

Minutes: St Olave's PA Form Reps meeting

Date: Wednesday 10th October 2018

Location: Main school library

Attendees from the school: Mr D Budds – Assistant Headteacher

Apologies (School): Mrs L James – School Business Manager

Parents present:

Fatima Zahra, Ping Chan Yin, Zainab Mohammad, Haili Cui, Zey Kagan, Sangeeta Mead, Charmaine Joshua, Jade Bimpe, Manish Vadukul, Baoching Liu, Elizabeth Garnham-Jong, Harbi Kaur, Sarah Cassidy, Tiffany Barradell, Narinder Gill, Sue Watts, Martine Magnan, Rinku Chibber, Gauri Grover, Malini Rajendran, Vicky Meehan, Sandeep Bhorkar, Colette Gebbett, Xiaohong Zhang, Justine Grant, Winnie Leong

Apologies (Parents): Brid Nunn; Paula McCabe, Charlotte Rutter, Seema Singh, Pauline Skerrett, Sarah Eldridge, Jane Bryan-Brown.

Questions for the School (generally copied verbatim)

Q1. Intruders/Security –

- a. *What are the procedures in place to handle intruder on site? Do students know what to do in such an event?*
- b. *Is it possible to secure the school site during school-hours by closing the gates and having an intercom system (These are in place at other schools)?*

Answer:

The school has sign in protocols but it is an open site. The school is reviewing security with new fencing in place and other measures under consideration. Students are and ought to be aware that if they see someone on site who shouldn't be there, they should report it to a member of staff. The intruder should be challenged by a member of staff.

The new fence has now been fully installed on the Goddington Lane facing of the site. The school is considering a gated system with an intercom to enable greater site security. Such a system could also prove useful for registration in the Sixth Form.

A parent asked if a biometric system would be expensive.

Answer: Yes, such a system would be expensive and feedback from partner schools is that they are not always very robust- break down quite easily, so this is not likely to be the solution the school is looking for.

Q2. School comms – Can the school send out regular updates regarding school clubs?

Answer:

It's difficult to maintain a balance between sending out too much information or too little. If parents need to find out about individual clubs or societies, they can go direct to the relevant member of staff in charge.

A parent suggested regular weekly updates on clubs.

Answer:

While this could work, there are often requests to send out information on an ad hoc or urgent basis fairly immediately. All this needs to go through Reprographic office, so it is about having a balance through school comms. Urgent/immediate communication will need to go out on specific dates rather than weekly.

For now while trying to find a balanced solution, please go directly to the 'Go To' person for any given initiative. The school is carrying out further research on the Parent App for mobiles and will be updating on this at the next Form Reps meeting.

Q3 – Rugby coach contact details – Are there contact details for the coaches when the rugby team plays away matches on Friday afternoons and Saturdays?

Answer

Mr Kenward is the person to be contacted. It is best for parents to go directly to the 'go to' person.

Q4. School website – User-experience and financial information

a. User-experience – The school website has sufficient content and information however it could be more user-friendly. What is the process for suggestions for improvement?

Answer:

The website and the bigger question of school branding is currently under discussion and is a work in progress, albeit some work has already been done on making it easier to navigate with important information such as policies more clearly signposted.

We're also looking at improving website functionality by providing better access from mobile phones through a dedicated parents' app.

A parent said that he runs a creative media business and he would be happy to help

Answer:

Mr Budds thanked the parent and said he is happy to explore this further and will discuss with Mr Rees. The school will evaluate all options and provide feedback at the next meeting.

Winnie Leong, form reps coordinator, would send the parent's contact details to Mr Budds.

b. Financial Information –

- i. Can more information regarding both the year-end and future budgets be made available on the school website.*
- ii. Can this be presented more clearly? Some information is available. This needs to be more clearly signposted and presented.*
- iii. Although budgetary decisions may be discussed and deliberated by the school governors, it would be useful if parents had more information.*
- iv. Some parents wish to make suggestions with reference to the school's current or future procurement priorities.*

Answer:

There is definitely more information available in the public domain than there ever has been before. Mrs James, the new School Business Manager who joined the staff in April, wants to maintain regular dialogue with parents. Efforts are in progress to ensure greater transparency and that income and outflows are more clearly represented on the school website. They are happy to accept suggestions from parents as to what should be included in order to ensure transparency and accountability.

Parents please raise these suggestions to Mrs James through Form Rep dialogues once it is up and running.

Action point for school: Questionnaire specifically regarding disclosure of financial info? Update at the next meeting.

Q5. Acknowledgements from the school office – following queries of any nature e.g. requests to have personal data updated.

Answer:

GDPR - we are considering various solutions. Under GDPR, the school is dealing with and implementing changes to be compliant.

Mobile app - the school is again reviewing and improving the mobile app as currently this does not work, whilst at the same time looking at application for parents, where the parents can update their data via a portal.

It is the aim of the school to have as broad a reach as possible. Parents would also be able to tailor their preference so they wouldn't receive too much/too little relevant information. Parameters would need to be clearly defined. It may also be an avenue for the school and/or parents to share any minor concerns during the school.

Several parents shared experiences/success stories with similar mobile apps at other schools.

Mr Budds will update on the progress at the next Form Reps meeting.

Q6 – Heavy bags; heavier blazers – the boys' pockets are stuffed - hymn books, calendars/planners, locker keys...

- a. Can the school advise the boys on being judicious about the books they carry?
- b. Do the boys have to carry the hymn book and calendar on their person all the time? Or can parents make these decisions/advise their sons as to what's best?

Answer

The teachers do give boys in Year 7 advice on time management, packing their bags and how to use lockers. All boys have a locker. If they use these well, their bags should be lighter during the school day.

However, the boys need their hymn books at assembly as there are difficulties displaying the hymns on a screen in such a way that the words would be visible to all.

The planners are also a very useful tool and the boys should carry these on their person all the time. We hope that parents in Year 7 will appreciate the process.

Q7. Year 9 –

- a. Homework - How much time are boys expected to spend doing homework each evening and at weekends?
- b. Year 9 exam - when are the Year 9 end of year exams?

Answer

a) Questions regarding particular year groups should go directly to the Head of Year. General guidance would be one hour per subject when it is set. This information is on the school website <http://www.saintolaves.net/uploads/admin/download/file/30/Homework.pdf>

b) Year 9 exam date – Please email the Head of Year 9 directly if the info is still not available by the time these minutes are circulated.

Q8 – Booster sessions – *The Physics department offers booster sessions on Monday at lunchtime. Do the other departments have plans to follow this good example? If not, will they consider doing so as these booster sessions are very helpful.*

Answer:

Booster sessions run in various year groups across different subjects. Information is available on the school website http://www.saintolaves.net/uploads/admin/download/file/205/Autumn_Term_-_2018.pdf

We rely on the boys to find their own feet. If they need help, they should approach their teachers. Teachers will gently encourage boys to go to these booster sessions. Sometimes there will be recommendations from Heads of Year. Suggestions are also made during the Y11 interview programme in the spring term, as they start approaching the home strait for GCSEs. If the boys aren't sure what's coming/available, they should speak with the Heads of Department or Faculty.

A parent asked if the days for the booster sessions could be rotated in order to avoid clashes.

Answer:

Teachers hold several elective sessions, especially in the run-up to the GCSEs. It is generally not possible to rotate and suggested that if there is a clash in the booster subjects, perhaps pupils should attend alternate weeks. Teachers are always happy to offer advice and feedback.

If teachers have particular concerns, they will inform parents. Equally, if parents have concerns in particular subjects, they should bring these to the subject teachers

A parent asked if boys can just turn up/drop in

Answer: Definitely. There are many drop-in sessions e.g. Maths clinic

A parent asked if booster sessions were also available for Year 12 and 13.

Answer: Yes.

Q9. The New Scientist Show at the Excel – *It was an amazing show. All disciplines were represented. Talks presented would have benefited all year groups.*

- a. *Can the school consider raising awareness?*
- b. *Can school trips be organised?*
- c. *Can special family tickets be negotiated? Family tickets cost £90 for the day. This would benefit all the year group.*

Answer:

This sounds like a very good idea. Please raise this directly with Dr Stewart.

Q10. Work experience – *Will there be a period of work experience for the boys in the school? Students at many schools do this in Year 10.*

Answer:

There are no specific period of provision for work experience but the school do recommend in the Year 11 interview period that students explore these opportunities after their GCSE exams. This is especially with vocational careers – medicine, engineering, law etc.

The Careers Fair is another opportunity for students to engage in work experience activities

The weeks after the GCSE exams are the recommended period for work experiences to take place.

Q11. Year 11 –

- a. *Parents evening Will it be possible to see all subject teachers at the Year 11 parents' evening this term? This has not been possible in previous years where teachers take more than 1 class. This is the year with important public exams: parents are very keen to speak to all teachers.*

Answer:

This is not possible due to time and scheduling constraints. If you have concerns and can't get a slot, email the relevant teacher directly. The teacher normally gives priority to boys where they feel there is a concern.

- b. *Are the dates for the mock exams out?*

Answer: Yes, the majority will take place between 8th January to 18th January 2019 with a few before the Christmas break due to the large number of papers the boys have to sit.

- c. *Will the teachers of each subject be able to send out links to past papers, if available?*

Answer:

There is a very limited stock of new specification papers. The exam boards have provided a sample paper.

A parent in Year 12 mentioned that the boys had given permission for their papers to be called back so they could share these with Year 11 students.

Answer:

As the specification is new, the school will not be sharing these as they will be used in the coming mocks and exam practise questions in class. Once the supply is built up, this situation will change

- d. *When will the students receive their predicted grades?*

Answer:

Challenge grades were already given in Y9. It is important to match progress grades with the challenge grades. There are also nominal internal predicted grades that are used as a proxy when necessary.

A parent asked how this will work for an application to another school.

Answer:

Students in Year 11 will be receiving their interim report very soon. The Year 10 report is also a useful guide. Wait for the last available data drop.

- e. *Maths group 1A seems to be working on advanced maths topics. Will these students sit a further Maths GCSE too or will they only sit one Maths GCSE?*

Answer:

There is only one Maths GCSE. Pupils in Set 1A will also be preparing for the more challenging Freestanding Maths Qualification (FSMQ).

- f. *When do Art portfolio or DT projects need to be completed by? Can the school please share the key dates with parents?*

Answer:

It's best to go directly to teachers in charge: Mr Clark for Art and Ms Hawley for DT. The students have been told of the dates. Nearer the deadline, teachers run extra clinics so the boys will be able to finish the projects.

- g. *Revision for Saturdays – is there any progress on ‘Saturday revision’ for boys who wish to drop in for academic support? There are boys who are interested in attending revision, but they are not so keen on wearing school uniform. There was a suggestion that this option was being considered.*

Answer:

The option of coming in to school in casual attire is not under consideration. The boys will be required to wear school uniform when they sit for the exams. Historically, revision classes were held during the Easter Holidays, specifically for English and Maths. As to ‘Saturday revision’, the school needs to take staff workload into consideration; these can't be done as a drop in session - e.g. if staff are employed to come in on a Saturday and no one turned up, that would not be very good allocation of budget.

- h. *Is it possible for Year 11 boys to be able to stay back to study in school as this is a very important year ahead of them? (Apparently Mr Rees has said that boys aren't allowed to stay in the library after 4.15. Previously, there used to be a homework club, and although the supervising teacher often didn't turn up, boys would sit in the designated room and work. Some boys may be distracted at home and that school should offer a quiet space after school where they can focus and study. This is particularly important for Year 11 students but it would be useful for all year groups.*

Answer:

We appreciate that domestic circumstances can sometimes prove to be less than conducive for study. Mr Budds will discuss available options with SLT.

A parent suggested that teachers could sit in the library while students studied.

Answer:

As this is not part of directed time, a system of the kind described would have to be set up on a paid rota basis.

A parent suggested that volunteers could sit in the library while students studied.

Answer:

There are also the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) challenges. Safeguarding and protecting pupils would be of paramount importance. <https://www.safeguardingschools.co.uk/keeping-children-safe-in-education-2018/>

Parents discussed whether this should be set up more like a supervised homework club or whether self-study in the library would be preferred.

Answer: Further research into feasibility of keeping the library open later will be conducted. More information at the next meeting.

Q12. Year 12 entry – How many Year 11 students didn't progress into sixth form this year because they didn't meet the entrance criteria?

Answer:

Seven pupils were told that they could not take up their place in the Sixth Form as they hadn't fulfilled the entry criteria. They all had meetings with a member of the Senior leadership Team and the opportunity to discuss their situation; parents were involved and the meetings were to offer support and advice. Some flexibility was offered to pupils who had not quite achieved 63 points but who it was felt may yet flourish in the Sixth Form at St Olave's.

There were five others whose point score met the criteria to take them through but who opted to leave.

Q13. Sixth form break-out and library space – Are there any plans to increase the space available to Sixth Form Students? Currently the common room does not have enough space or seating, the Pavilion is very busy with not enough seating and the Sixth form library doesn't have enough computers available. Could an outdoor undercover seating area be created to provide another space for meals and socialising?

Answer:

The 'Quad' area between Art, Science, PE and Humanities will be redeveloped and repurposed. The school is looking at various landscaping and seating options and fully recognises that there are 457 students in the Sixth Form.

Part of the PA well-being fund has been used to purchase benches for the Sixth Form Common Room. These are being tested to see if they are robust enough to last out the term before purchasing anymore.

Further information on developments in this area will be provided at the next meeting. If not more benches, then other solutions will be provided.

Q14. Duke of Edinburgh scheme – Is it possible for parents to be given more information about what is expected of the boys and by what dates. Firstly, given the scheme runs each year it would be nice to get more notice of the start date. This year if you weren't already doing an activity and able to backdate the records then it would be impossible to have it complete in the required time to do the practice expedition. Secondly, despite having the first section signed off in time and having bought items for the expedition it appears that if the boys couldn't find a 'team' to join then they were unable to take part in the October expedition. Maybe the boys were told in plenty of time but as a parent I had no idea this was a potential problem until two weeks before the event. Is it possible that groups could be allocated in future years so that the 'less popular' kids do not miss out.

Answer:

Pupils need to be self-starters here. This is for the boys to take responsibility, which is one of the core tenets of the DoE award scheme. If parents need more information, it is best to contact Mr Holland, the teacher organising the DoE at St Olave's.

Q15. Demerit/detention – Do students get a demerit or detention if they lose their exercise books by accident? When do student get a demerit or detention?

Answer:

There are recommended scales of sanctions laid out in the behaviour policy that is available from the school website: -<http://www.saintolaves.net/uploads/admin/download/file/9/Behaviour.pdf>. Mr Budds said he has not personally issued a demerit for a lost exercise book. Faculty detentions are given for work-related issues such as the persistent failure to produce homework, missing internal coursework deadlines, poor behaviour or attitude in lessons.

School detention is given for Incidents of other kinds of misbehaviour. More information on this is available on the school website.

Q16. Locker issue – *A few students in 7H had an issue with their lockers. These were either broken or unable to lock.*

Answer:

Mr Budds asked if it was reported

Parents responded to say that it was.

Answer:

Boys should report these incidents to their form tutor or the site team. Every boy should have a locker that works.

A parent reported that one boy didn't get a locker at all because he was told that they were 'finished'.

Answer: If the name and form of the boy concerned are forwarded, then Mr Budds will find out why the particular boy didn't get a locker and if there are any other related incidents.

Q17. Year 7 school trips –

- a. *Costs of school trips – What options are available? Are lump payments the only option? Can payment be made nearer time; can it be made in several instalments. If parents can receive information as early as possible this will allow for early budget allocation.*
- b. *Activity trip in May 2019 – Can further details be provided please? This will help with both budgeting ahead and also planning for family holidays as there are two Bank Holidays in May.*

Answer

- a. Parents should contact the organiser of the school trip regarding splitting the payment into instalments where necessary. There is provision for pupils who cannot afford these trips to ensure access for all, in the form of bursaries.
- b. This point has been resolved and the date has been made available. Dates for trips are available from the <http://www.saintolaves.net/calendars>

Parents asked if more information could be circulated via the newsletter.

Answer – it is difficult to find a balance on what to put in the newsletter but as in b) the information is in the school calendar

Q18. School Blazer – *Is there an option to purchase a school badge and a black blazer instead of the blazer from 'Graduates'. Having a spare black blazer is potentially is expensive. Tesco, marks, Asda, Sainsburys, Lidl all sell blazers (NB M&S are selling boys black blazers for £7-£11 in a similar style to blazers from Graduates.*

Answer:

Mr Budds understands the school has an agreement with Graduates. Mrs James might be able to look into this arrangement. Historically, the quality is pretty good. Having one supplier ensures that blazers are of a consistent quality. In this way, the school is able to ensure the concept of a 'uniform' (in its most literal sense) is adhered to and also there will be no issue of hierarchy – good or bad; better or worse quality; style/fashion.

However, this is not to say that an alternative system won't work.

Many parents complained that the quality of the blazer from Graduates is far from good. Others mentioned the quality of the jumpers.

Answer:

The school will explore further into the quality of the uniform supplied by Graduates. Mrs James to explore other uniform providers as well as the option of using generic black blazers from department stores and will update at the next Form Rep meeting.

Q19. Oct half-term –

- a. *We have noticed that the first term of the school year is very exhausting for the boys and they often get sick and need time to adjust to new teachers etc... This has been acknowledged by other state schools that are increasingly moving to a two-week half-term in October.*
- b. *Two weeks might not suit everyone, but it might help if the boys have a homework-free week in October to rest and relax. Is this up for consideration for the boys in the lower school?*

Answer:

The school has no option to extend the October half-term by a week. We are subject to the local authority holiday scheme, unlike with an Academy. There is an argument for this and the school has worked round this period of exhaustion, by ensuring a homework-free "Refresher" week in November and another one in January. The school recognises that the first term is a very long term. Pupils should look forward to the exciting and fun activities at the end of term such as 'Festival'.

Q20. Canteen – *No fizzy drinks should be allowed. Instead only water and juice should be available. This is already the practice at Newstead Wood Grammar School – Please refer to 2017.01.19 Minutes Q 16 on this.*

Answer:

There is only one type of fizzy drink left in the canteen. When the stock runs out the caterers won't be restocking it. Mr Budds will check with the stock manager to confirm this.

Q21. Mobile phone usage – *Please refer to 2017.01.19 Q17, 2017.05.11 AOB(f), 2017.10.19 Q19 Minutes*

- a. *parents are concerned that the boys use all their break time playing on their phones rather than interacting with their fellow students.*
- b. *Phones should be locked up in the locker and not allowed inside classrooms and during breaks as all these boys do is play Fortnite and sometimes miss out on lunch queues!*
- c. *Is there any system where the boys' WhatsApp groups can be monitored? I saw some messages from year 7 boys which weren't appropriate for their age. Is there something the school can do about it.*
- d. *At x's secondary school they have a cupboard in the room where the children put their phones in at the beginning of registration and it is locked and they do not get it back until they have been to last registration at the end of the school day. Is that something St O's could adopt?*

Answer:

The school is in the process of revising their policy on mobile phones following consultations with teachers and with pupils via student voice.

The school recognises all the concerns and hopes the new policy will address some if not all these concerns. A member of staff has been researching various policies in place at other schools around mobile phone use.

Parents would like their children to be able to take phones to and from school but conversely are concerned that they are using phones too much.

It is unlikely the school will go down the route of setting a rule whereby boys had to keep phones in lockers but more likely to opt for a 'half-way house' approach.

Many teachers feel that phones are a useful teaching tool for a variety of reasons. They can be used for research tasks, for instance.

Watch this space on the revised policy on mobile phones that is being drafted. Updates to be reported at the next meeting.

Various parents mentioned that there are boys who play games during class and distract others while teachers are completely unaware of this.

Use of phones in lesson time is only at the discretion of the teacher; if pupils have concerns they should report them and teachers remain vigilant for engagement and behaviour in all lessons.

Phones during exams -Phones are **NOT** allowed during exams and cannot be taken into the exam hall.

Negative issues related to What's App groups

Various parents shared various concerns on What's App groups set up by pupils – e.g. how some have expressed being in distress on these groups. They asked if it was possible to inform the school and ask the school to keep an eye on a particular child?

Parents also suggested that it would be good for the parent of any child that posted inappropriate messages on a What's App group to be informed about this.

Answer:

A lot of advice is given on this via PSHE sessions. As a school, we educate our boys about their digital footprint, about how easily what they deem "banter" can become inappropriate. Our staff are aware of guidelines re: Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018.

However, we can't be mediating in private What's App groups or other groups on social media. Although the school is concerned and appreciates the concerns of parents, this is not something the school can lead on, albeit if specific evidence of bullying or other causes for concern emerge, it may be appropriate for parents or pupils to report it on to the school.

For data protection reasons - schools are not allowed to go through pupils' phones

Parents should speak to their children about this and supervise where necessary. It is definitely a good idea for parents to look at their children's phone.

Action point for parents: Please be responsible for checking your child's phone and providing advice on their digital footprint.

Any other business

1. What's the follow-up on today's meeting

Answer:

Once Minutes are drafted, this will be sent to Mr Budds for review and adding any missing information. It is then returned to Winnie, who then sends to the school to upload onto the website. Once done, she will be notified. She will send the link to Form Reps who in turn will forward to all parents.

2. Geography supply teachers – There have been reports of supply teachers coming in for Geography. What is the status on this?

Answer:

Two geography teachers are currently on unforeseen long-term absences. Some teachers have taken on extra sessions to cover and all exam classes are being taught by specialist geography teachers. The school is exploring a variety of options as a matter of urgency. (N.B. At the time of circulation, the matter has now been stabilised and resolved).

Questions were asked about geography results across different year groups.

Answer:

GCSE and A level Geography results were good.

3. Is there a grade average for each subject for each year?

Answer:

Given the incredibly high academic standards of all Olavians, the school does not encourage boys to be unhealthily competitive nor does it offer average marks per subject per year.

4. Now that the school is under new management is the policy going to change around the variety of subjects offered at the school - psychology; politics?

Answer:

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum of 18 subjects in the Sixth Form. However, financial implications need to be considered when offering subjects for which there is less demand. Any A-Level class with fewer than 14 students runs at a loss. However, to protect curriculum breadth, some classes currently run with 2 or 3 students, although more popular subjects have larger classes which help support the undersubscribed subjects. The school always seeks to protect curriculum breadth, ensure class sizes do not creep up beyond BASS averages, and make classes cost effective; the cost of introducing new subjects is potentially prohibitive.

5. Challenge in Maths – Some boys do not feel challenged by their current maths teachers and several parents asked questions about recruitment challenges in the subject they had read about in the national press.

Answer:

This is a demanding subject to recruit for. There is an active drive in place at St Olave's to recruit good Maths teachers and one which has led to several very positive appointments; all of our teaching staff within the faculty have strong and appropriate qualifications. We have historically always had good results at GCSE and A-Level. Challenging our very able cohort of pupils remains a key focus of the school.

6. Is the Olavian lecture series not running this year?

Answer: Not this term, but we are looking to revive the programme and source speakers in the coming year.

7. What is the schedule for teaching and revision for Y13? When will teaching be complete and revision begin?

Study leave will begin in the second or third week of May. Although it will vary by subject, there will generally be two or three weeks of revision when the curriculum will be complete before study leave. Students should be approaching the completion of their courses before the Easter break.

Similar schedules are followed for the GCSE year.

- ***Date for the next meeting & meeting close***

Meeting closed at 9:50pm.

Date of next meeting – Thursday, 17th January 2019 in the Main School Library