

LEIGH TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY PARENTS **COUNCIL**

Minutes of meeting held on Monday 28th April 2008

Attendees:

Academy staff: Tony Ryan, Principal, Brunel

Parents:

BRUNEL: Chris Baker, Tracy Roblett, Christine Ford, Elizabeth Peters, Kevin Nutter, Jacqueline Smith.

CHAUCER: Louise Oakley, Jacqueline Ellis, Kate Holder.

DA VINCI: Janet Robinson, Mike Linfield.

DARWIN: Gordon Ebers, Carol Veal, Liz White, David Russell, Jackie Park, Christine Bright

Apologies: Tina Shuttlewood, Julie Walden, Steve Veal, Cathy Linfield, Rod Chapman. Dave Auty (arrived during the meeting)

Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies

Chris welcomed members and accepted apologies as above

2. Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed and signed.

3. Matters arising – input from Tony Ryan.

Website: This is now up and running and first impressions are that it is well presented and a good site. Every college can put forward work etc to add to their own section and/or the main site areas for the whole college. Part of the remit was that it should be easy to access and upload and this seems to be the case.

Options for yr 8: It was reported that every child should be getting their chosen subjects, but confirmation will be given after the May break.

SATs: The year 8s are 'on track' for SATS, Talmos is being with-held pending some changes but after testing for robustness it should be re-instated in the next few weeks.

Diaries: Parents are requested to keep a check on them as teachers have been asked to ensure they sign them – parents should also keep them up to date.

Term Dates: It is hoped that next year the college will be more in line with the other Kent schools, but there will always be some variation eg the 2 week October break. A parent asked about some leniency with regard to requests for time off during term time where the holiday dates do not match with siblings at other schools eg one parent had 3 children at 3 different schools. Tony Ryan responded that as a parent himself he appreciates the difficulty encountered by mismatched term dates, however the general ruling is that leave requests would be refused. There are always individual circumstances which may be taken into account should a short absence be requested.

Computers: Apple Macs were selected for the Academy, they have a facility to convert files so that students can use Windows etc at home. In the main they are working well, but there are some minor glitches outstanding. The Academy have invested in SAM learning software for revision of GCSEs as this is an excellent tool for helping and encouraging revision in all subjects. Staff are constantly looking at websites for good practice to be brought into the Academy.

4. **Principal's Question time** – a variety of issues included:-

Maths class sizes. Still causing problems and concerns with some pupils in some colleges, other report class works well. Tony Ryan reported that they are aware things are still not quite right, and some teachers need additional training in control and teaching of larger classes with input/support from other teachers in the class. There will probably be some movement of staff between colleges for the next year to resolve the issues.

GCSE Exams. Questions were asked about the pressure and ethos of taking GCSEs a year early. Tony assured the group that students are not put under pressure, but if they are ready and likely to 'peak' at the end of yr9 then they may take exams. Numerous ways of assessing students such as data and input from the DOLs (Directors of Learning) help inform their decisions.

Maths evening for parents. Pete Finnegan held an evening for parents to be shown how maths was taught and other colleges would benefit. Tony Ryan agreed this would be arranged at a later date.

End of Module Reports. A parent suggested that reports lacked information and comments were meaningless, they could often be about any child and gave no real information as to progress. Tony Ryan agreed that this should be avoided, but the existing system was having problems and would be looked into.

Contact with subject teachers. Several parents expressed a wish for more contact with the subject teachers, rather than the tutors. Although the teachers should feedback info to the tutors, parents felt more direct contact would be preferable so that issues can be discussed properly and not through a 3rd party with no direct knowledge. Tony Ryan said

that he is really looking into the tutors getting more feedback from teachers and assured the group that he gets all necessary info about students in his college.

IAGs and CEGs (Information Advice and Guidance and Careers Education and Guidance). A parent asked how much involvement the school has with IAG and CEG? Tony Ryan responded by saying that they work with the Academy and that all 6th formers will get interviews if requested.

ILPs (Individual Learning Plans). Does the Leigh have them? Tony said they do have them for all statemented students, but there is a move to have them for all students in the future.

Restaurant issues. A parent asked if students can get receipts for items purchased in the restaurant to keep a check on spending and food purchases. There are no receipts but the student's card will log every item purchased so there is a record held on a system. Tony Ryan will look into how this information can be retrieved for parents. During consultation for the website, a request was made for the menus to be put on the website but they are not there. Tony will chase this up as amendments are still being made to the website.

School transport. Dave Auty reported on the issues. There are 3 bus routes costing £240 per day each totalling £72,000 per year. Data shows that on average 36 student trips are made each day resulting in a subsidy of £1,000 per student per year. Sam CAetohoven is willing to look at alternatives, but there is a question to be asked about the fairness of other students not having access to those funds due to the subsidy too. Dave has contacted some companies but there is little interest and complications for collection of money from users etc.

Year 7 entry for 2008 have not been told that there is a service, and it has not been marketed at all. A parent said that some grammar schools use Birchwood Coaches at £55 per month which runs as a community service and is always full, so surely demand could be there if reasonably priced? Dave Auty agreed that he would still be willing to meet with others to continue discussion. Sam's suggestion is that smaller groups of students use taxis which may be quicker and no more costly, so Dave Auty will look at the problem again.

Tony Ryan left the meeting at 8.45pm

5. Parent Governor Update

The Governors had concerns and discussion about the Maths and English results at GCSE level as they are below the national average. The school has a good level of results when all subjects are taken into account.

Fastrack services have been under scrutiny since the unfortunate accident a few weeks ago. Some parents felt that the buses present a danger at the school entrance as they travel more quickly than other traffic, and students do wander or cycle down the bus lane which is also dangerous. If any parent has problems or issues with fastrack they can email the parent governor Lousie Oakley at loa@leighacademy.org.uk.

6. Requests for readers for SATs

Sue Brown would appreciate any help for the week commencing Tues 6th May so please let her or Chris know if you are able to help out with reading for the less able students.

7. Lashings

Last year's event was a great success and raised over £6,000 towards sending the football and cricket teams to Antigua. Help is needed again this year, and tickets are on sale in the office. Please support the students by attending this event at Hesketh Park cricket ground on Friday 4th July. If you can help out o the day, please let Chris Baker know as soon as possible.

8. Any other business

The air conditioning was reported to be malfunctioning; Louise verified this but said it was being attended to.

The question of supervision in the PE changing rooms was raised again as a Chaucer student had been 'skanked' whilst getting changed last week. Chris Baker said this would be raised with the PE staff.

Meeting ended at 21.15.

Next meeting Monday 9th June 7pm, July meeting Monday 7th July