

LEIGH TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY

PARENTS COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting held on Monday 1st February 2010

Attendees:

Academy staff:

Maggie Leah-Wilkinson – Principal Da Vinci, Matt Ditchfield & Mike Turner, Vice-Principals Da Vinci.

Parents:

BRUNEL: Chris Baker, Tracy Roblett, Vicky Lester, Lindsey Summers, Nikki Hall, Christine Ford, Kevin Nutter.

CHAUCER: Jacqueline Ellis, Michael & Luisa Holmes, Mo Jenson.

DA VINCI: Karen Brooker, Louise Oakley, Tina Shuttlewood.

DARWIN: Emma Isidorou.

Apologies: Kate Holder, Jackie Park, Sarah Dunn.

Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies

Chris welcomed Maggie, her team and parents to the meeting. Apologies were accepted.

2. Principal's Q & A

Maggie asked that thanks be recorded for the flowers, cards and support she received whilst away from work following her accident. She said they were very much appreciated.

A parent asked about the situation at Wilmington Enterprise College. Maggie confirmed that the Leigh Trust is working with Wilmington and that Frank Green is at a public meeting tonight to discuss the move to an Academy status with the Trust. She emphasised the desire of the Trust not to dilute the work at the Leigh, or lose the skilled and experienced staff we have here to Wilmington (or Longfield). The move

will mean that our ideas can be shared and developed, which may be particularly beneficial at 6th form level for example, as a broader range of subjects could be covered within the 3 Academies and students could travel between sites to get the subjects they need if necessary.

A parent asked about recruitment of teachers for the Trust as a whole. Matt replied that two very successful teacher enrolment/interview evenings have been held – showcasing the Academy to encourage potential teachers to consider the Leigh – and a further recruitment exercise will be held in Canada again this year by Tony Ryan. These have been very intense but successful trips, and in addition this year they hope to recruit from Sweden, where the teaching standards are high and English is good. Matt believes recruiting in this way from Sweden will be a first in this country.

Computers and compatibility at home with Apple Macs was discussed. Mike Turner said that the Academy are looking into a computer aid that will make all work compatible, but this is a big job that cannot be done until the exams are over as any potential problems and disruption would be risky for students and their work. Louise Oakley asked that all parents remind their children to save work somewhere on the system and not just on their memory sticks. Every college has a variety of memory sticks handed in every day – if they are named they can be returned, but many are not so therefore are unidentifiable.

Website access was discussed, with a parent raising some concerns about inappropriate content being accessed, eg Facebook . Matt explained that there are firewalls in place but as everyone is aware, Google searches performed for the most innocent items sometimes throw up very dubious content. Mike Turner added that they are introducing a tool for teachers to enable them to limit the sites students visit within each lesson, for example the staff computer could be set to allow student access in that room, for that lesson, to only one, two or three sites. However, what they access on the general use PCs in their own time is very difficult to govern outside of the normal firewall. He added that Facebook is a difficult one as it has a large amount of good educational content within it too. As a safety net, there is one computer that shows thumbnail pictures of each student's current webpage view, and if it is not appropriate a message can be flashed onto that student's screen. This is a very effective deterrent!

Exams are just around the corner, so a parent asked about revision. Matt said that there are a variety of after school revision clubs, with every student having a revision timetable. If any parent has concerns about their child, they should approach the individual college for advice. He reminded parents that if students do come in early or stay late, teachers are not responsible for their children outside of the teaching day. It is the student's responsibility to attend a club, not the teacher's.

There being no more questions, Chris thanked the Da Vinci team for their attendance and advice and they left at 8.15pm.

3. Minutes of previous meeting and Matters arising

These were agreed as correct.

4. Parent Governor update

Dave Auty, the Parent Governor was not present and had not forwarded any information to Chris to report on.

5. Any other business

Lunch 4 still causes some concern, so Chris agreed to ask Doreen, the Catering Manager to attend the next meeting.

School uniform is still an issue which has not been resolved. Parents quoted various examples of outstanding items which have been paid for, staff rudeness at the shops and a general lack of service from our supplier. Sue Crocker has been making efforts to bring this to a conclusion and is in almost daily contact with them. She has a list of all known outstanding items, but if anyone else has not made her aware of something still not supplied, please contact her. There is a proposal for a new supplier underway, and the Parent Council volunteers will be meeting with Sue to discuss it in the next few weeks. The possibility of a 2nd hand uniform shop may also be discussed then.

A parent requested that the Art department be asked to encourage students to wear an old shirt or overall over their school wear as uniform is sometimes spoiled by the art materials.

Road safety, and the apparent lack of awareness of the dangers when school ends are a serious concern for several parents. Students seem to have no regard for traffic and just walk or cycle across the road regardless of what may be there. There is also some concern about students leaving the site during school hours. We have been told that the entrance will be locked once school starts so hopefully this will resolve some issues.

Meeting closed at 8.40pm

Next meeting Monday 1st March 2010