Dear Parent/Carer

5th February 2014

PARENT COUNCIL

Please find below notes from the Parent Council Meeting held on Thursday 23rd January. A copy of these notes, together with my presentation will be put on the school website for those parents who were unable to attend on the evening.

Yours sincerely

S. Gardner

Mr S Gardner
Principal

Notes from the Meeting of the Parent Council on Thursday 23rd January 2014

Mr Gardner, Principal welcomed parents to the meeting and presented a slide show entitled: CGSB: A Vision for a Thriving Community. These notes, together with the presentation will be placed on the school website for all parents to see.

Mr Gardner was sharing the presentation with students at assembly and keeping them updated of changes, all necessary so that we can build a thriving school community. There is a successful community within school already with individual achievements and the school’s role is to identify these successes and support students.

Need tools to be successful in our learning and to help students to understand how to learn; all students learn differently and we need to find out how best to use their personal resources. Knowledge has power and value and students need the acquisition of memory skills to be successful in school and beyond.

One of the school’s aims is to provide a skilled community; Year 11s are already being mentored into team roles eg, helping staff with display work, site team and stage crew; this is important for developing leadership and presenting skills for future.

A vibrant community: A Family that Plays Together Stays Together: Mr Gardner stated that in his experience boys connect with people who give of their time. In this regard a Year 11 House Night is being piloted on a Friday night with a view to introducing this across the school in the future to build on relationships with fellow students and both teaching and support staff.
Parents then asked questions:

Q: **What support is in place for Year 12 students?**

Specific students have been identified as needing supervised study time within school; the school is also running revision classes during the Easter break for Years 11, 12 and 13

Q: **What about for those Year 12 students doing A2s?**

Mr Brown and Mr Benwell are going through results in the next couple of weeks and then will be talking to students; also link them up with Year 13 students who have had unconditional offers for university.

Q: **My Year 12 son’s motivation is dipping. It’s great that the Year 11s are being motivated but what is in place for Year 12?**

The long term vision for the school community is to have House nights on each nights of the week where students can come together and support each other in subject areas. Year 12 and 13 students have been involved in a Memory Skills Day where memory tools and techniques have been explored. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is improving and will drive up the quality of results of our students. We are trying to feed this into lessons

One parent stated how impressed he was with the progress that had been made so far and that Mr Gardner should be praised for his efforts; he had done a lot this evening to explain how the school was moving forward. He did, however, question resources, eg, lack of books in some lessons and also a number of supply teachers in school.

Mr Gardner stated that there were problems with finances that needed to be corrected; however, where books were necessary they had been purchased and once the budget was balanced then there would be reinvestment in books as required. Supply was necessary at the moment for two members of staff on maternity leave; History and Geography posts had been filled and starting after the Easter break. Mr Gardner also stated that supply teachers were interviewed and observed in lessons before being appointed.

Q: **Is it hard to find teachers who would welcome this new ethos? Did Ofsted recommend not employing NQTs?**

Although Ofsted recommended not employing NQTs, Mr Gardner stated that he would consider employing them if he felt they were the right person for the job; the interview process was rigorous now and that without prior knowledge, interviewees had to plan and teach 2 1hr lessons followed by interview. Mr Gardner observed their teaching and was on the interview panel so that he could ensure that the person employed was the right choice.

Q: **Still problems with IT?**

A new school website had been launched earlier in the week and although not yet perfect, it was the start of a better on-line image for the school; new software had been installed for Moodle to allow more effective use; internet now much more stable; dedicated IT suite now in the S Block; all machines around the school have been improved. More investment in IT to be made in future
Q: Use of laptops and value for money?

Still issues with using laptops, some rented, some bought, and not always used in lessons. Suggestion that the scheme be dropped. Mr Gardner to discuss the whole laptop scheme issue with the IT Department

Q: Will there be a Year 12 Prizegiving?

There will be a separate Certificates Evening and Prizegiving Ceremony in the summer. It was decided to cancel the traditional Prizegiving at the Central Theatre to save on costs, which would be better spent in school

Q: Will there be a Year 8 Option Evening?

Year 8 exams will be shortly after February half term (now confirmed for the week of 3rd March). The results will give us an idea of the levels for the core subjects; the Options Evening will follow this.

Q: Is there any motivation for Years 10 and downwards?

The school is looking to introduce House nights for all year groups eventually.

Q: In Science, my son has had a number of different teachers; can you assure me he is not losing teaching time? (Sixth form)

It was accepted that there had been a number of different teachers but it was felt that the lessons delivered were still of a good standard.

Q: Several visual learning techniques displayed in the classroom – are these the tools you are using with students?

Teachers teach the way they learnt. Boys like kinaesthetic learning. A step within our Continuing Professional Development is to train teachers in the use of circle maps, bubble maps etc. The PE staff already teach in a kinaesthetic style and will help train other teachers to use those methods.

Q: How are the teachers supporting the students with SEN issues?

The SEN Department is a strength within the school; measures are put in place for individual students as per their needs but it is still an area we need to focus on. Teachers need to have confidence to use the Teaching Assistants effectively in class so that the teacher can spend more time with SEN students. Feedback has shown that SEN students’ needs are being met. Improved teaching will engage those SEN students and, therefore, every child will benefit from good teaching.

Q: How do you help students cope with the stress of exams and personal issues; with all the changes in school how can you help them focus on exams?

There are a number of staff within school that have pastoral roles and the students need to feel confident to approach them; the PD lessons in school cover these topics; acute individual needs are addressed separately. Students are kept informed of changes in assembly and by letters home to parents. Within the classroom, individual teachers are in a position to support students with their stresses and exams they face.
Q: Marking seems to be an issue?

In the December Assessment review over two thirds of books were assessed as having good marking or better. Where marking was found to be inadequate, staff have been seen and further monitoring is taking place.

Q: Communication is still an issue?

Still appear to be cases where messages are left either by email or phone but not responded to by staff; also that some parent emails end up in the school ‘junk mail’ box. It would be useful if there was a list of staff and their emails on the website for easier access. Mr Gardner stated that this situation was unacceptable and he would look at the issue with the office staff.

Q: My son does not appear to be getting much homework?

A system has been recently introduced where all homework for Year 11 has been posted on the website and it hoped to do this for all years; we do want your son/daughter to get the right amount of homework but it is not consistent at present

Q: Is there an opportunity for students to appraise the teachers?

When things have settled down in school we will be looking at training students to know what to look for in a good lesson. In all lessons there is a plenary session at the end to see if the learning objectives have been met and students understood; from this we can pick up strengths and weaknesses of teachers and improve.

Q: Would you consider having a Year 12 evening?

This is something that we have held in the past a few weeks into Year 12; we will be looking at an evening that combines expectations for the rest of the year and university information

Q: Is the school in a stable position now regarding staffing and morale?

Staffing is now fairly stable; this is a good school and teaching is better than it was three months ago

Q: As Year 10 work experience placements I am concerned that my son will be disadvantaged if he doesn’t stay on in the sixth form

As students now need to stay in some kind of education or training until they are 17 then it is more appropriate to offer work experience in Year 12 when students have more of an idea what they want to do; Year 10 students need to be in school studying still.

Q: My son says there are 40 in his class of Year 9 Economics?

Mrs Diaz said that this seemed very unlikely, but would look into this.

A: Any indication of numbers of Year 7 students joining in September?

Early indications are that the 1st choices are lower than last year at the moment. Open Evening was very well attended and our boys were proud of the school
Q: Transport is a real issue with pupils choosing this school

Mr Gardner had raised this with Medway Council and some amendments to bus timetables have been made. We will monitor the situation and try to work with Medway and Arriva to deal with any issues.