

HEADMISTRESS' FORUM TO CURRENT PARENTS – TUESDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2016

<p>RCFO Welcome and introduction. Forum platform is intended for parents to discuss their concerns – the agenda is yours! If there is a particular topic which needs greater discuss, a whole Forum may be taken up with this subject. Notes from the Forum will be posted on Firefly.</p>	
<p>TIMINGS OF FORUMS</p>	
<p>Several parents have commented on the timings of the Forums to allow working hours. Future Forum timings will vary throughout the School year in order to accommodate as many parents' diaries as possible. Evening Forums will be held in later terms; initial timings were constrained by events already in the calendar for this term.</p>	
<p>SCHOOL UNIFORM</p>	
<p>No Crest on uniform</p>	<p>This is traditionally an independent school method. To do with uniform outside school – no crest means less prominence on public transport etc.</p>
<p>Girls' skirts are too short and tight – other schools have more loose fitting designs.</p> <p>Pencil skirts are the 'wrong shape'. Is there a specific rule on length of skirt (i.e. 3 fingers above knee) – there needs to be more clarity.</p> <p>Girls 'roll up skirts anyway'</p>	<p>Agree with length of skirts – need better guidelines and consistent reinforcement.</p> <p>Rules should be 'sensible' i.e. just above knee.</p> <p>Perhaps design of skirt can prevent rolling up of skirts.</p>
<p>Trousers for girls or variety of girls' skirts to choose from?</p> <p>Parents would have the same issues with trousers! Clarity on uniform is what is required.</p> <p>Would it be possible to gauge popularity of trousers for girls?</p> <p>If girls have a choice of trousers, should not boys have a choice of shorts?</p> <p>As a teacher at Heathside, both choices were offered and it was never an issues.</p> <p>Rule for Jumper and Blazer combined is too much particularly during Summer Term (heat issues!)</p>	<p>Personally in favour of skirts for girls. A variety of skirts would be difficult to reinforce and produce in bulk. For teenage girls particularly, it is simpler to have one choice of skirt only and reinforce rules.</p> <p>School Council can be consulted if trousers for girls are to be considered and to go forward.</p> <p>Of course, but we would have to offer up skirts for boys as well for equality – boys and girls should be given the same options.</p> <p>This may be different in our context; we would need to consider carefully before acting.</p> <p>Yes agreed, guidelines should be sensible for summer. Again, clarity!</p> <p>RRR as DH Pastoral over sees uniform but is on maternity leave, therefore the onus is on HoY to reinforce the rules.</p>

IT AT THE COLLEGE

<p>Despite much progress with Firefly, IT is outdated at the College. Is there a digital strategy for the school?</p> <p>Should teaching staff and departments be pushing for more progressive IT?</p> <p>Information is emailed to parents but still have email attachments and forms with tear-off strips.</p> <p>Public exams are still written whilst most of the homework is done on a computer.</p>	<p>Yes, there is a need for better digital strategy and this is currently under discussion with SLT.</p> <p>Despite advance in Firefly, SLT is aware that this is inconsistent and dependent on the HoD. Perhaps the appointment of a Firefly ‘champ’ to push all of the HoDs forward?</p> <p>IT provision is also under review; we are considering more manpower which will help push IT forwards.</p> <p>Aware of the inconsistency of message sent out. SLT are focussing on better branding to ensure all correspondence is the same and reinforcing branding.</p> <p>This comment has reinforced an issue which is already on the SLT agenda, so thank you.</p>
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MOBILE PHONES

<p>As a parent, I’m amazed at the ‘laissez-faire’ attitude to use of phones and texting at lunchtime particularly with the First Years. This must be managed better.</p> <p>A blanket ban of phones would not work but usage during specific times only. In the event of an emergency, parents can be contacted via SSU anyway.</p> <p>There are schools that don’t allow phones all day which must be put in locker</p>	<p>This is recognised as a problem with First Years particularly, and agreed, it must be managed. Other First Year parents have spoken to Mrs Willis about this concern. However, as new starters, the ability to use phones is new and exciting, and creates great use in the First Year.</p> <p>Better management would mean teaching students ‘phone etiquette’ to teach responsible usage. LLW is planning a PSHE session on phones this term to educate First Years on usage and to stop use of Whatsapp & Snapchat etc.</p> <p>Aware that there is peer pressure in the lower years to use phones, therefore next year we are considering a trial of no phone usage during lunch break before Christmas to encourage First Years to focus on making new friends. However, realistic policing of phones is extremely difficult, particularly at lunch when children are not all in one group. Parents also, should be responsible for policing their child’s phone usage.</p> <p>Yes agreed but in reality – from speaking with other heads – blanket ban policing is a ‘nightmare’! Also some parents negate ban by providing multiple phones for their child..!</p>
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STANDARD OF TEACHING

<p>There is huge disparity between the teaching staff. Some teachers consistently fail to provide quality teaching and receive complaints year on year.</p>	<p>SLT is aware of concerns with elements of the teaching staff. RCFO is taking ‘walkabouts’ including lessons and investigating this closely. This is also reflected in some of the findings from the Mungo Dunnett research. Please be reassured that action will be taken - it would be wrong and pointless not to respond to parent</p>
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<p>Would the school consider 360 degree evaluation by peers/SLT/students?</p> <p>There appears to be difficulty by SLT in executing action on poor quality teaching staff.</p> <p>Teaching interviews should include lesson observations.</p> <p>Having worked her for over 10 years as well as a parent, the number of staff has remained at the same levels despite the rise in the number of students. Staff are required to spend time on extra-curricular clubs as well as teaching with means increasing pressure with time.</p> <p>There appear to be an increasing number of trips during the holidays which staff must plan for and attend. (there are several Fourth Year trips but only 1 skiing trip for Second Year)</p>	<p>feedback.</p> <p>All teaching staff are interviewed by SLT members, HoD and by Sixth Form students - whose points of view are often spot on and very valuable.</p> <p>RCFO assures parents that she is willing and able to make hard decisions regarding teaching staff. Line management of teachers is undertaken by HoDs, but ultimately the teaching staff performance is the Head's responsibility.</p> <p>Yes, lesson observations are always included in teaching interviews. SLT are aware of the importance of consistent reviews, including teaching and learning groups, discussions on approach rather than detail.</p> <p>Yes, agreed – this does have to be looked at. Staff are under increasing pressure.</p> <p>We are working on establishing a grid of trips to provide information on costs, timings etc. to enable better planning and budgeting for parents.</p>
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SPORT

<p>Would SGC consider adding a physiotherapist to staff to meet the increasing need for this support particularly for boys as they go up the school? Could this be put to parents? (Another parent advised physiotherapist on-site at another school but parents paid themselves).</p> <p>Would SGC consider extending rugby for another term? Currently Rugby, Hockey, Cricket means short time for each sport.</p>	<p>Unsure, but academic staff should always be the priority! Certainly as high performance sports children increase it could be a possibility.</p> <p>Independent schools traditionally do 3 different terms of sport. It would be difficult to deliver on this suggestion, as there are obvious preferences for different sports by each student and cannot cater for everyone. The status quo is a 'best fit'.</p>
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LUNCH QUEUES

<p>Lunch queues are too long! Children involved with sport or lunchtime clubs do not have enough time to eat a proper meal (<i>Very high consensus by all parents</i>).</p>	<p>NOTED! Lunch queues in September are always at their worst with new system and new students. However, it is obviously not working as it should.</p> <p>DFW, Deputy Head Staff, has made this a priority this week. HoYs are being deployed to sort this out, to prevent students coming in to lunch at the wrong time despite their rota.</p> <p>Strong opinion on queues has been noted and it will be advised as a major priority to staff.</p>
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<p>Lack of food choice for late arrivals for lunch. Daughter chose to bring sandwiches due to lack of choice.</p> <p>Lockers are very small and design means that to access a bottom locker, child must wait for the upper locker to be used. Means late for lunch.</p> <p>Why are children queuing outside for lunch in the rain? Fifth Years are always the last year to eat – can the rota not be swapped so that each year takes turns?</p>	<p>Interesting point; there has been concern that too much food was being wasted, therefore this should be reviewed.</p> <p>Personally, I do not believe locker size is an issue; space is good in locker-base areas. Teachers will need to keep an eye on behaviour to prevent children being delayed (will mention at staff ‘Soapbox’) and ensure First Years leave early for lunch.</p> <p>Outside queuing not acceptable. Eating times are split so that business staff and some teaching staff, plus some Sixth Formers eat early to ease the burden at 1.10pm. First and Second Years do go first – thereafter a rota is in place. Agree better supervision and staffing needs to be deployed for the system to work efficiently. Also the turnstile system is being looked at.</p>
SPORT/MUSIC/DRAMA	
<p>These departments are ‘great’ but Music department in particular, put too much pressure on students and put them off! There were 8 x GCSE students studying Music this year but numbers dropped at A Level. There is too much pressure – last weekend’s choir trip was ‘torture’!</p> <p>There is in-fighting between Sport/Drama/Music departments for time which puts pressure on the children.</p>	<p>These concerns need to be looked at, though I should also note that some parents put forward a diametrically opposite view!</p> <p>This is a problem for all schools. Different department commitments are often difficult for a child in the lower years to balance and Group Tutors should be helping them to manage this.</p>
<p>RCFO</p> <p>Thank you to parents for coming, and I would encourage you all to come again to future Forums which will have different timings.</p> <p>Please advise in advance if you have any particular general concerns before the next Forum – feedback is very welcome!</p> <p>A representative from a specific department may be invited to come along in future to a Forum to discuss a particular topic, but the next one will also be just of a general ‘all topics’ nature.</p>	