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## Newcastle Academy: Parents' Forum

### Minutes: Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017

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**Staff Present:** Tim Rogers – Principal (TRO), Lois Newton – Senior Vice Principal (LNE), Duncan Adams – Assistant Principal (DAD), Nathan Keeling – Assistant Principal and Head of Maths (NKE), Dave Dolman – Associate Assistant Principal (DDO), Krystina Jackson – Office Manager & Principals PA (KJA – minutes)

**Apologies:** Simon Walsh – Senior Vice Principal (SWA)

**Parents Present:** Parents of BP Yr10, SB Yr8, L-H J Yr10, E C-J Yr10, EG Yr8 & SG Yr7, MS Yr11, CM Yr9, MNA-D Yr7, TNA-D Yr8 & SNA-D Yr10

**Apologies:** Parent of AL Yr9

1. **TRO:** Welcomed everyone and introduced new members of staff LNE and NKE.

#### AGENDA ITEMS

#### 2. Staffing Update.

TRO provided the following information.

- a. Bobbi De Cecco is the new marketing manager, replacing Helen Drummond. TRO has discussed advertising, parents evening. TRO confirmed next Parent Forum meeting is 9<sup>th</sup> November. We have one at the beginning of every half term.
- b. LNE replaced Mrs White who left after twenty eight years.
- c. NKE replaced Mr Mickleburgh.
- d. New staff appointments were made in the last week of July.
- e. Employed really good teaching staff.
- f. A positive first week. All staff are present and new staff have settled in very quickly.

**A parent** expressed congratulations and well done.

**A Parent** made reference to the drama teacher and maternity leave.

**TRO** announced that replacements for maternity leave will be found as quickly as possible.

A parent expressed concern about using a supply teacher.

**TRO** confirmed that they are aiming to appoint specialist teachers to cover any maternity leave.

#### 3. Examination Results 2017

TRO told parents that he believes he has a good, stable and experienced team that stands in good stead for the future. A positive start to the year following a decent set of exam results this summer. Results over the last two years have greatly improved.

- a. 2017 basic figures = 48%, 2016 = 39% and 2015 = 31%
- b. Improvements in department areas are French, History and English. Maths held steady. Considering the issues in maths last year, it was a good indication in the way Mr A Jones oversaw

maths in Mr Mickleburgh's absence.

- c. Better performance at the top end A\* boundary.
- d. Progress 8 National figures are yet to be confirmed. Not expecting the figures to be as good as the outline figure but will give us an area to work on.
- e. Twenty five remarks in English and Maths.

TRO expressed his satisfaction in the results and level of improvements in exams. The vast majority of students were accepted into college. One or two students were disappointed. Sixty one out of sixty three students came in to school to collect their results.

#### **4. Security:**

TRO provided the following update;

- a. Fences and new gates are nearly all in place. Timers will be in place during the next couple of weeks.
- b. Gates will be closed automatically during the day providing a more secure site. The only gate that will be accessible during the day will be Gallowstree lane.
- c. Work on the roofs is near completion. Scaffolding will be dismantled next week on the Curie building. Work to continue on the Darwin building for the next few weeks. Work is ahead of schedule.

#### **5. Catering:**

TRO confirmed the following;

- a. All completed. The new catering company offer a complete new menu to students.

**DDO** added that students have a choice of various foods. Furthermore, staff strive to encourage the students to try different foods.

- b. The system will go cashless possibly before the end of half term. It will become much more hygienic.

**TRO** explained to parents the term cashless and top up machine and ensured that parents will receive plenty of notice prior to going cashless.

#### **7. Teaching and Learning:**

DAD provided an update of the following;

- a. DAD and SWA spoke in depth last year about strategies they were going to put in place for September are all now in place;
  - Raising standards – small steps at a time as opposed to going for unmanageable gains.
  - PLC (Pupil Learning Checklist) for every pupil in Yr7, 9 & 10 by the end on this September.

Dad explained to parents the introduction of PLC and that it will identify all the skills or objectives or knowledge the students need to do for that unit. Teaching staff will identify areas for improvement and strengths. PLC is built around the mastery programme. DDO, DAD Mrs Stott (Head of English) and Mr Tunstall (CHA Maths) have all been involved in mastery projects, making sure that the students understand what is going on and building up the knowledge a little at a time. Linked to that they are still going with "what went well" for marking for the pupil feedback.

**A parent** drew attention to marking in terms of student marking and a lack of feedback and comments attached to marking making reference to an individual case.

**TRO** made it clear that the feedback a teacher is giving students is the most valuable, however how that happens is up for a lot of debated discussions in the education circle generally. Some schools

have abandoned marking completely. There is the notion that feedback to the student does not necessarily have to be written in an exercise book. Ten minutes of them sitting next to a teacher can sometimes be more valuable.

**A parent** said she would agree in the majority of cases but that there are some students where it needs to be written.

A brief discussion took place around staff capacity and time constraints to mark and marking policy.

**DAD** confirmed that three working scrutiny cycles were carried out last year; KS3, KS4 plus a whole school marking scrutiny which is broken into 4 sections;

1. Section one was quality and quantity of work
2. Section two was on whether the work linked to the scheme of work and showed progression on to KS4 onto the exams
3. Third section was marking feedback and literacy
4. Final section was general condition

**TRO** emphasised to parents that if they are finding that their child's work is not being marked they need to let the school know.

b. **BLOOM'S** is continuing with posters positioned throughout the school. KS4 is now a three year Key Stage as opposed to two years so year 9 pupils have started there GCSE or BTEC courses as well as year 10. Year 9 and 10 students taking courses are on the accredited courses for DfE and are also offered far more technical awards or BTEC technical awards.

**A parent** asked if construction was still an option.

**DAD** reported that year 11 are currently studying construction, however at this present time, there are no construction classes running for year 9 and year 10 owing to low option numbers. Year 9 and 10 are offered Design and Technology in GCSE consisting of a range of; textiles, product design, graphics and food technology all together as one. Hospitality and catering or engineering is also offered and they are looking to expand that portfolio in the future.

**TRO** stressed to parents that Teaching and Learning is the key and what takes place in the classroom will be the living proof of the results of the school and that will improve aspirations and improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school. The teaching and learning that has been introduced during the last few months will continue and be embedded and teaching staff have fully appreciated that. Results will hopefully improve year on year.

**LNE** gave a brief account of her past background. Coming from a completely different school from NA, LNE was, for eleven years, at a school with a nearly two thousand student roll, her role being predominantly pastoral and safeguarding. She is Member of the Derbyshire Safeguarding Board for Trainers and an accredited Prevent Trainer.

## **7. Pastoral:**

LNE provided the following information and updates;

- a. **Uniform:** In general, students are looking incredibly smart. Students who have not quite met expectations have been seen by House Leaders followed with a letter to parents. Students will not be sent home; they will sit in with House Leaders. It will become a discipline issue if a student simply does not want to wear uniform.
- b. **Mobile phones;** One of the biggest change for students is mobile phones. They have not been banned from site; however, phones must not be seen or heard. Very few have been

confiscated; students in general have received that really well and have actually voiced they think it is the right thing to do.

**A parent** asked if phones were banned at lunchtime too.

**LNE** confirmed it did and that she had confiscated a couple today during break time. There is no need for students to have their phones out. If they need to phone home, they go to the House Leader.

**TRO** added that the reason it is so successful is that students were told clearly before the end of the summer term and was highlighted with a count down every time a student logged on to their computer. Six phones were confiscated in the 1<sup>st</sup> week of autumn term.

- c. Attitude to learning:** A grading system of 1 to 5 has been introduced during lesson time for each student. A teaching and learning grid that will identify the student's attitude to learning; 1 being the absolute exceptional to 5 being requiring some intervention. A process that has been implemented that can be used in a number of ways;
- fuel rewards
  - when parent's want to know their child's attitude or what they are like in their lesson.
  - Used in reports to show their child's performance.
  - The new system will replace Stars of the Week.
- d. Behaviour:** Behaviour at NA in general is good with minimal problems during break and lunchtime. However, there is work to be done with a small core of students at NA. The behaviour management system will become far more robust and simplified for staff, students and parents so that everybody understands exactly what is expected and what happens if those expectations are not met. LNE has redrafted the behaviour policy and will provide parents with an update at the next Parent Forum.
- e. Safeguarding:** In addition to safeguarding LNE is also responsible for pupil premium and is currently focussing on specific areas.

**8. DDO** provided an overview of his role as Associate Assistant Principal, explaining to the parents his approach in dealing with disruptive students during lesson time. To sanction and work with the student removed from class and to ensure that they can progress well so that when they do return to class they are not just going to repeat disruptive behaviour. It is a humanistic approach to staff and the students about how to work together. DDO has put forward a proposal for the second year to be how the children work with each other and is confident it will have a positive impact. The quiet room is rigorous with the importance of student's understanding what they have done, how they work and the impact on other students.

**A parent** referred to class disruption as a result of supply teaching last year. Reference was made to an individual case.

**A parent** drew attention to a specific case during a Cross Federation art class and seating plans.

**LNE** reassured parents that the focus is, with the agreement of the Trust and SLT to ensure processes are in place and structurally sound.

**A parent** asked if Clayton adopted a similar Cross Fed policy to that of NA.

**LNE** told parents that one of her next tasks is to hold a meeting with her equal at Clayton with a view

to reaching an agreement that the policy in practice will be agreed between the two schools and that both sides mirror their practice as closely as possible.

**NKE** told parents he joined Newcastle Academy from St Peters one month before the end of summer term giving him the opportunity to familiarise himself with the students but more importantly teach the year 10 going into year 11.

- a. Maths:** BLOOM'S has progressed a great deal. There is a great deal of shared expertise in place at NA, CHA and Sir Thomas Boughey and if the need arose, staff can interchange between the Trusts schools'. Because of a few issues "My Maths" has been dropped. NA has signed up to "Maths Watch" which will be used in the GCSE homework, offering exam style questions. If the student is unable to understand a question, there will be a video available to explain them. Year 9, 10 and 11 will be set homework in the next fortnight on "Maths Watch".
- b. iPad:** The vision for the school is that every child has an iPad not just in school but also at home and it will give them an advantage for when they go into the workplace with so many transferable skills. It can be used in;
- Maths - website software and interactive games
  - In English they can use it to film each other doing drama.
  - In PE it can be used to analyse individual sport techniques.
- The majority of year 7's have signed up, the deadline being the end of this week. Staff training will take place at the end of October.

**TRO** reported that year 7 was chosen as a trial year, hoping for as many of the parents to sign up to the programme as possible. The United Endeavour Trust have spent a great deal of money improving the Wi-Fi around the school. Unfortunately, however, because school budgets are shrinking there is a cost to parents; approximately £11.00 a month. NA is linked in with a charity called "BELF" which is committed to helping parents who cannot make those contributions within their means. If the launch proves successful it will be offered to other year groups with a vision that in three years every child has an iPad transforming the way to teaching and learning in the school. The main concern from parents was the payments. No child will be disadvantaged.

**A parent** asked how the school would control the use of iPads assuming it does go ahead.

**TRO** replied that the operating system behind infrastructure is incredible. It can shut down and block devices off, including the cameras so that students cannot take pictures.

Parents have the options to purchase their own iPad as long as it is the same model.

**c. Homework;** NKE reported that an online system for homework will be put in place and are currently waiting for Microsoft to update some of their software for NA. Teachers will be set homework online for year 7, 9 and 10 as well as handing it to them in class.

**TRO** added that a survey would be carried out of how many students currently have internet access. TRO reassured parents that no child will be disadvantaged. Students will still use planners as a way of recording.

**A parent** asked if it will involve the Year 11's

**TRO** said depending on how quickly it goes into operation, it most likely will.

## **9. Any Other Business.**

**A parent** asked about the minibus provision between NA and CHA making reference to a student being left alone at CHA owing to there being no room on the minibus.

**TRO** said he could not understand why that could happen, as there are enough minibuses to transport the students.

**ACTION:** TRO to follow up.

**TRO** thanked everyone for attending tonight's forum and hopes for an increase in parent numbers for the next meeting.

## **10. Next meeting**

The next Parent Forum meeting will take place on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November at 5:00pm

**Meeting concluded at 6:30pm**

**Tim Rogers – Principal**

**TRO/KJA**