

St Olave's PA Form Reps Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday 20th January 2016 @ 7:30pm

Location: Main School Library

Attendees: Mr Evans (Deputy Head), Charlotte Rutter, Kate Cameron, Esmat Pourjam, Rinku Chibber, Narinder Gill, Seema Singh, Julie Vouillemin, James Ward, Sue Watts, Shubhra Tripathi, Jennifer Franks, Madhu Pandey, Rachael Peek, Isabel Corniciuc, Siobhan Gee, Sarah Eldridge, Ritu Karlekar, Francesca Iudicello, Tiffany Barradell, Nicky Davies, Ching Yu

Apologies: Lin Limbrey, Dinta Madlani, Bernadette Coker, Catherine Fleet, Helen Patel, Julie Costard, Sally Begley

Questions for the school

1. Revision expectations for Year 9s

A parent would like a guideline on how much work their Year 9 child is expected to do for revision and homework.

Mr Evans stated the homework expectation for Year 9 is one hour per night, on average. In Year 9 there are no external exams so there is no requirement for structured revision. There are summative IPMs, however, and these are taken in the summer term. A timetable will be distributed in due course. These summative exams are used by the school to check progress but there is no reason for undue concern or excessive revision.

2. Child report response form

Parents were asked for feedback on their child's report. Should parents receive responses back from their comments where appropriate? If so, when will this be?

Mr Evans was very clear that all questions should be answered. If you have not received any feedback, please ask your child's form tutor.

3. Are demerits applied consistently by teachers?

There was some concern about demerits being given out for trivial matters.

Mr Evans said there are strong policies in place for the giving of demerits and teachers try to be consistent. Demerits should be used for misdemeanours only; more serious offences will result in detentions. Without knowing the specifics of the case it is hard to comment. Mr Evans did say that he would be very surprised if there wasn't a very good reason for issuing demerits.

4. Concern regarding 6th form teaching

a) Is the rapid expansion of the sixth form with lots of new younger teachers all at once in the best interest of students also coping with the transition from GCSE to A Level?

Mr Evans explained that there are no more newly qualified teachers in the Sixth Form than in the rest of the school. All teachers go through a rigorous interview process and the school prides itself on the calibre of its staff.

b) There is lots of focus on getting into good universities but not enough on work-life skill development and preparation for world of work.

Mr Evans said that staff would be disappointed to hear this view as the School puts a lot of time and effort into developing students' personal skills. There are a number of talks and visits from people in different industries to help inform students of the requirements of various careers. If there are any suggestions for improvements, however, parents are encouraged to let him know.

Work experience is encouraged and is best arranged by the student and/or their parents. Unfortunately it is too complicated and expensive to arrange individual programmes through the school.

5. Protocol when child leaves later than expected / has a detention

There was an issue where a student was 2 hours late home and didn't have their phone which caused a lot of upset and panic emails to the class.

Parents are given at least 24 hours' notice (via a form given to the student) of School detentions, which take place on Fridays after school. This needs to be signed by a parent before the child can attend the detention. Mr Evans will check that the procedure of looking for parents' signatures is being followed correctly and investigate whether parents can also be notified via email.

Faculty detentions (as opposed to School detentions) are most often held within the school day, so may well occur without notification reaching parents beforehand. A summary of any detentions will show on the child's next report card.

Parents should ensure their child knows what to do if they cannot use their own phone and need to contact them if they will be late home. Suggestions include using a friend's phone or using the pay phone outside reception.

The particular example is currently being investigated by the school.

6. Lack of space in the Sixth Form Common Room and library

Mr Evans said usage varies from day to day. The school has recently increased seating in the Sixth Form library, common room and pavilion. In addition, if a student wishes they can ask to study in an empty classroom where a teacher is also working.

7. Sixth form expansion

More Sixth Form pupils brings extra funding for the school but is it the school's intention to repeat this expansion in future years?

Mr Evans confirmed there are no plans to increase the size of the Sixth Form beyond its current level: there are currently 231 students in Year 12 and 225 in Year 13. He explained that the Sixth Form needed to increase in size to improve the viability of certain subjects. The cost of running a class for 6 pupils is very similar to running one for 12 pupils but only brings in half the funding from the government. Some subjects are more popular than others but as long as the majority of classes break even then the school hopes to maintain the breadth of subjects.

8. Concerns about non-progression to Year 13

Mr Evans stated the policy is that students need at least 3 Bs in their AS levels to progress through to Year 13. Last year, 12 students failed to progress but all are now all settled in other schools/colleges. The school works hard to support pupils during Year 12 to ensure that all make expected progress.

9. Could a list of planned school trips be published

Mr Evans has very kindly drawn up a timetable of possible overnight trips for all years at the school along with approximate costs. This has been distributed by email. He wants to emphasise that all trips are subject to change and this list should be used as a guideline only.

10. Cancellation of Trips

The Year 8 Christmas Market MFL trip was suddenly cancelled because of lack of voluntary donations. In the future could parents be informed if a trip is in danger of being cancelled as some may be happy to pay extra to ensure it can go ahead.

Mr Evans will speak to trip organisers to ask that this be done in the future.

11. Why are the School Trips so expensive?

Mr Evans was keen to emphasise that the school does not seek to profit financially from any trip. The majority of the cost is due to the students' travel, accommodation and food. Being a school means that an ATOL registered tour operator has to be used whenever travelling abroad, which can be more expensive than booking flights and hotels separately. Trips are offered in a variety of price ranges and the School offers financial support to those who require it on the most important curricular trips.

12. Rugby Tour Food (or lack of)

Several boys missed breakfast on both days of the Year 8 rugby tour due to staying up late and over sleeping. Could the school arrange for their rooms to have hotel wake up phone calls or some system whereby they ensure everyone is there at breakfast?

Mr Evans will pass on this request to the PE department.

AOB

A parent requested to see a list of prizes and awards that boys can receive to be used as motivation.

Mr Evans said that school awards (such as the bronze, silver and gold awards) are detailed in the students' planners. External awards are not planned in advance but are applied for as appropriate.

A parent has paid money on Squid for a revision book but has not received it.

Mr Evans said anyone in this position should contact the Finance Office to arrange a refund.

PA Spring Ball – Sat 19th March 2016

There are still tickets available for the Spring Ball as not as many as expected have been sold. Testimonials from a previous year were distributed. There was no feedback as to reasons for the low turnout in Years 9 and 10 in particular.

Date of next meeting

Wednesday 27th April 7.30 - 9pm