

PARENTS' FORUM - WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2017

Welcome and introduction. The Forum platform is intended for parents to discuss their concerns, and raise any issues, and always provides much food for thought! Notes from this and all Fora will be posted on Firefly.

UNIFORM POLICY - USE OF MAKE-UP

Anonymous letter received from a Third Year student regarding uniform. RCFO brought this up at Assembly asking the student to make an appointment, which she did. The student wished to discuss use of make-up by the lower years and why it is not permitted until Sixth Form. What are parents' views?

"Can't bear" use of make-up by the younger students. Will increase peer pressure unless very clear perimeters for use by younger years.

Some students should be permitted if they have acne problems – it will give more confidence to girls if they can use concealer (Fourth Year daughter).

What about boys' acne?!

No problem with use of make-up provided it is used discreetly, in a similar way to uniform rules (Fourth Year daughter).

What is the policy in other schools?

Make-up should not be allowed – it's a distraction and introducing it will create an unnecessary battle as the students push the boundaries.

Agreed – we must ensure equality!

Usually make-up is not permitted below Sixth Form but this is not always adhered to. There must be sensible control of make-up (i.e. use due to acne issues). There is definitely a big difference between make-up usage in co-ed and single sex schools. An interesting one!

Yes, on balance, I believe the current rules to ban make-up below Sixth Form seems on the whole correct, but with discretion used when there are difficult confidence issues or problems with acne.

PARENTS' EVENINGS vs REPORTS

RCFO interested in views regarding Parents' Evenings and written Reports. Which do Forum think is most valuable, and what is the preference in terms of frequency and timing?

Parents Evenings are ineffective in the current format of 5 minute slots. The appointments are organised by my daughter and all of them over-ran. The evening did not give a clear picture, particularly in Fourth and Fifth Years. However, staff did give a good impression.

Don't agree - great fan of Parents' Evenings! You learn far more by direct contact with teachers rather than by Reports.

At another school, 5 minutes is allotted per appointment but for any serious issues, further time is given with parents, separately to the Parents' Evening.

The frequency of the P/E should be increased as this is the best way to get information on progress. The first term is the most important time to have a P/E.

SGC staff are very approachable and generous with their time outside P/E. It is important for First and Second Year students to have P/E early in the year to establish how they are doing early on. Would

Agreed that 5 minutes is not much time for each subject but with the number of children each teacher has to see in the lower years, it's just not possible to extend the timing per appointment. In the Sixth Form more time (double) is allotted for Parents' Evenings.

More time can and will be given to parents in the event of serious issues. This may not have been made clear enough to parents. Staff will always meet with parents if required.

<p>welcome the opportunity of another P/E later in the year in addition, to monitor progress.</p> <p>Would the College consider using the same on-line booking system for P/E as the Junior School which works very well?</p>	<p>Yes – aware that the current system is old-fashioned and is in need of review.</p>
---	---

HEADMISTRESS' VISION FOR SGC

What is your vision for St George's?

<p>Over the last two weeks, there has been a noticeable change of relationship between staff and students. From 7.45am to 5.45pm my children have been busy out of class-time with staff. A transformation from last year! (Daughter Fifth Year and son Second Year).</p>	<p>Improvement through increasing contact time for teaching staff. 10 additional staff will be added from September thus allowing for more 'breathing time'. Utterly convinced that this will make a difference to pupil performance - allowing more time for staff development will therefore create more time for student development. This was presented to Chair of Governors and budget for new staff established.</p> <p>Establishing 'Walkabouts' i.e. adhoc visits to lessons since starting at SGC have been very instructive. This is important for consistency and monitoring. All of SLT should be doing the same to increase contact with students and spend less time at the computer! Increased visibility also raises confidence of staff who wish to 'show off' their lessons.</p> <p>Importance of Pastoral Care. Having moved from a small school to this large school, individual care is vital. Pastoral care is as much as a priority as teaching. Empathy with students and engaging with them is very important. Every student should be known. Again, giving more time to staff will allow them to prioritise this, too.</p> <p>Good to hear – will pass this back to staff!</p>
---	---

CELEBRATION OF ACHIEVEMENT

RCFO welcomed views on this, as it is currently under review.

<p>CoA is a record of attendance rather than achievement!</p> <p>Don't agree with the proposed changes – every child should be awarded at each event beyond the First Year.</p>	<p>Agreed – visited CoA last year and this is currently under review by SLT. New system may mean First Year CoA to include prizes for all as before, but the name of the event will change. The Second and Third Years' CoA will award prizes for only those that have achieved, but all students will be recognised for their effort.</p> <p>There should be more careful thought about CoAs and prizes must be relevant, not simply awards for awards sake. Older children are cynical and are aware that everyone getting a prize means that sadly they are devalued.</p>
---	--

GOVERNORS	
There has been a noticeable culture shift of the expectations of staff. How can parents be assured that parental governors are elected with integrity and proper skill set?	
Is the constitution fit for purpose as the school continues development?	<p>There have always been governors who are also parents in the past. Governors are appointed as governors by a nominations committee. The Clerk to the Governors, Greg Cole (Bursar) will suggest that we look for particular governors in certain areas. The Chair of Governors will take soundings then may invite an individual to apply and then interview. It is agreed that our governors are self-perpetuating, but this is quite usual in our sector, and they are always keen to broaden those involved.</p> <p>Yes absolutely - Greg Cole is highly organised as Clerk and there is meticulous preparation for each meeting. There is a close Josephite relationship and a broad range of governors who are aware of parental perception and the importance of being robust. The Board must also report to the Charities Commission who hold the Governors to account, as do ISI.</p>
FOOTBALL	
With two boys at the College who love Football, would you ever consider introducing this as a main sport?	
	<p>Very aware that this is a popular sport but at this stage, no – will not introduce as the College already has 3 terms of main sport i.e. Rugby, Hockey and Cricket for boys. Adding Football could dilute the success of our College sport.</p> <p>Football has been introduced by two boys in our Sixth Form for this age group, and there is now a First, Second and Third team. A new kit has been agreed and whilst BJP runs the Football teams, the two Sixth Formers organise their own fixtures – a great initiative!</p>
5 YEARS AHEAD	
'Be the best version of yourself' - what does success look like five years from now?	
	<p>Success is BBVOY because if you are happy, you will do well.</p> <p>Consistent Value Added across all subjects is more important than raw success in school tables. Better performance across the board through superb Value Added.</p> <p>SGC should be the first choice for people within a certain radius.</p>
IB SYSTEM	
Would SGC ever consider introducing IB system?	
	<p>Probably not, for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All need to be good at Language and Maths - not always the case • Cannot take early languages

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced to take weaker subjects to higher level • At UK University, 93% state intake, who take A levels – therefore A levels are understood best by Admissions Tutors.
CAREERS Technology at SGC - gender balance in industry?	
<p>Careers should mean engaging with people in particular industries and bringing them in to inspire students. Aware of ReUnite but parents should be more involved and would be happy to do so.</p> <p>At JS there were regular 'Show and Tells' which were extremely positive but a high proportion of teenagers don't have any direction for their career (First Year boy).</p>	<p>Careers at SGC is currently something that I am keen to review. Keen to encourage girls into industry and to encourage students generally to make them aware of the world of work.</p> <p>OGs and parents are currently networked for Careers but agreed, more parents should be sourced and development is needed here.</p> <p>Agree, some students don't have career ambitions – there is an opportunity to inspire students!</p>
MONITORING & ASSESSEMENT TEACHING STAFF What assurances do we have of being rigorous with less able staff?	
<p>The Forum has been extremely impressive and there is a big sea change at SGC – thank you! It's great that 10 new staff will be appointed from September but are all staff consistent – what assurances do we have of being rigorous with less able staff?</p> <p>Tutor feedback in the past has been minimal – with the staff changes, will they take on more?</p> <p>What support is there for weaker teachers at SGC?</p>	<p>Consistency is vital. Very aware that students have one shot at GCSEs and A Levels therefore, it is vital to get the teaching body right and I will not avoid issues. This means proper monitoring and sustaining good teaching staff. I am passionate about getting and retaining the best teaching staff possible at SGC.</p> <p>Yes, more staff should create more time for pastoral work besides teaching, and for them to take the initiative, though some tutors are already very proactive. It is important for schools to move away from 'them and us' to focussing on the fact that it is a partnership with parents, and that we must all listen and work together.</p> <p>There was a HoY meeting before half term to discuss Tutors and how to develop the role.</p> <p>Dan Wright, DH Staff, is very knowledgeable about teacher support. He and Francesca May, DH Academic, have recently introduced a Head of Departments 'How to' Guide each fortnight (on topics such as 'Working with challenging parents!') We do recognise that some staff do need more guidance, for example on how to convey difficult information to parents. Performance management, as in every workplace, should be an equal balance of 'carrot and stick'.</p>
PARENTS SUPPORT What do you, as Head, want from the parent group (other than funding!).	
<p>A great Forum tonight – but surprised at the low number of parents attending. What do you, as Head, want from the parent group (other than funding!).</p>	<p>Parent support! It's good to hear positive feedback as well as hear the bad – tell the good stories!</p>

	<p>Ask your child's teacher 'What can I do?' – don't assume a teacher has all the answers. Parents and children can make suggestions.</p> <p>Don't always believe your child! Keep a close relationship with their teachers and email them if you have issues to discuss. Don't bottle it up!</p>
--	---

Thank you to everyone for coming – it's good to hear your thoughts. Please advise in advance if you have any particular general concerns – feedback is also very welcome!