

At the last Parents' Forum Meeting on 21st September, the following was discussed:

YEAR 7

Parents were welcomed and introductions made. A presentation in to the aims of Parents' Forum and how parents/carers can be involved in the decisions affecting their children was given.

Transition of students: As discussion took place about the transition process, beginning in Year 5 through the first days of Year 7. Parents raised how other schools offer a full week of summer school during the summer break, or students in Year 6 move up during Term 6. Parents feel two days may not be long enough for their child to feel settled and confident. Springwell have offered this in the past but it has not been well attended and so it was stopped a few years ago.

Feedback from New Intake Evening was good. Parents felt there was not enough time spent with the Form Tutor. It was agreed to put the date of Form Tutor Evening into the transition booklet.

Parents fed back that they were not fully informed about the plans for Aspire at the Open Evening last year when, and that this is the first time they had realised that the provision was being withdrawn. They also fed back that they were unaware of the potential change in uniform. Miss Staton informed them that both these decisions were taken after the Open Evening, but agreed large changes like this needs communicating to the students in Year 6 that are joining.

Parents asked questions about the card machine for lunch money. The feedback was that it does not easily take notes and that there isn't a spend limit so some students are spending more than planned. Miss Staton informed parents that a spend limit can be enforced if Chartwell's, the catering provider, are contacted and that students may also take advantage of free breakfasts from 8am to 8.40am. Parents said that students were left without food if they went towards the end of lunchtime and that there was pushing in the lunch queues. As a result, some students did not feel as though they wanted to go into the dining room. Miss Staton responded that SLT are present every lunchtime in the dining room and that running out of food is a very rare occasion and students are always offered something; it may not necessarily be something their first choice. In the first few weeks students in Year 7 go into lunch early so as to familiarise themselves with how it works. After this they use the dining room at the same time as the other students. However, Miss Staton did say she would look at the queues and Mid-Day Supervisors would be more alert in future. Miss Staton offered to use Student Ambassadors in these situations to assist younger students.

Parents also felt that Chartwell's were extremely expensive, and would like the college to feedback this back to them.

There was concern raised over the amount of books and equipment students are expected to carry and have with them as this makes bags heavy for younger students. The provision of lockers was raised. Miss Staton informed parents that they have their planner and they are to write their homework in it and refer to it and their timetable is in it so they can see when they have PE. Parents are required to sign each week to say they have seen it.

ALL YEAR GROUPS

All Parents were welcomed. Introductions were made and parents were informed that Parents' Forum meetings are three times per year and they give parents the opportunity to discuss topics and for the college to consult with them on issues being raised and changes being considered. The agenda for the meeting was given: My EdApp, Exam Results, HMI Visit, New Term and Any Other Business.

Parents were asked if they were accepting in allowing representatives from the community to be present, as usually the meeting is for parents. All attending were happy to continue with those present.

Mr Wingfield alerted parents to a letter being sent out asking for nominations to the Governing Body for a Parent Governor. If Parents wished to be nominated they are to have their forms returned to college by Friday 23rd September.

My Ed App: a new communication device for mobile phones/smart phones has been introduced. My Ed App provides information, dates, messages, attendance tracker, Kudos awards and letters direct to devices. Miss Staton presented a short film about the app. One issue which is currently being addressed is that only one parent/carer can be the nominated person to receive all correspondence, the priority one contact. This is causing issues. Along with this, parents who download the app no longer receive messages as texts – they arrive in to the My Ed App. Therefore if notifications are turned off parents may not realise a message has been received.

Miss Staton would like feedback from everyone using it to see whether it is a useful addition to our communication package with parents.

Parents raised concern that if their internet connection was poor then they would not get the message.

Exam Results: Results have improved on the previous year. A*-C including English and Maths have gone up by 8% and the college's progress score is in line with the national average. Information about the collection of GCSE certificates was given and a parent asked what the process was for collecting the results in the student's absence; these must be collected by a parent/carer with a letter of permission from the student.

HMI Visit: One of Her Majesty's Inspectors visited this week, following the full inspection in April of this year in which the college was judged to continue to require Improvement. This was a scheduled visit, although the timing was not known. The inspector looked at what plans were in place to tackle the issues raised in the last inspection. The Inspector was satisfied that the college is making good progress towards these targets and that appropriate plans are in place to move us to good at the next inspection, which we believe should be in the summer of 2018. Mr Wingfield raised what the issues would be for the college should we receive another requiring improvement outcome at the next inspection. He asked parents for their help in supporting their children to work hard and be well prepared for their exams.

New Term: Parents raised the issue of the dining room, and how food is in short supply at the end of the lunchtime. Miss Staton confirmed that there is SLT on duty in the dining room every lunchtime and she urged students to inform them if there is no food left as Chartwell's will always ensure that every student is fed. Miss Staton will put a reminder to students on the morning notices. SLT will be informed to monitor the situation. Some parents felt that lunchtime was too short in order for students to have accessed the dining room as the queues were too long. In addition they felt that there were not enough seats for all students to have lunch together and therefore the facilities were inadequate. Parents feel the choice of food is insufficient and questioned the healthy eating agenda if pizza is allowed. Miss Staton confirmed the issue is about healthy choices and options; there is a full dinner option, fast food and students may bring sandwiches.

Any Other Business – Uniform: Miss Staton explained the uniform changes for this year; – a new logo on the blazer, a new tie, neither of which were obligatory purchases to students already at

Springwell and uniform trousers. Uniform trousers have been introduced due to the significant number of students in previous years who have worn trousers considered to be inappropriate. There is now a huge range now of Back to School clothing available in supermarkets, some of which is not appropriate. Miss Staton pointed out that a lot of staff time was taken up in challenging the wearing of inappropriate trousers and that the college's priority is to concentrate instead on teaching and learning. Miss Staton acknowledged that although the price of the uniform trousers were comparable to those in high street stores, the prices in supermarkets are significantly lower.

Parents fed back that that they felt college had been critical about the quality of the supermarket brands, but that the Price and Buckland quality was not as high as would be expected for the price. Miss Staton has informed Price and Buckland of the issues which have been addressed individually by parents and the company has apologised. Therefore the new policy would not become active until after 1st November, as which time all issues from Price and Buckland will have been addressed.

A parent stated that the policy should not yet be implemented because the minutes of the Governing Body meeting in May had not yet been published. Mr Wingfield explained that policy became active as soon as Governors ratified it and that it was not necessary to wait for the minutes to be published. A parent stated that they should have been invited to a consultation, not a Parents' Forum meeting, and that they should have received a letter at the consultation stage. One parent raised that the brand of trousers 'Banner' are what Price and Buckland are supplying and these can be purchased from elsewhere for far cheaper than the marked up price charged by Price and Buckland. Miss Staton asked that if this number of parents came to Parents' Forum meetings then the college would have far better sense of the feeling of parents.

Cost aside, a parent said the need for uniform in all areas was understood, but not for trousers as especially for girls it was causing them some sizing difficulties as not one style fits every shape and suits every child.

It was raised that when considering this new policy, if only 30 parents attended the meeting out of 800 student then there should have been a letter to consult with all the parents who did not attend. The prices of other supermarket brands should have been taken into consideration, the feedback regarding other schools using Price and Buckland should have been taken into account as they do not have the best record, and once all that information had come together it should have then been discussed at a meeting that all were invited to specifically to discuss this consultation. At that point it could have gone to a Governors' meeting. If cost was an issue, then a payment plan could have been put in place to satisfy this. A lot of the concern from parents is the fact that the college did not take the correct path in putting this in place.

A parent said that, according to the legal framework for schools, schools are advised against having one company to purchase uniform from. A parent mentioned a letter which was sent from DCC advising against a single supplier for purchases and suggested that the college had gone against this guidance.

Miss Staton responded by explaining that, by not making the blazer and the tie compulsory, the college had gone some way into ensuring that the additional cost to parents was reduced. A payment plan had been offered to parents who had contacted college with their concern about the cost.

A community representative felt that parents were being bullied by the college to purchase these trousers.

A parent stated that, as it took 6 months to publish the minutes from the meeting in May, the policy should not yet be implemented. Mr Wingfield referred him to the previous answer to this point. In April, Ofsted inspectors praised how smart students looked which raises questions as to why the policy needed to be changed. A parent asked if the college had received 3 tenders for the contract and that, if so, he would like to know who the tenders were. He argued that Price and Buckland had failed in their efforts to provide a suitable service to the parents of Springwell.

Parents, Mr Wingfield and Miss Staton agreed that the issued needed to be resolved so that the college could get back to its main aim of improving teaching and learning.

Mr Wingfield and Miss Staton thanked everyone for attending and for raising their points and concerns.