

FORUM FOR COLLEGE PARENTS

TUESDAY 16 MAY 2017

1. Confidential Communication

- 1.1. There has been a lack of confidence in teacher confidentiality if a complaint/problem is escalated.
- 1.2. *It usually depends on which staff are spoken to – sometimes there can be a problem with consistency of Group Tutors/Subject Teachers, and possibly more training is required to resolve this issue (HM). This has been taken up at subsequent SMT meetings.*
- 1.3. Sometimes parents are afraid to confide in staff because of the apparent lack of confidentiality. Parents don't always want their children to know.
- 1.4. *Is it the common view that there is a lack of confidentiality? (HM)*
- 1.5. No, some staff are totally trustworthy, but for example, the change of attitude of some staff when dealing with Fifth Year compared with how they deal with Sixth Form is huge, and staff need to remember that some Lower Sixth students are still very immature and need guidance which is not always given.
- 1.6. It is difficult to get confidential feedback. Also, the recent results from the mocks were extremely slow in coming and although results were not strong, there was 'jolly and jokey' feedback in some cases. Too much familiarity means less sharp and direct reports.
- 1.7. *This issue will be discussed by SLT (This was discussed at length at SLT and SMT, and reiterated to all staff at 'Soapbox' 22/05) (HM)*

2. Correct Process for Complaints about Teaching Staff

- 2.1. It is felt that there will be negative repercussions for a child if a complaint is made about a member of staff.
- 2.2. *We always encourage parents to voice their concerns if they are unhappy about teaching. It is vital that each issue is handled properly and we do not become defensive about SGC. If a Head of Department does not address an issue within their department, the next point of contact should be FMM as Deputy Head Academic. It is totally unacceptable for a child to be affected by a complaint made about a teacher. (HM)*
- 2.3. Is there a confidential channel for students to make a complaint about teaching staff?
- 2.4. *Primarily, FMM as DH Academic or RCFO as HM may be approached at any time, if students are worried about repercussions by talking to a Head of Department. Complaints will always be dealt with; for example an anonymous letter left for HM was mentioned at Assembly and as a result, the child concerned met with HM to discuss the issue. Talking to children is very important and as HM, always happy to discuss student issues.*

- 2.5.** There should also be an opportunity to praise staff for doing a good job! This is often overlooked and it's nice to say positive things as well as make complaints!
- 2.6.** *In the same way that a channel is being set up on Firefly to make a complaint about bullying, there should be a conduit by which children can make a complaint and this needs to be investigated. Also, good idea to give parents the opportunity to praise! This point is taken and will be discussed with SLT and HM will reiterate to students at Assembly. (HM)*

3. Sport Co-ordination

- 3.1.** Communication to parents of teams, timings etc. is sporadic and disorganised. Team selection is 'live or die' to a child and sports staff don't seem to be aware of this.
- 3.2.** *Our teachers and coaches are under a lot of time pressure, but SLT is aware of the mistakes made which in turn, cause stress for the children. As a result, from September, a new Sports Administrator has been appointed to co-ordinate the Department communications i.e. team list, coaches, transport, lunches. This will be a one year trial – feedback welcome! (HM)*
- 3.3.** If a child does not make it into a team, they should be encouraged to approach the coach to ask why (rather than parents).
- 3.4.** *Yes, totally agree – students should be able to approach sports staff in the same way as other teaching staff and in turn, the coaches should be encouraged to respond confidently. (HM)*
- 3.5.** Sharing information about teams, sporting results makes a big difference and empowers – is this something that SGC can do more of?
- 3.6.** *Staff are emailed with results from the past week each Monday – we will check if this may also be shared with parents. Unfortunately, full team lists should not be widely shared, due to data protection restrictions. (HM)*
- 3.7.** Rather than relying on your child to check teams, it's also important for parents to know as children are not always reliable!
- 3.8.** *We are aware that the communication of teams varies according to each coach – and each child, depending on whether they are organised or not! It is our aim that the new Sports Administrator will provide better information/logistics regarding timings and team selection to help parents from September. (HM).*

4. Football

- 4.1.** There is minimal Football provision for those students who don't play the curriculum sports (Rugby/Hockey). How can this change?
- 4.2.** *Football is now very strong in the Sixth Form. Organised by the boys themselves, the College has provided support with new kit and adult help with fixtures. However, we are aware that there is less provision for football in the lower years and this should be addressed in terms of clubs. Rugby remains the main College sport, however. (HM subsequently met with Head of Activities to see how this might be addressed from September, with more formal clubs for those below the Sixth Form).*

- 4.3. If your child does not play rugby, he is able to get away with playing very little sport at the College. For example my son played lots of sport at the JS, but since College has done very little as it is difficult to break into a team.
- 4.4. *We would not consider adding football as part of the curriculum as this would 'dilute' the main sports but it is agreed that more opportunities should be given elsewhere if a child is not interested in them. (HM)*
- 4.5. Delighted that there is more Golf provision – can the College reach out to more parents to get involved in these minority types of sport?
- 4.6. *We would welcome more parent input but safeguarding regulations make this challenging! However, there is opportunity for better deployment of staff next academic year with an additional 10 new staff joining from September. (HM)*
- 4.7. My son hates rugby and he needs a proper sport alternative – would you consider a survey for students to confirm their preferences?
- 4.8. *I do hear your points, but primarily, SGC is a rugby school and parents have bought into this. To change to football would be cataclysmic! However, there are alternatives to rugby higher up the school and children are not forced to play rugby as they go on. (After meeting – agreed with Head of Activities to survey the pupils about their activity preferences and if football features strongly to increase provision in club time. HM)*

5. Trips - First and Third Years

- 5.1. Apart from a Retreat, there are no 'whole year' residential trips organised for the First Year (in comparison to several residential trips in at the JS). This is a disappointment for my child – and means less opportunity for the year to bond.
- 5.2. *As a response to other parental concerns, a day trip to Fishbourne has already been organised for the First Year during this Summer Term. However, it is agreed that further trips, earlier in the academic year, should be organised for both the First and Third Years to better help integration. This will be discussed with SLT. (Subsequently agreed in principle by SLT - an overnight bonding trip in the first term for both First and Third Year students – now being put in train. HM)*

6. Registration Communication from Student Services

- 6.1. Overall communication by SSU is good – thank you for the information provided about Fifth Year exam dates. However, a blunt text was sent yesterday about my son not turning up for registration which freaked me out, as he had an exam!
- 6.2. *Understood – this will be passed on to SSU team. Need to ensure 100% accuracy, especially around exam time. (HM)*

7. Competitiveness in Classroom vs Sports Field

- 7.1. Other schools appear to have better competitive 'spark' in lessons but at SGC there seems no place to be proud of academic achievement.

7.2. *My aim is for a child to be as lauded for academic achievement as on the sports field, or in any other aspect of school life. The Josephite ethos of recognising excellence in all areas is very important to us. (HM)*

8. Visibility of Changes to Improve Departments

- 8.1. There appears to be a lack of communication when changes are made to teaching departments i.e. the removal of under-achieving staff and replacements.
- 8.2. It is very difficult to communicate this aspect of change without humiliating or undermining staff. Rest assured, steps are being taken to address problems, but these cannot always be announced. Staff morale is absolutely essential, but the priority must be what is best for the children at SGC – this is the bottom line.
- 8.3. The Physics department has had a lot of changes – will these be communicated to parents?
- 8.4. *Agreed, new staff appointments should be shared with parents and RCFO will do so in half term update. (HM)*
- 8.5. There has been concern that staff turnover over the past year has been high.
- 8.6. *There is always traditionally a natural turnover with the departure of an HM. It will look like a lot this time, as 10 additional members of teaching staff have also been appointed for September to allow for greater contact time. That said, whilst it is vital to retain good staff, good staff should also not be held back from promotion opportunities! (HM)*
- 8.7. Parents have noticed and been discussing staff turnover and have questioned if good staff have been hired vs the old excellent staff?
- 8.8. *We are very confident that good staff have been appointed - the Governing Body gave authorisation for 10 additional new teachers in January, which enabled us to hire from the optimum pool of candidates. Staff morale is high because this issue has been addressed, and I am confident that with this will come better outcomes. Staff pay has been bench-marked against competitor schools, (by Baines Cutler – who most independent schools use), in order to ensure we retain good staff. (HM)*

If there are any further issues or questions which have not been raised at tonight's Forum, please don't hesitate to contact me by email: headmistress@stgeorgesweybridge.com.

*Parents will be notified in advance of two Fora on either side of the Christmas Term 2017 (dates to be confirmed). The topics for discussion will be **Pastoral Care** with RCFO and DH Pastoral (SLH) and **Academic** with RCFO and DH Academic (FMM).*