

MINUTES - PARENT VOICE / SMT MEETING

MONDAY 28TH FEB '22

ATTENDEES

Rick Clarke – Head

Becks Scullion – Deputy Head

Laura Griffiths – Deputy Head (Academic)

Malika Power – Assistant Head (Teaching)

Andy Spink – Assistant Head (Student Development)

Katherine Bluck - Head of Junior School (until the end of Spring Term)

Nick Oram-Tooley – incoming Head of Junior School (from the Summer Term)

Jo Dalziel – Head of Senior School

Hannah Manton – Head of Sixth Form

Emma Judge – Director of External Relations

Richard Fry - Governor

PARENT VOICE

Vicki Nixon Chair, **Emma Tweed** Vice Chair, **Isobel** Hanmer Secretary, **Claire** Karitzis Rep N&R, **Jo** Bushill Rep Yr 1, **Gemma** Matthews Rep Yr 2, **Nina** Maidlow Rep Yr3, **Helen** Jones Rep Yr 4, **Ellie** Inskip Rep Yr 6, **Helen** Davison Rep Yr 7, **Mark** Griffiths Rep Yr 8, **Sandra** Laird Rep Yr 9, **Sara** Acworth Yr 10, **Kay** Mawer Sixth Form.

APOLOGIES

Sian Owens – Head of Middle School

Giles Rudd – Assistant Head (Learning)

Dan Wheatley Rep Yr 5, **Mark** Havard Rep Yr11, **Lucy** Cripps Rep Boarding.

INTRODUCTION AND ADMINISTRATION

Vicki welcomes everyone to the meeting and notes the good attendance. She explains that now we are Parent Voice (PV) and not the Parents Committee we have an evolving structure, and that the emphasis is on collaboration. This is a work in progress and Vicki encourages feedback.

- We formally **vote in** and welcome new members Jo Bushill Yr1 rep and Nina Maidlow Yr3 rep.

ACTION: Isobel will advertise next term to replace current reps Ellie Yr6 and Mark G Yr8 to start in September.

- We agree the changes to the **PV Constitution**.
- Vicki outlines the **new format** of this meeting which will include a workshop element at the end.
- **Number of PV reps** per year is discussed and it is agreed with Rick that we will stick to the current format of one per year group. Officers are there to support reps too but if a particular year group would benefit from a second rep this could be considered on a case by case basis. Vicki stresses the importance of encouraging support from the wider parent body with regard to coffee mornings / social events / WhatsApp group admin and also attending focus groups and workshops. Widening parent engagement is a core goal of Parent Voice and there are opportunities for more parents to get involved. As ever the rep policy will continue to be reviewed.
- Strengthening the connection between parents and the school continues to be a challenge. Finding ways to bring Junior School parents back into the classroom was discussed at the Town Hall meeting last term and Rick confirmed that he is working with Katherine and Nick to get this actioned. Rick is also working with Katherine and Nick on revising the pick up and drop off procedures. There are safeguarding issues that need to be considered but it is hoped that a process can be implemented that enables more parent interaction.

ACTION: Rick to work with Katherine and Nick to find ways to get Parents back into the classroom and to review drop off/pick up routines, taking into account the safeguarding concerns that were raised by the previous system.

ACTION: SMT to help Reps raise their profile by introducing them at parent coffee mornings/ meetings/ workshops/events etc (Reps to ensure they make themselves known to the member of staff to facilitate this).

- The new parent **QR code poster** is presented by Vicki (created by Mark H's daughter). Rick and Becks like the idea if it is used positively and it will hopefully be a useful way to receive positive and constructive feedback from parents. Becks suggests a link as well as a QR code as this is generally used more by parents. It was agreed that as well as the posters the link can be included in PV emails and the weekly newsletter.

ACTION: Vicki to finalise and circulate.

UPDATE FROM RICK ON CURRENT SUBJECTS/MATTERS ARISING FROM LAST TERM

Rick begins by thanking Vicki and the rest of the team for driving the shift in focus with the newly established Parent Voice structure. He feels it is more constructive than the previous Parents Committee format and thanks the PV reps in advance for the work they'll be doing, particularly pointing parents in the right direction.

He feels the PV is a progressive, powerful and innovative way of working with parents and a good example/template that he feels sure other schools will look to follow.

Values

- Rick notes that although the Values <https://www.frensham.org/who-we-are> have only been introduced and in place for a term and a half, the school was given very positive feedback on this subject in the recent Independent School Inspectorate (ISI) report, as they judge a school on how well they uphold their Vision, Mission, Aims and Values. Rick acknowledged that there was more work to do on embedding the Values but felt it was incredibly encouraging that they are being given this external validation by the ISI. Unfortunately, the report cannot be shared just yet but Rick is hoping to share the results as soon as the report is formally issued.
- The Attitude to Learning charter is proving to be a powerful tool for clarifying expectations. Nick confirms that the JS are talking about the ATL charter in assemblies and are also in the process of holding separate lessons for each of the 4 Values across all year groups to further embed learning.
- Rick tells us that there is a staff workshop tomorrow with the company that helped create the school Vision, Mission and Aims. He has also met a Head at another school who is about 6 months further down the line with implementation and was delighted to see the progress that was being made. Rick confirms that over the next few months the staff will be continuing to embed the Values into everything we do including appraisals and recruitment. In particular Rick feels that the student admissions process being an entirely holistic approach helps to ensure that the children joining Frensham are a good fit and embody the school Values.
- Kay asks if all parents know what the Values are? Rick agrees that likely not and accepts that there is more work to be done.
- Rick explains that he has invited some parents to attend part of the workshop tomorrow and that there will be more opportunities in the future for parents to be involved.
- Isobel noted how effective his in person presentation on Values etc was at the JS Town Hall event.

Junior School

- The JS Town Hall event in December was well attended and created a good opportunity for open discussion between staff and parents.
- Rick expressed relief that Covid regulations changing really opened things up now.

ACTION: Rick to write to all JS parents sharing the short term and long term changes / actions that will be taken and to arrange another Town Hall event next term.

SEN

- Rick explains that the school only caters for mild SEN needs and that this has always been the case, so he is surprised if he hears the contrary said to him by prospective parents. Perceptions differ from reality sometimes.

- The school uses the same Values based admittance criteria for every child. Not based on grades or additional needs but whether the student embodies the school Values and whether they will be able to thrive at Frensham.
- Rick recognised when he arrived that the SEN provision needed to be improved and therefore in recent years the SEN team has increased from two to five staff led by Beverley Wrigglesworth (Director of Support for Learning).
- The SEN team also have a lot of input in pupil recruitment as ascertaining a student's needs is a difficult job and requires expertise. Rick reflects that one of the hardest things to do is turn away pupils / parents. These conversations are particularly difficult on the rare occasion where Frensham can no longer meet the needs of an existing student. However, the school cannot cater for everyone, and the decision is always based on what is best for the student.
- Some children's needs are complex and challenging and there has been a national increase in SEN applications over the last few years.
- Rick mentions St Christopher's in Letchworth where our FH founders came from. They have the same ethos and profile as us.
- Sandra asks if the school need to make any changes due to the SEN numbers growing nationally? Rick explains that increasing the SEN team was to help current pupils rather than in response to national numbers but confirmed that the provision is continually under review in order to make sure the school is offering the best support to all students.
- Katherine points out that some SEN children will need more structure and rules, therefore FH might be too challenging an environment for those pupils to cope with.
- Laura explains that additional needs are being more readily diagnosed. It is therefore not just a case of more children having extra needs, but rather more children being identified as having additional needs.
- Mark G states that he is unsure if all teachers are providing the support needs that the SEN department are recommending. Rick tells us that he wants to hear of any teachers who do not read Beverley's reports on children. Any parents concerned about this must let him know, he has promptly dealt with this issue in the past and will continue to do so.
- Richard notes that the Governors approved the increased SEN team in order to support the diverse range of students at Frensham and ensure they can all thrive. He also notes that although we are in the lucky position where we can be selective about our student intake, we absolutely are not a hot house and do not base our decisions on grades. He reiterates that the process is designed to identify those students that are the best fit and who will thrive at and contribute to our diverse school.
- Katherine notes there is a range of diversity in staff too.

ACTION: Rick to continue to encourage staff to thoroughly read Beverley's SEN reports.

Comms

- Vicki acknowledges that although there are long term goals to improving communication (such as software updates) she asks if the Communication Team could also look at implementing some shorter

term fixes, eg keeping parents in the loop and response times. There is still some frustration with slow (and in a few limited cases no) responses.

- Rick is disappointed as he feels it is completely unacceptable not to receive a response. He encouraged parents to escalate to a more senior member of staff if they do not receive a response. He would also like to be made aware of any repeat offenders as it may be necessary to provide them with more support if they are struggling with their workload.
- There is a set of communications guidelines that all staff have that helps them set the right tone. Any parent who receives emails that don't have the right "tone" etc can be forwarded to EmmaJ at hello@frensham.org
- Laura asks that if there's an academic question parents can send it to her and she will either answer it directly or pass it to a member of her team.
- EmmaJ asks if parents are aware that if they reply to a generic email from frensham@frensham.org it will automatically go to the original sender.
- Sandra notes that there has been improvement in the generic email as the emails now helpfully provide the name and email of the original sender. Reps were delighted to hear this.
- Email addresses for all staff are on the school website <https://www.frensham.org/our-staff>

ACTION: EmmaT and Isobel to catch up with EmmaJ once the ISI report is published to re-visit the communication plan

Equity, Inclusivity & Diversity (EID)

- The gender policy is currently in 2nd draft form and Rick hopes to have it circulated by the end of term.
- Rick refers to a document he is finding useful produced by AGBIS and the law firm Farrers called 'Towards an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy' which is a guide for Governors and schools.
- A Parent EID Group meeting has been organised for the 21st of March.
- Rick explained that the three members of staff who have been working with him on this area have become spread quite thin managing their other responsibilities. As this is such an important area Rick explains that one dedicated member of staff with responsibility for all matters of Equity, Inclusivity & Diversity should be considered.
- Rick again stresses the need for individuals with concerns to approach the correct staff members and get it resolved.

ACTION: Rick to discuss gender in sport and competitive v non-competitive sport with Phil Stanway (Director of Sport) to ensure the schools policy is clear and underpins the schools Values.

Dance & Drama

- HelenD updated us on the PV reps D&D group meeting that morning with Andy Spink and the Performing Arts team: James Casselton, Josh Edwards, Bob Keane and Amanda Liddle.
- They had a positive and open discussion covering a range of topics including Covid, resources, perception and vision.

- The group were keen to meet again soon for further discussions.

GENERAL OR RECURRING ISSUES

School Trips

- Andy tells us that the school is passionate about trips and is pleased that he has been able to get many back up and running and many more are in the pipeline.
- Andy explains that the three core residentials for students are those in Yr6, Yr9 and Yr12.
- Unfortunately, the Yr9 Knoydart experience has had to be cancelled 3 years in a row due to Covid. The remoteness and nature of the trip means that school are still not able to offer the trip to Yr9 so they have arranged for them to go to the Peak District instead. The school wanted a trip that continued the principles of Knoydart but was Covid proof. Andy feels they have managed to achieve this and the students will have time, without technology, being challenged to live out of one bag, doing activities that stretch them, and to complete a community project.
- Andy stated that they were determined that Knoydart would still run but with a much smaller group. (People in the local community there don't want large numbers of school kids going as it is quite remote). The trip has therefore been adapted for just 11 x Yr12 students going this year. The students attending will help the school try to design a trip that can accommodate greater numbers in the future. Thus becoming an established Yr12 trip and giving the students who have missed out due to Covid another chance at going. Students had to apply for a place and Andy said that the applications were amazing to read and it demonstrated how powerful the Knoydart trip was in their Frensham experience, with many students wanting to go a second time.
- The Year 6 Wales trip to St David's, Pembrokeshire is going ahead and is well established.
- Other examples of trips are Yr 7 to Hadrian's Wall and there are plans for a Yr8 Summer Term "survival" residential experience on site.
- Many day trips are planned for the Summer Term but it can be tricky to fit in due to the shortness of this term.
- Becks makes the point that off-site trips and residentials are planned a year ahead and that last year they were told not to organise any. Things are opening up now though, for example the postponed Geography Iceland trip is going ahead before Easter. Also, the postponed Netball trip that was adapted to Covid proof it is also finally going ahead this week in Manchester instead of Jersey.
- Becks explains that full year residentials are usually run in Yrs 4,5,6,7,8&9, however from Yr10 they are mainly subject or interest based eg sport, geography, history and MFL. Outdoor Education choices also go ahead such as Duke of Edinburgh.
- Sara asks about Yr10 having missed out on Knoydart and it would be nice for them to have something coming up, even if it was just a day trip. Becks points out that Yr11 missed out too and that it gets tricky when time needs to be missed out of school in GCSE years. However, she mentions that they are

looking at a trip at the beginning of Yr11 for the current Yr10s. Plus noted that about 50% of Yr10 were signed up to do the DofE awards.

- Becks mentions the impact on staff numbers at school that a residential trip makes. Malika explains that is not such an issue with MFL trips as they are in holiday time. Richard wonders if it would help if parents could support staff on trips as they did a few years back.
- Katherine also highlights the need for children to build up to these trips and reminds the group they have missed 2 years of sleepovers/trips/residentials so some may not be able to cope with the more challenging residentials. They are planning classroom sleepovers and a night under canvas to help prepare the children.
- Rick summarises this topic by saying they are getting back up on their feet after Covid and to give them time.

ACTION: Becks is planning to send out a list of the big trips happening in the next calendar year, to give parents notice.

Academic perceptions

- Vicki voices that some parents are still convinced that there is a perception of academic focus.
- Rick is surprised that this is the case as all subjects are equal at FH. He discusses what “academic” means and refers to the letter Laura sent out last year to parents about this. He also references the academic survey from a few years ago that was done before he took over as Head. Rick explains that he found the survey very helpful, it highlighted that parents didn’t want the school ethos to change but also that parents wanted the school to be more ambitious and to “raise the bar”. Rick confirms he has done that.
- Other schools are having similar issues with Covid being responsible for the cancellation of many creative ventures, performances and trips etc.
- Rick tells us that the academic profile has actually changed in recent years. He uses the evidence shown in the standardised testing of Yr7s. These tests show their likely success at GCSE’s and are scored by A,B,C&D grades. He explains that 7/8 years ago the school showed just A&B results. There is now a range from A-D proving that contrary to the perception of academic focus FH now has a much wider academic profile.
- Laura confirms that she does not treat any subject differently and that they are all of equal importance.
- Isobel believes that the school has not become more academic or that they test students more. It’s just that communication in this area has greatly improved in the last few years under new leadership and this might have led to the misconception. The steady stream of information and half termly reporting means parents are now fully aware of what their child is doing and how they are doing. This wasn’t always the case in the past.
- Laura agrees and confirms that in fact there is now less testing than there used to be, parents are just better informed.

- Malika tells us personally, from her experience of working in a variety of schools, that FH is definitely not a “hothouse” or a pushy school academically. Children here are encouraged to achieve their potential, not necessarily top marks.
- Sandra suggests a workshop to ask parents what they really think.
- Sara notes that prospective parents can have the opposite concern ie. whether the school is the right place for an academic student. Other reps agree that this is a question commonly asked by prospective parents when they help with school Open Days. It is perhaps another common misconception which prospective parents need more reassuring on.
- Rick suggests that the imminent ISI report will help put to bed any misconceptions.

ACTION: Rick to talk to staff to ensure it is made clear that all subjects are treated equally.

Transition

- Rick is aware that some parents who joined in the last few years have not seen the school properly. Open Mornings are generally busy so it is not always practical to invite large numbers of existing parents along but that other events could be arranged. In the meantime, he encouraged any parent, particularly those approaching transition years to go on the website or contact reception and book a tour.

ACTION: Rick and EmmaJ to discuss ways of including existing parents on Open Mornings or inviting them for private tours of the school.

COLLABORATIVE WORKSHOP - MANAGING LOW LEVEL BEHAVIOUR

Rick explains that there is a rise in low level behaviour issues coming out of the Covid lockdowns. This is common for all schools and has had the greatest impact on the younger Junior School years and Yrs 7,8 & 9.

Becks clarifies that the issues are not the “big stuff” and that they are mainly due to a lack of socialisation and break in routine. For example, trouble among friendship groups, lack of focus, disrupting others, showing a lack of respect or demonstrating unkind behaviour.

The group were split into 3 mixed sub-groups and asked to consider 3 questions in short brainstorm sessions to identify creative approaches from different perspectives. The ideas collected are listed below:-

- Q1. How can we reward positive behaviour in a way that fits the school’s values?
 - Postcards home
 - Values based postcards home
 - Peer praise on Teams
 - Group rewards
 - Sweets – an informal well done
 - DOJO points
 - Lucky dip boxes
 - Teachers to feedback to parents

- Celebrating Values based success
 - Make sure every child is celebrated for something
 - Stickers
 - Extra responsibilities
 - Extra freedom for SS (Rowledge CoOp visits?)
 - Linking Values to reports
 - Ask the students!
- Q2. What Values based sanctions could we consider to help effectively manage behaviour?
 - Helping the community
 - Students coming up with own consequences
 - Relationship between staff and students must be positive
 - Conversation much more important than detention
 - Link to what has been done
eg Can you put it right and what do you need to do to put it right?
 - Mentors – older students
- Q3. How can we ensure consistency across all staff in managing behaviour whilst continuing to embrace the individual approach?
 - More time to reflect
 - Better use of tutor time
 - Staff training
 - Sharing best practice
 - Staff supporting each other
 - Linking closely with Values
 - Induction/mentoring of new staff
 - Making sure staff know their student community and share knowledge
 - Availability of pastoral staff – always someone around
 - Really great recruitment!
- Sara acknowledges that we all appreciate how difficult a topic it is and how much work and thought has already gone into it.
 - Vicki notes what a positive experience it is to consider these subjects together, the more we can work together the better we can understand each other and recognise the opportunities and challenges.
 - Rick thanks the group, agreeing how useful it is to hold these conversations. He states that staff training has been set up and that the suggestions will be taken into consideration and, where possible and appropriate, implemented. Change is unlikely to happen overnight, but Rick looks forward to reporting back on progress in due course.

ACTION: Rick to report back progress and improvements in behaviour management to Parent Voice in the Autumn Term meeting.

- AOB