A communication channel for the New Year 7 parents to clarify schedules/ check requirements/ updates etc (e.g. a central link on the website) for the initial half term. For example, many parents did not know that children could be collected earlier from school on Wednesday, when after school rugby was cancelled.

It is difficult to set up a separate channel for communication for Year 7 as there are many variables. The school uses a centralised email system to communicate with the parents. As for the day-to-day activities, the onus is on the children to relay information to parents. The reported miscommunication about the after-school rugby being cancelled was a one-off event.

Re rugby on 13th September – Mr Kenward confirms this was shared with pupils via Teams and boys were told this in Games. He suggested that if parents want access to these communications, they can ask their son to enable them to access their Teams messages.

2.6 Lunch/ Catering

2.6.1 From 7B - for the reps meeting 7B could we find out about the catering? I think the details on the school website are out of date. I know there is theoretically a three week menu but I don't see any way of working out which week we are e.g. was the half week beginning 30/8 week 1 or not? I did contact the catering company direct via their details on the website - probably over two weeks ago now - but had no reply. Thank you!

It is not in keeping with the school's expectations that a parent has not received a response from the caterers; we have raised this issue with the operations manager at The Pantry, but have not had a response regarding the non-communication by the time of the meeting. We have had a response in terms of the new menu. The reason for the delay of publishing the new menu is that The Pantry have employed a new development chef. The new menu will go online on the school website shortly.

We are discussing with the catering company whether dates can be added to the PDF of the three weekly menus posted online – this is unlikely to be resolved by half term but the enquiry is now with the management of the catering company.

2.6.2 From 9M – Issue with the availability of vegetarian food - Over the last 2 years, I have been consistently informed that if you go to the canteen after finishing a lunch-time club, then there are no vegetarian options left in the canteen and the kids resort to eating unhealthy items like crisps or cookies. Can I please request enough vegetarian options are available so kids don't suffer as a result of that?



2.6.3 Even when they do get vegetarian options the quality of food is not good. What can be done to address this?

Issues with vegetarian food - Mr Budds mentioned that in his regular personal experience and from what he is told by the catering company and serving staff, there is always vegetarian food left at the end of the lunch time whether pupils are in need of a hot meal or a cold meal. If there is any particular date/dates this has happened then he needs to know and he can feedback it to the catering company. The school is considering its longer-term options regarding catering.

2.7 Lockers

2.7.1 From 7B – My son still doesn't have / use a locker. He says there are spare ones but they are broken. He says he doesn't want to use one as he is worried he won't be able to get his books back out (as someone in his form had trouble). How can I (as a parent) encourage him to use the lockers?

The pupil should in the first instance raise the concerns with his Form Tutor or with the prefect allocated to the Form; they will be able to talk through with him and hopefully reassure him about the concerns. As a parent, you can choose appropriate padlocks that your child is comfortable with. The Form Tutor is the first point of contact regarding the lockers. About the broken lockers, I will investigate this tomorrow.

Re lockers in Room 6 – The Premises Team are repairing three broken lockers today (the day after the meeting) and meeting the Form Tutor to explain the two different handles/opening systems of the lockers in the room so that she can share this information with the pupils (as several lockers there which are currently unused work fine, but are not a simple "turn and it opens" mechanism - but once you know the knack, they are easy enough to use). Re lockers throughout the school, the Premises Team review the whole entire stock of lockers around the school annually for their condition/usability every summer holiday. All lockers were deemed fit to use when the term started. If there are issues around particular lockers which have arisen since, pupils need to report this to Reception who will share this with the Premises Team – they will then repair or, if necessary, replace.

2.8 Exam Test Papers

2.8.1 From 10M - None of exam test papers are shared for home, give kids less time to learn from the mistakes. This was raised during Parent Teacher meeting but nothing came back.

Typically, exam test papers don't go home as a rule. One reason for this is so the papers are not put into any wider public domain. After a test, pupils will always get feedback on what and how to improve. If the pupil doesn't get the feedback, then it is a problem which needs to be reported.

2.9 Cleanliness

2.9.1 From 7B - Soap in Toilets – My son has explained that soap often runs out by lunchtime / afternoon in the toilets he visits. I've given him small bottles of antibacterial gel and soap. I've also refilled them this term already! Who should this be reported to as conscious that flu /covid is around?

Toilets are cleaned twice a day; there are cleaners working during the day every day. Sometimes we do have instances of boys being silly in the toilet and leaving a mess with loo rolls or hand towels or something of that sort. Occasionally, we get boys who are wasting the soap and it runs out; more often with soap dispensers we get blockages. Typically, those soap dispenser nozzles are checked daily. If there is any issue where there is a blockage or soap runs out, the boys can notify the reception and reception will contact the premises team to resolve the issues.

2.9.2 From 9N - Cleanliness of the toilet - not regularly cleaned and no soap in the toilet.



Soaps are refilled daily into the toilets by the Premises team. Toilets are cleaned twice in a day. Once during the day and second - at the end of the day. Pupils sometimes make a mess in the toilets during the day by wasting soaps, causing occasional blockages in sinks or toilets etc. If a pupil notices any cleanliness issue, report it to the reception and they will in turn notify Premises team to take action on the complaint.

2.10 Sports Facilities

2.10.1 From 7B - I wanted to check how we can access sports facilities on weekend like my son wants to practice badminton / tennis . Are we allowed to visit school on weekend n use sports fixtures? Happy to pay.

The school has a lettings policy. Outside of fixtures, the school's sporting facilities are not open for pupils to use during the weekend. The only staff provision we have at the weekend is for fixtures. I did speak with the premises manager about the lettings policy; the policy is relatively new and we are not yet at the stage where we can look at individual lets. We are not regularly open on Saturdays after Christmas. Rugby Fixtures do not continue after that point. We regret that physical activities outside of school hours are not something we are able to support.

2.11 Travel

2.11.1 From 7C - Please can tube strikes be discussed in the meeting, where the education for those who live further would not be disrupted by it. Especially since with tube strikes it would take my son 2.5 - 3hours to get to school and then to repeat the journey home, is tiring especially for children, then to come home to do homework would be unfair to make them sit to do it. As parents we also want their welfare taken care of, especially in these situations. Perhaps an option of online learning could take place for those who live further so they do not miss out on vital school work?

It is not possible for the school to organise hybrid learning (partly online and partly in person) owing to the workload implications and practical challenges this creates for teaching staff. However, parents can inform the school about their child's absence due to unavoidable circumstances beyond their control (e.g., tube/ train strikes). The teachers can then use MS Teams to communicate the work that was given on that particular day, so the pupils concerned don't miss out on their learning.

Below are two questions which were asked on the day by an Y8 parent (therefore they were not on the agenda) along with the notes from the parent who asked them:

1. The pdf says homework should be at most 60' per fortnight per subject? we haven't seen that-research homeworks are surely more than 60' for example and the kids do tend to get a lot of homework which leaves limited time to learn/ prep for tests/ extra curricular stuff including sports and then personal time and they're only in ks3, not that their GCSEs are tomorrow, the school should look at their overall well-being and reassess overall homework load they're putting on the kids. The duration of homework is differentiated by Key Stage and the current amount per subject is felt by the school to be appropriate and manageable for students. If specific H/Ws are being set which take longer than the published duration, please notify Mr Budds and he will follow up.

2. When are we having the GCSE presentations for parents?

We would like to know more about what is going on, because we do not want them to be under the impression that DT is a good choice due to F1, when it might make his life more difficult, and be



less involved in subjects like Latin, if they are considering law for later on. **The internal options evening will be in the first week of Feb.**

3 PA Form Reps forum

- What it is and what it could or should be
- What do parents think the school is doing well and should do more of

4 Date of next meeting – TBC

5 **Close** – I would like to thank Mr Budds for agreeing to continue attending our Form Reps meeting.

Attended by:

School Rep: Mr David Budds

Form Reps: Rishi Vijay, Lakshmi, Namita, Ritu, Geetha, Kavita, Seema, Fatima, Chandrika, Amina, Sunaina, Mrs Ayorinde John.