Dear Parent/Carer

PARENT COUNCIL

Please find below notes from the Parent Council Meeting held on Thursday 27th March. 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. I hope to hold another meeting before the end of the academic year and will advise parents of the date in due course.

Yours sincerely

Mr S Gardner
Principal

NOTES FROM PARENT COUNCIL : THURSDAY 27TH MARCH 2014

Mr Gardner welcomed everyone to the meeting; he showed a presentation which updated parents on issues that had arisen from the last meeting. This presentation will be placed on the school website together with these notes. Points included:

- House nights have now been held for Conquest house and Year 7s
- Following concern about lack of text books, the school is now working on fact packs for Years 11, 12 and 13, condensed into bullet points for revision purposes
- Although there are still some supply teachers, a number of permanent appointments have been made, some of which will start after the May half term so these teachers will have a term to settle in before the new academic year. Business Studies is still an area we are struggling with but are not prepared to appoint until have found the right person. Interviewing takes place next week for PE for a September start; Miss Wilson is rejoining the school as Head of Science and will start in June. Overall, supply staffing has been reduced and although it has been a difficult period it was necessary part of the improvement process
• Communications coming in the school office have been tracked and it appears that there has been an improvement in terms of the school's responsiveness to parents; however, Mr Gardner was open to feedback

• The Year 12 evening was well attended; there is a HE Fair on 23rd April; students have been looking at the UCAS website in form time

• In Year 9, the numbers in the Economics classes are 32 and 25

• Concern over the 653 departure after school has resulted in students catching that bus being given ‘exit’ cards enabling them to leave school promptly at 3.20.

• Positive feedback following the last visit from Ofsted; in addition, we had a Lead Inspector in school on 18th and 19th March. Of the 19 lessons he observed, two thirds were judged to be Good or better. He was pleased with the behaviour of students and teachers appeared much more confident in their approach to knowing what a good lesson should be like. Almost all students are on track for 5 A*-C grades this summer; however, Mr Gardner was aware that there were individual circumstances where things were not right but the broader picture is of continuing improvement within school and the journey we are on.

Questions from parents:

**Are supply teachers observed? Is the school confident that the number of staff leaving is slowing down?**

Supply teachers are observed; the school is aware of strengths and weaknesses within supply staff. Teachers now know what is expected of them and those that have felt the journey is not for them have left; others have chosen to stay and with the new staff starting in June and September staffing should be settled for the start of the academic year 2014/15. Parents commented that the supply teacher in Biology was recognised as being very good at engaging the students.

**Will you be employing a new English teacher to cover maternity leave?**

Mrs Diaz stated that whilst there had previously been difficulties within English, there was now a highly qualified, settled group of English teachers and this maternity position would be covered within the current staffing.

One parent commented that activity on Facebook had now quietened down which reflected how well the school was moving forward.

**Confirmation of study leave for sixth form as it was not clear in the letter that went home to parents?**

Study leave for Years 11, 12 and 13 would commence after the May break. Mr Gardner wanted students to have the maximum opportunity to engage with teachers in school; he was concerned about the amount of independent study students take as data suggested that boys do better when revising in the school environment.

**Mock exams after Easter were felt to be too close to summer exams?**
Mr Gardner stated that the purpose of the mock exams after Easter was to make sure that students were revising over the Easter holiday period and that if there were particular concerns these could be dealt with. There were a number of revision classes for Year 11 and 12 students over Easter.

One parent felt that mock exams in January could be moved back a week or so as it was difficult to motivate her sons over the Christmas period. Mr Gardner would take this into consideration.

Year 12 students are back in school on 1st/2nd July and will start their A2 work; school will permit work experience if students are on study leave but have finished exams.

**Is any more strike action possible which will close the school?**

Of around 60 teachers in school, 35 are members of the NUT. Teachers are not obliged to let the school know of their intentions until the day of the strike to maximise disruption so it is difficult to open the school for all pupils.

**My son in Year 9 still has his laptop. Can I stop payment and give the computer back to the school?**

Mr Gardner once again apologised for a scheme that was put in place before his arrival. He believed that under the credit agreement payment had to continue but that at the end the computer was the property of the parents. IT would remove any school-based software but Microsoft Office would be kept on the computer.

**My son started a GCSE Japanese course in December and is taking the exam after Easter which is not long?**

This is being run as an extra-curricular course as Ms Kushida has now moved to London. Mr Gardner would investigate the timescale with Ms Kushida.

**Concern of lack of homework and behaviour in Year 9/what is appropriate homework/concerns over English homework**

Mr Gardner told parents that the school was introducing ‘Show My Homework’ where homework for all year groups would be set online and parents would be issued with a log-in for tracking. Mr Gardner would also be able to check that appropriate homework is being set as regularly as meant to be. Appropriate homework depended on the year group. Year 9 students should be spending 1 ½ to 2 hours a night covering 3 subjects

Whilst Mr Gardner was not aware of widespread concerns with Year 9 as a whole, and learning walks around school had not shown any issues, Mr Nanson, Academic Leader for Year 9, was looking at behaviour in classes.

**Was the school website working now?**

The school website should be working fine now. There was a request for the school calendar to be put on the website so that parents could see important dates and Mr Gardner would initiate this. There was also a request for school trips throughout the year to be listed so that parents could gauge which trips would be coming up for their sons and could budget accordingly. Mr Gardner said that at present trips relied very
much on the goodwill of teachers. However, in the future he hoped to run a good balance of trips for each year group, including cultural trips and more subject specific trips at GCSE level.

There seemed to be uncertainty as to whether the Spanish exchange trip was happening. Mr Brown would follow this up with Mr Melvin and arrange refunds if appropriate.

**Concerns about not being able to eat food outside of the Hall and the cramped conditions for everyone eating in the hall**

Mr Gardner explained that a lot of time, effort and money had been put into the fabric of the buildings and yet a lot of litter and food was being dropped both inside and outside school (problem with foxes outside). If contained within the Hall area it was easier to clear and keep this area clean. He was looking at a plan to increase capacity by knocking down a side wall to create a specific eating area for the sixth form but also creating more space for everyone. With Year 11s, 12s and 13s going on study leave soon then this should help ease the space issue. More bins are being provided in the Hall as well as at the exits. Sixth form students can eat in S19 but they know that it will be closed if not kept clean.

One parent suggested having ‘House’ bins and to give prizes for the most rubbish collected thus encouraging students to pick up litter. Another parent suggested that with the warmer weather approaching that an area outside could be set aside for eating. Mr Gardner would look to trialling this.

**Numbers for September?**

Mr Gardner said that 50+ students had put CGSB as their first choice which was heartening considering the position the school was in when parents were considering schools. We should have a 4 form entry this September.

**When will the school come out of Special Measures and will Mr Gardner be continuing as Principal?**

Mr Gardner said that Ofsted were happy with the improvement in Teaching and Learning, behaviour and tracking and it could be as early as the summer, depending on results, but hoped that certainly by Xmas 2014/Feb 2015. Monitoring visits should take place every 8/9 weeks but our last visit was later than this. It was hoped that Ofsted would return during June when school was returning to normal after exams and the new teachers had started. Mr Gardner stated that he liked the ethos of the school and liked the students and the school had made huge improvements.

**Whilst totally supportive of the English staff, my Year 7 son is not good at English and I feel that his needs are not being met.**

The school is concerned about the quality of Year 7 and 8 English and is looking to provide students with basic literacy skills as this affects all other subjects. Mr Gardner was looking to get an English consultant in school; and to do a English language and literature check for years 7 to 9; express was concerned for Year 10s too.

**New pen system next term**

Mr Gardner would talk to students in assemblies this week about this; he stated it was especially important for Years 7 through to 10 to check their work and form time the week after Easter would be used for proof reading training.
What is the outlook for Year 12 into 13 results in general?

Mr Gardner replied that we would know more after the Easter mock exams. The January results for Year 12 were not good but there are additional lunchtime sessions and the Easter school so significant improvements are expected. Mr Brown said that there was constant monitoring by staff.

Perhaps the information given at the Year 12 evening should be given to Year 11 before choosing their A level options?

Mr Gardner replied that each Year 11 student was seen by a member of the senior leadership team to find out what they would like to do as a career and then worked backwards looking at the courses that would be appropriate and if the student felt able to study them. It students were unsure what career they wanted to pursue then Mr Brown said that students should choose subjects they are enthusiastic about which, in turn, may lead to a career.

Is there a guide for parents on ‘cashing in’?

Mr Gardner said that with respect, parents do not need to worry about this, and the school would always do the right thing for the students.

Is there an Assessment week for Year 9 students?

Parents should receive a booklet on this at the start of the academic year.

Students really enjoyed the visit of the Japanese students from Tsurumine School last week.

This link would be ending as Tsurumine felt that with Mrs Kushida leaving the school that this link was just not sustainable.

Students from CGSB would be visiting Kobe High School in October and it is hoped to continue with this link; this link is being promoted to Year 7 students. Mr Gardner was hopeful that GCSE Japanese would continue but only if an appropriate person can be found to teach it.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.