

PARENTS' FORUM FOR LOWER SCHOOL PARENTS - THURSDAY 26 JANUARY 2017

RO	
Welcome and introduction. The Forum platform is intended for parents to discuss their concerns, but due to timing it will not be possible for everyone to speak, so apologies in advance for this. Notes from this Forum and RO's responses will be posted on Firefly.	
YEAR GROUP TERMINOLOGY	RO
<i>By e mail - Does anyone else find the nomenclature for year groups at both the College and Junior School confusing (i.e. 1st-5th year at both Junior School and College)? I enjoy following information about the school via Twitter, but at first glance it often appears difficult to distinguish between what the Junior School and College students are doing!</i>	There are historical reasons behind the terminology, and no plans to change them at this time. The proper terminology is: JS Year 1 to Year 6 and at SGC First to Fifth Year & Sixth Form. It is important that staff are reminded to use the correct terminology at the College and also that parents use this correctly as well e.g. for completing the upcoming ISI Questionnaire!
CLASS GROUPINGS FOR FIRST & SECOND YEAR	RO
<i>By e mail - Would you ever consider mixing the classes up every year instead of keeping the children together in the same class for First and Second Year? My daughter has been in a different class every year since reception, so she is well used to it and would consider it quite normal.</i>	Rationale for keeping the same classes for First and Second Years is allowing the children to settle and build relationships. Main challenge is ensuring that each class is well mixed and rounded (i.e. in terms of behaviour, sporting, musical and academic ability).
A good system, established stability for the first two years.	RO asked for parents' response to this enquiry. <i>(Responses on left)</i>
Classes should be mixed as some are challenging and children can struggle.	Do parents feel that there is good integration for First Year students? <i>Yes, positive response.</i>
Parent of a Third Year son & daughter feels that two year rotation works well but why move them around in the Third Year and disrupt the groups when they are due to start GCSEs?	The rationale for this is the need to integrate the external Third Year entry; classes need to be mixed up again to ensure they are well balanced.
SETTING IN ENGLISH	RO
From Third Year, there are no sets for English, only Maths – why is this?	Ms May (FMM) is reviewing this at present – the idea is to bring parity to Maths and English with the same number and provision of setting.
Are sets re-assessed at the end of first term?	Personally, RO feels Maths should definitely be set, but English is less clear cut - but is guided by FMM on this in the SGC context. Yes – mid-term, and towards the end of term, too. Sets are based on entrance exam results which RO knows are imperfect.

<p>Third Year: could we keep to same classes for the first 3 weeks then sets change?</p> <p>Concern was raised re 'scholarship classes', which used to exist.</p>	<p>RO will pass to FMM for consideration.</p> <p>RO stated that she had been assured that this was never the case, but that this was a common misconception of Junior School parents. <i>From Ms May post meeting 'Scholarship classes did not exist. Streaming was used across the First and Second Years – 2 bands, and then setting for Maths and French took place within those bands. Setting in English was introduced a few years ago after we stopped streaming, and this takes place across the whole year group'.</i></p>
<p>FIRST & THIRD YEAR ENTRY & INDUCTION</p>	<p>RO</p>
<p>The Taster Days were very advantageous and allowed children to meet their class but do we need two days of induction?</p> <p>One parent received a personal email from their child's Group Tutor at the end of the Christmas Term which was extremely positive.</p> <p>Several events were organised during the first term to increase integration between JS and external students which was extremely good and gave them something to look forward to.</p> <p>The Hockey tour in the first term was a great bonding experience and gave the (female) First Years the opportunity to meet external students other than JS. Would the College consider more 'mini tours' in future?</p> <p>A parent received an email from her son's Group Tutor in early January to reassure him. Her son also has commented 'It's very friendly here'!</p> <p>The New Parents' Welcome Evening on the first Wednesday of term to meet Group Tutors and get information was extremely helpful and boosted my daughter's confidence.</p> <p>The Induction Day on 2 September was great as it allowed the new students to have the school to themselves. However, one point to consider for next time might be to have Sixth Formers involved to help the new students out and show them around.</p> <p>Sixth Form Mentors should be more proactive to help new starters in the first term, for example, finding their way around the school, getting to Clubs - as it is extremely daunting for the new starters. My child is a music scholar and called home to check about a meeting. No</p>	<p>There are two days SGC@11 in September (prior to 11+ exam) and summer Orientation Day for all First Year students starting in September. Due to some prep schools not allowing absence during their term, it allows students the opportunity to visit at least once before they start.</p> <p>RO agreed – very positive and will take this back to Heads of Year.</p> <p>Yes, very positive feedback – mini tours are often as valuable as trips abroad.</p> <p>Did the Third Year parents present feel this was helpful as well? <i>Yes!</i></p> <p>Yes, practical point – and noted.</p> <p>RO is aware that the Mentors differ significantly and support can depend on which Sixth Former is allocated! Point taken – it can be extremely daunting for new students and we will work on a more proactive approach generally by the Mentors.</p>

<p>introductions by other children on the bus.</p> <p>The bus journey to/from school is extremely daunting for new students – they need to be better informed when bus changes have been made. Mrs Cheeseman doesn't appear to give that support.</p> <p>After the Third Year induction, there was very little going on to integrate the year unlike the First Year which appeared to have lots of Clubs and Societies (my son was jealous!).</p>	<p>However, there are some very positive actions by Mentors. For example, Ed Morrison, Head Boy, last term asked a First Year to sit with him and his peers on the bus route to Camberley which had an immensely powerful effect. Mentors need to be encouraged to be welcoming and supportive.</p> <p>For bus information or questions, please let your know children know that they can always approach Student Services team who have up to date information and are very friendly and approachable. But point noted about support in the Playground, too.</p> <p>Agreed this may be the case. Inevitably with the First Year as the biggest intake, they will have more induction events provided - although this is not necessarily correct! To look at further.</p>
<p>GRADE CARDS</p>	<p>RO</p>
<p>No Grade Cards issued at the end of Christmas Term which seemed odd.</p> <p>Third Year parents would like to receive Grade Cards at the end of Easter Term and this would be useful in planning for GCSE options.</p>	<p>The general rule is that no Grade Cards are issued when there is a Parents Evening that term. RO will check to see if this has/will be changed. <i>Post meeting – this has always been the case.</i></p> <p>Understood – RO to review.</p>
<p>THE HOUSE SYSTEM</p>	<p>RO</p>
<p>Inter-house competitions at the College are not very prominent. There was an inter-house Music evening last term, but this was largely for scholars rather than all students.</p> <p>The Inter-house competitions should not feature just scholars but all children in the year e.g. Drama competition for all First and Second Years.</p> <p>Can House Pins (badges) be introduced?</p>	<p>RO is aware that the House System needs developing. With only 4 Houses and almost 1,000 students the House System means it is difficult to involve all. One answer might be to increase the number of Houses but this may not be easy to implement, as students sometimes don't wish to move!</p> <p>Agreed, the House Competitions should be broad, and not for the elite only to take part.</p> <p>Will investigate.</p>
<p>DISCIPLINE</p>	<p>RO</p>
<p>There appears to be a varying approach to discipline by staff. With two disorganised boys the first few weeks of term were traumatic as some of the punishments were quite harsh!</p>	<p>The policy may appear to be strict, but consistency by all staff is the key - both when administering discipline, and when giving positive feedback.</p>
<p>MOBILE PHONES</p>	<p>RO</p>
<p>My daughter is at Sir William Perkins's School, and the First and Second Year student there do not have access to their 'phones all day.</p>	<p>RO is aware that there are vastly differing views on this. A letter was sent to First Year parents in the Christmas Term about mobile 'phones and a new</p>

<p>Conversely, at SGC students can use their 'phone in break time and lunch in all areas. What is your stance and will this policy be changing?</p> <p>Some children use their 'phones as a security blanket</p> <p>My daughter is on social media which is stopping her from interacting with other students. Her usage of the 'phone is relentless and having very negative effects. It can affect mental health. Currently SGC is giving mixed messages and not reinforcing parents' rules of phone use.</p> <p>Why is access to social media allowed during the school day? The College policy clearly states that 'phones may be used in locker bases or outside but children use them in classrooms.</p> <p>It is important for children to learn as they mature and to trust them!</p>	<p>policy to ban them in the First Year during their first term is under discussion with Head of Year, Mrs Willis. Ultimately, though, education is the most important issue here, and whilst making sure the students are fully aware of the implications of using their phones, they will be permitted to have access, provided usage does not interfere with the children's well-being.</p> <p>Yes, use of the mobile 'phone is everyone's responsibility, not only the school's but parents' too.</p> <p>The SGC policy and our job is to educate students on how to use 'phones sensibly and responsibly and ensure they are aware of the implications of social media. A ban would mean taking them off the students, but past history has shown that whilst some parents do not wish their children to have access, others insist on it for security and have been known to provide their child with another phone! It is impossible to reinforce a blanket ban logistically and realistically, particularly in the world we live in, therefore education is critically important. Boys and girls are very different at this age!</p> <p>Parents should be aware, however, that in the event of inappropriate information on a student 'phone, or if we are aware of poor behaviour involving a 'phone, disciplinary action is taken immediately.</p>
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Thank you to parents for coming, and I would encourage you all to come again to future Fora next term. Please advise in advance if you have any particular general concerns – feedback is also very welcome!