

# **LEIGH TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY PARENTS** **COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of meeting held on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2008**

### **Attendees:**

**Academy staff:** Frank Green (FG) - Chief Executive, Maggie Leah-Wilkinson (MLW) – Principal Da Vinci, Matt Ditchfield (MD) – Assistant Principal Da Vinci, Sarah Monk (SM) – Student Services Manager Da Vinci

### **Parents:**

**BRUNEL:** Chris Baker, Maxine Fagan, Wendy Fairbrass, Christine Ford, Carole Knight, Tracy Roblett, , Liz White,

**CHAUCER:** Tim Field, Neil Halsey, Kate Holder, Sharon Whitebread.

**DA VINCI:** Rod Chapman, Louise Oakley, Janet Robinson, Tina Shuttlewood, Kathy Wingfield.

**DARWIN:** Gordon Ebers, Vivienne Hyde, Jackie Park, Gill Penney, Jackey Smith, Carole Veal, Steve Veal

**Apologies:** Dave Russell

### **Minutes**

#### **Pre-meeting tour**

During a tour of the new building, FG answered a variety of questions regarding use of space, the restaurant facility, access and behaviour. Due to time constraints the tour was limited to the main building only. Access to the building outside of ‘normal’ hours was noted to be an issue as some parents could not get into the building initially.

Following the tour he gave a brief speech and answered further questions on safety and parking within Goals, the publicity and issues surrounding the larger class sizes and the problems with heating in the building. There is a long snagging list which is being dealt with, and as with any move, it has to be accepted that there will be teething problems. On the whole the building is seen as impressive and facilities excellent for the students, and the meeting was held in the Lecture theatre.

FG left the meeting at 7.30pm.

## 1. **Welcome and apologies**

Chris welcomed the Senior Leadership Team of Da Vinci to the meeting. Apologies were received from Dave Russell.

## 2. **Minutes of previous meeting**

Agreed and signed.

## 3. **Matters arising**

None other than outstanding action points included within the agenda.

## 4. **Principal's question time –**

**Year 8 options** Students are beginning to talk about their options. MLW said that a letter will be sent home soon advising of an options evening meeting in March. It will also details the blocks of subjects that choices will be available to select from.

**Detentions** An apparent increase in detentions has been noted by some parents, in particular there is an issue with same day 30 minute detentions and 'whole class' detentions. Parents have been contacted by staff during the day to say their child is being kept back that same afternoon, rather than a note being put in the diary or detention slip being issued for a future date. MLW stated this is not the correct protocol, and her team had not noticed any increase as on the whole the students have been really well behaved since the move and respected the 'new' rules.

MD asked that any parent with a detention issue about a particular teacher notify him directly after the meeting so that individuals can be addressed across the four colleges as necessary.

**Action point** –any parent with concerns to contact MD

**PE Kits** Action point from last meeting was outstanding. Miss Box advised MLW that the new kit is to be supplied by Longfield wools and will be available via the admin officer of each college. Stock is on order and will be in soon, but in the meantime if a student is without any item and has to wear something else, MD suggested that parents put a note in the diary to show staff. There is a danger of students 'losing' shirts in order to wear something they prefer, so the staff need to be sure items are really 'lost'!

In connection with PE, a parent raised an issue about the use of changing rooms by more than one year group at once as there was an incident where year 8 students had all their belongings thrown on the floor by an older year group whilst they were out on the field. MD said the incident had been picked up and was due to new PE staff being unaware of the system. The issue has been dealt with so the problem should not re-occur. Students should check in lost property, which if identifiable by college colour (eg PE shirts) is sent to the individual colleges.

**Site safety** A lot of parents are concerned about the number of children just running out into the road now at the start and end of the school day with no regard for traffic. MD said that 'pinch points' have been identified this week and a rota has been sorted out for teachers to watch and guide students around and immediately outside the site as they used to prior to the move. MLW said that although staff undertake to do this as a goodwill gesture, they are not covered by insurance to monitor outside the school as it is 'off-site'. The bridge between the two sites is to be demolished within the next few weeks, so this will mean more students will use the road if parents park on the East campus side when delivering or collecting their children. Goals car park was available initially but was so dangerous due to the volume of children and numbers of cars moving around. FG's suggestion was that parents stagger picking up times by encouraging use of college facilities for doing homework in college at the end of the day. Other possibilities suggested were that parking is easier in Orbital One further down the road or delaying pick up to 4pm eases traffic flow considerably. MLW said that in future there may be a case for formalising a staggered finish.

**School transport** Parents are really concerned about withdrawal of transport. MLW reported that Sam Caethoven assessed the subsidy needed for each student using transport at £600 per year which is not sustainable. Discussion continued about the difficulty in using public transport to fall in line with school hours and the additional problems if a parent has children at several schools spread across the age groups and area. MD has some knowledge of a school that experienced similar problems and they solved the problem by getting together to arrange private transport as a group which was cheaper. CB reported that Dave Auty (who is also a parent governor) had agreed to chair a group to look at the issue further. CB will give Dave the email/contact details of those previously expressing an interest, Dave can be contacted through Parents council if anyone else has suggestions or views for the transport group.

**Restaurant problems** CB had received several complaints about the new restaurant which included lack of food and/or choice, high prices and long queues. MLW said that there had been problems at first but staff have been aware and have been allowing extra time where necessary. MD said that restaurant staff have been unable to use all the new equipment properly as they have to be trained and familiarised with it, so queues have been lengthy. This situation will improve, as will choice. MLW said that Da Vinci took 9 minutes to choose their food, get through the queue and be seated. Water fountains are being installed around the site, until now there has been no facility to get a drink other than to buy it or bring it in. A parent asked if weekly menus were available to parents – it was suggested that they may be able to be included in the website information.

**Action point** - CB to discuss at next website meeting

**Talmos** – feedback from parents was that the site was good (apart from the down time) but students who had done the work set had not been asked for it or had not had feedback in all cases. Parents wanted reassurance that it would be 'marked' or requested. MD/MLW said this should be done but MD will speak with the teachers. The mymaths.co.uk site was recognised by some parents as really useful to help them learn basic skills and students can access that for the whole year through Talmos and login. It was suggested that a session on maths for parents may be useful so that they can assist with homework if a child gets 'stuck' in methodology or calculation processes. The home study period had highlighted the different ways of learning and teaching.

**6<sup>th</sup> form space** A parent asked about a ‘common room’ for 6<sup>th</sup> form students. MLW said that a deliberate decision was made to not dedicate a room to 6<sup>th</sup> formers as a common room for ‘free-periods’ as the ethos is that there are no ‘free-periods’. There are however, spaces that they can use such as the open areas and soon the top floor library area.

**Fire drills and safety on balconies** All students had an induction tour where safety was discussed, and fire drills, by college are being conducted this week. In the event of the fire bell sounding, all fire doors open automatically for swift exit.  
MLW, MD and SM left the meeting at 8.30pm

5. **Parent governor update** – The governor’s meeting was due to be held last Saturday (2<sup>nd</sup> Feb), but was cancelled therefore there was nothing to report.
6. **Request for readers for exams** – Sue Brown has again asked if any parents would be available to ‘read’ for students allowed extra help with exams. The dates are during the week 5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> May, commencing on the Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup>, and will be morning and afternoon sessions. If anyone can help out with any sessions (even one or two), please email CB at [chris@58stalbans.freeseve.co.uk](mailto:chris@58stalbans.freeseve.co.uk) so that details can be passed on to Sue.
7. **Meeting dates for remainder of the year** – these were agreed to fit in with term breaks and avoiding ‘first day back’ meetings. The dates are:

March 3<sup>rd</sup>

April 28<sup>th</sup>

June 9<sup>th</sup>

July 7<sup>th</sup>

Please note there is no meeting scheduled for May, and all meetings will begin at 7pm, with the venue (within the Academy) to be notified nearer each date.

8. **AOB** – CB asked that if anyone hears of a parent not receiving minutes, please could they let her know the details so that it can be rectified.

Meeting closed at 8.40