Dear Parent/Carer

9th December 2013

PARENT COUNCIL

Please find below notes from the Parent Council Meeting held on Thursday 21st November. In addition, I have included responses to a number of questions that I have received over the last few weeks that I felt would be useful to share with you.

The next meeting of the Parent Council is on Thursday 16th January at 7pm in A12 and I look forward to seeing you then.

Yours sincerely

Mr S Gardner
Principal

Notes from the Parent Council Meeting held on 21st November 2013

The latest parent council meeting/forum was hosted by the Management team from the school and open to all parents to attend.

The Principal, Mr S Gardner, welcomed parents and presented a slide show, informing the parents of the changes that have taken place within the school since the last parent forum; along with responses to questions raised at the last parent council meeting.

Mr Gardner talked about some of the support being provided for staff - Learning walks/assessment walks/training/developing the Language of pedagogy/common lesson plan/CPD sharing good practice/lesson planning ideas. The response from our HMI indicated that she was impressed by the quality of observations/feedback.

A copy of the presentation will be provided on the school website for those parents who were unable to attend on the evening.

Parents had the opportunity to ask questions during the evening and the following issues were raised:

Coats
The school has been reinforcing its coat policy; coats are not to be worn indoors and that the students have been asked to put on or taken off their coats as they enter/leave the school.
Sanctions
Parents raised concerns about what they saw as draconian measures. Mr Gardner accepted the need to explain to staff to be reasonable about expectations – uniform/equipment, especially Year 7. Repeat offenders though would not be ignored.
A discussion was held on what constitutes a sanction. A sanction is where a boy is corrected for minor issues. The reward card allows for the sanctions to be wiped clean once 3 rewards have been received. However more serious issues will attract a detention. The boys are aware of the changes to the reward/merit scheme but the message will be reinforced through assemblies.

Laptops
Year 9 are still not having the opportunity to use their laptops within their lessons. The school is aware of this and has asked the teachers to use the laptops wherever possible; however the school is aware that the IT system at times fails, letting the teachers down. A review of the IT within the school has taken place with a report being prepared for the IMB.

Also at the end of the payment schedule some year 10 students have found that they have lost some of their laptop software; this may be due to the operational Licences but the school will investigate.

Homework
Every student has a homework timetable; however comments were raised over the amount and time to be spent on homework with some years reporting that the full amount of homework is not being set. This will be reviewed. Mr Gardner reported on the purpose and use of marking stamps. Homework Timetables will be published again.

New Timetables
As the school moves over to the new two week timetable, wherever possible the students will remain with the same subject teacher. However the new timetable will allow for greater setting within KS4 in subjects such as Math and Science, which may see the students with a change of teacher.
All students will have their new timetable prior to the Christmas break.

A request was made that if the students experience a change of teacher in any subject any time during the year that they are kept informed.

Communication
Parents asked for clarification on ParentPay – do parents have to opt in to the scheme in order to receive emails? Not all parents have been receiving the school letters via parent pay. The school is aware of the problem and will contact all parents over the next week to correct the situation.
Parents suggested that a Newsletter to pupils would be useful.

There was a suggestion from the floor of adopting a common communication strategy across the Trust
Examinations
Mr Gardner explained the logic of pre-seen papers in A2 assessments in order to build confidence. Year 11 will also have pre-seen papers but there will be further unseen mocks later in the year.

Year 11 revision timetable
A revision timetable has been put in place for those students who could benefit from extra support during their GCSE year. Revision sessions have been held during form time, lunch time and after school so not to disturb any lessons.

Exceed club
The exceed club is where the 6th form students (arranged via the School Captain) help support year 11 students with their studies. This has been very well received in past years and a request was made that this year it is opened up to include year 10 students.

Vertical form classes
The parents were asked their view on Vertical form classes, which give the students an opportunity to integrate with different year groups. It was felt that integration was a good thing but should be achieved through after school clubs and the school plays etc. It was felt that they boys benefit more from being with students of the same age, who are a going through the same experiences in life at the same time, providing an understanding and support net work amongst the boys. Mr Gardner indicated that the school will be looking to develop further Inter House activities. Mr Gardner explained about Year 11 Form time support and that additional support will be provided after school by teachers. Parents asked if sixth formers would be encouraged to assist. Mr Gardner indicated that he was keen to extend pupil responsibilities and this was an example of opportunities that could be made available.

Entry into 6th Form
A question was raised regarding the entry requirements. Mr Gardner explained the reasoning behind the need to make changes to the 6th Form in order to offer more appropriate pathways for students. The students will now need 5 A-C GCSE’s including Math and English plus a B grade in the subject they wish to take forward at A level, with the exception being Math where an A grade will be required.

Date of Next Meeting
Thursday 16th January at 7pm in A12
RESPONSES TO RECENT QUESTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN ASKED

Chatham Grammar School for Boys becoming part of the RGS/AFS Thinking Schools Trust.
The expectation of The Department for Education is that all schools that go into special measured become sponsored academies. The Trustees of Chatham Grammar School for Boys voted to ask to join the RGS/AFS Trust as a sponsored Academy. Some parents have asked for the minutes from these meetings and we will make these available on the School’s website.
The RGS/AFS Thinking Schools Trust is a multi-academy trust consisting of both Secondary and Primary schools.

Creation of an Interim Management Board (IMB) to take responsibility for the governance of the school.
Schools that go into Special Measures will normally appoint an IMB to take responsibility for the governance of the school as it works its way out of Special Measures. This body will meet more often than a traditional governing body. Given the Ofsted report’s comments on leadership and oversight the governing body voted to appoint an IMB on 15/10/13. Some parents have asked for the minutes from this meeting and we will make these available on the School’s website.

The creation of a new Year 11 registration group
During the Easter term we will be creating an additional Year 11 registration group who will be able to receive additional support in English, Maths and Science. In addition they will receive support in their personal organization and preparing themselves for all their examinations next summer. This is being done to support students and ensure they achieve the results they are capable of next summer without having to remove them from their other lessons. The length of time a student will spend in this group will depend on the extent of the support they require.

Plans for physical education, the arts and other subjects as well as school trips
The new time table will allow for some increased PE in some year groups and extended periods of PE due to the longer double lessons. We aim to build on the current provision in these areas and aim to raise their status through House competitions. The school will continue to offer excellent opportunities to travel abroad and engage with different cultures.

Support for students with special educational needs.
Chatham Grammar School for Boys works very hard to meet the needs of all its students and will continue to do so. One of our first acts here at Chatham Grammar School for Boys was to enhance the role of Ms Currie within the school.

School bags
There are no plans to introduce a no bag rule.

The Learning Environment
There has been a significant emphasis on the Learning Environment in the school because students need to know that they are valued and the school has not previously invested enough time, energy and resources into ensuring that the students have a high quality Learning Environment.
The reward system
All rewards will be delivered through the reward card that every student has. This means that students have a better chance of working off any sanctions, increases the chances of entering for the end of term reward draw and allows the school to more effectively monitor the use of rewards in the school.

Student recruitment
Currently we are focused on making Chatham Grammar School for Boys the best school it can be. The admissions round for 2014 took place very early in the academic year and only a few weeks after the publication of the Ofsted report. The students and staff did an excellent job on the Open Evening and hopefully prospective parents will have seen the school we all believe Chatham Grammar School for boys can be.

Teacher planning
Good lessons start with good lesson planning. Therefore, it is essential that all staff use a common template in order to develop the quality of planning across the teaching staff. The teachers are undertaking intensive Professional Development and engaging in significant Joint Lesson planning to share best practice.

School Finances
Unfortunately, the school finances are in a difficult position and we will have to take action in the coming years to ensure the school re-establishes itself on a firm financial footing. Ms Shepherd is speaking to Lord Nash in the next week in regards to accessing funds to support Academies that go into Special Measures. Unfortunately, the days of schools that go into Special Measures receiving large quantities of additional funding have gone. We are seeking all sources of potential income to support the school and we have just had confirmation of an additional £48,000 to support the school.

Parental support
The school welcomes all forms of parental support, if there is something any parent feels they could offer to support the school then please contact the Holcombe Office. We would like to thank all the volunteers taking part in the Support Our School day.

Communication
We have had frustrating and on-going issues with the use of Parent Pay as a mechanism for communicating with parents. We have contacted all parents by post to confirm the extent of the difficulties parents are facing. We will review the extent to which we are able to resolve these difficulties and whether an alternative system needs to be adopted.
We are also aware that some parents report not receiving communications from teachers after they have contacted the School Office we will review how messages are being sent and how we track responses.