

MINUTES OF THE PARENTS FORUM MEETING ON
THURSDAY 2ND JULY 2020 ON ZOOM

Staff Attendance: Heidi Gale – Headteacher
Jo Cooper – Deputy Headteacher
Jenny Read – Assistant Headteacher – KS3
Cathy Peacock – Chair of Governors
Paul Heery – Executive Principal

Heidi Gale welcomed all to the meeting and dealt firstly with the questions sent in by parents.

Home learning: Jenny Read

Q: Can we reconsider using Zoom for lessons?

Whilst Zoom is a wonderful tool for meetings and a great platform for adults, it is not so good for students.

- It is not secure
- It can be hacked
- Teachers have little control over what others are doing
- It is not good for behavioural management

We therefore feel that from a safeguarding point of view it is not something we feel is appropriate. There are other platforms we could use to run live lessons but we feel that the benefits for, compared to those against, are quite limited. There are a lot of students who have no internet access and would be relying on their own mobile data. We have provided laptops to some of those students but there are a lot who do not have a reliable internet access and this puts them at a huge disadvantage if we are teaching live lessons that they cannot access. We also have a lot of students who are sharing with other siblings and with parents who are working from home and this makes it very difficult to run any kind of timetable for live lessons. A lot of parents have reported that they do not want a fixed timetable because of the issues accessing the internet in their households so we still feel that live lessons for most of our students are not going to be right thing to do.

Q: Can we use pre-recorded lessons?

A lot of the Teachers have started doing pre-recorded content, not in all subjects because not all teachers have the facilities at home. Staff training is something we will look at when we return in September, it wasn't something that Teachers had planned or prepared for and some have had a steep learning curve to get used to recording lessons. This is a priority for us so that come September, should we have to shut the school again, we will be in a much better position both in terms of equipment and training so that we would be able to offer more pre-recorded lessons.

Q: How do we help students stay motivated?

Very difficult. Young people have been at home for 3 months. A lot are struggling with trying to engage with anything; some with school work, some with anything at all. They may also be feeling isolated from their friends. Prioritising children's mental health and wellbeing is the most important thing, not to engage in arguments and problems with students who are struggling. Your relationship

with your children and their mental health is more important than completing every single piece of school work. Encourage them to try and complete something every day.

Q: Will homework be provided over the summer?

We feel that the young people need a break. We do not want to put more pressure on them over the holidays. It would be better, now that things are beginning to open up, for the young people to be out in the fresh air seeing their friends and family, where appropriate. If there is school work that hasn't been finished then by all means if they want to do this that is fine. From the school's point of view, we do not want to set any additional work in the summer (work would not normally be set during the summer). We want them to be refreshed and ready to start again in September.

Jenny Read invited parents to put forward any questions they wished to raise by writing them in the chat box and they would try and answer them.

Q: When is the end of term? When is the final date for hand-ins and final date for delivery of new work to pupils?

The end of term date is Friday 24th July. During the final week we will use this to mop up any final things. Year 7 & 8 have had an outline of when their assessed work dates are for this term and that is well before the 24th July. Year 9 and 10 who have had their new options work, we will not be set new work in the final week of term. It will be a final chance for students to finish up, to respond to the feedback they have been given and then get everything tidied up and finished off for the end of term.

Return of Year 10 and 12 students back into school: Heidi Gale

The return of Year 10 and 12 students has been really successful. They were almost at the end of the third week on their specific days. Staff had noticed how students were quiet and subdued on their return. Having to cope with social distancing, hand washing, different staircases, not seeing their friends was difficult but they have coped remarkably well. Credit to the Student Support Team and staff who have been teaching them.

Year 9 Parents will be aware that interviews had taken place with students and parents today and tomorrow and the SLT have discussed opening this to Year 7 & 8. It has been agreed that they are going to do this. In the next fortnight there will be the opportunity to book in to see your children's Tutor or a member of SLT and for students to have the opportunity to come into school and see what it may be like for them in September.

What it might be like returning to school in September: Heidi Gale

The Government have published a lengthy document for primary and secondary school students coming back into school in September. This is about giving clear guidance and building public confidence so that parents feel their children will be safe at school, staff will also feel safe and to have a realistic and sensible plan.

We started working with Curriculum Leaders and Teachers, looking at different scenarios.

- School would be closed – we thought this would be highly unlikely
- School would be completely open – at this point we thought this would be highly unlikely

- Flex scenario – a scenario where we can very quickly turn on remote learning if we have to and a scenario where we can have reduced occupancy in school so that everyone gets some time at school to learn and some time at home

We are working towards a model where we will have all the students in school all the time. We are quite blessed at Bramcote College. We have an enormous site, we have lots of classrooms and lots of outdoor space. We have trailed a one way system round school with the Years 10 & 12 so we know what we are doing in terms of practical things, getting children working in a way that meets the COVID-19 relations and in a way that keeps people safe.

We started to talk about how the current timetable of 6 periods a day meant that children had a lot of interaction with staff and other students so we are changing the 2 week timetable to a 1 week timetable. Should the school need to close and should we only be able to have half the number of children in school then the provision for those children would be the same for each week; negating the need to waiting a whole month for a turn around. In addition there will be fewer lessons to reduce the number of transitions within school and the number of potential contact which children might have. We will be working out the details of this over the next couple of weeks. The timetable is written but some of the details around this; for instance, does it make sense for Year 7 and 8 to be taught in tutor groups only so that they have a base and the teachers would come to them. There is a lot of logistics to work out so that we are not compromising on the educational experience of young people and without creating stress and anxiety for them. We will be communicating this with the staff, parents and students over the coming weeks.

Opening School in September: Paul Heery

The school will decide the model that will be put in place in September and we will then risk assess the model, see what alterations can be made around break times and lunch times and hand washing facilities. Look at the way students come into school in the morning and leave in the afternoon that will all feed into the risk assessment. It is our duty to reduce the risks however we can whilst maintaining the aim to get all students back into school. We will share the risk assessment with teachers and with unions and then we will make it available to parents so that they can see the measures being put in place. We will be sticking closely to the government guidelines and will share the risk assessment before the end of term. In August (11th) the Government will confirm if schools will be going ahead with re-opening but we are all expecting that schools will be open.

Heidi Gale: We will summarise to parents the Government guidelines to give reassurance and also answer some questions about uniform. The guidance is that there is no additional risk to wearing uniform and in fact there is a benefit in terms of routine for students in wearing uniform. In terms of the start and end times of school day; it is in the guidance that we can change the start and end times. We may do so but suspect that this will not be by much, perhaps 15/20 minutes either end of the day. We appreciate children still need to get to school and parents still need to get to work and we would look at provision if we were to change the times to support parents.

Year 11: Jenny Read

We will need to make adjustments for catch up. Some will have an awful lot to catch up and other will have worked very well. There is a consultation currently that we will be responding to as a Trust about modifications to exams and exam contents for year 11 next year so will await the outcome of

that to see ways in which exams, contents and curriculum may have changed. We will be supporting year 11s with additional sessions and targeting intervention where it is needed.

Q: Will year 11 be able to continue with every subject?

There was a leak from the government which suggested that there was going to be a lot of chopping back to just English and Maths but in the actual guidance which has been published this does not seem to be the case, other than on an individual basis for students who are not managing due to the time they had out of school.

Jo Cooper: We have some tuition in place and we are working with an organisation called 'Action Tutoring' already. They will be supporting students with Maths and English and we have discussed the way we are going to use additional funds for tutoring. We have written into the timetable for Year 11s that there will be opportunities for support and intervention from September with subjects where there is a lot of content where students need a lot of support.

Heidi Gale: We will also be looking at tuition for all year groups. We want our students to have a good balance of subjects.

Paul Heery: What it says in the guidance is that the vast majority of Year 10 and 11 are expected to continue to study their examinations. It says that in exceptional circumstances it may be in the interest of Year 11 to discontinue with an examination subject but we think that this will have to be in very exceptional circumstances. It has been made clear that we should follow the curriculum, which is what we wanted to do.

Q: Is there any more clarity regarding whether exams will be scheduled later?

Heidi Gale: It has been discussed that next year GCSE exams might be pushed back to the start of June. The question is how they turn them around for marking, particularly concerning 'A' levels and where students need grades to go onto University. Ofqual are consulting and we are waiting for more information on that.

Q: What will happen to Year 11s and exams if we have another lockdown?

Heidi Gale: We are aware that this could happen, our children have come through the hardest 3 months of their lives and we are discussing assessments early in the Autumn term to allow us to see who needs further support etc.

It would be crazy to have all the students back in September and then sit them down to do mocks. This will not happen. We need to do a lot of planning about this and want to be in a good position if a lockdown were to happen. We want to know that we have got the data from the children that is significant. Given what has happened this year, unless there is an absolute spike and health emergency, I am not sure that this Country could sustain another 3-4 months of school closure next year and I do not know how our young people would cope. We just need to wait and see.

Q: Will enrichment go ahead as normal or will clubs etc. be delayed?

Government guidelines currently say no singing etc and there are some concerns around activities mixing year groups that we are keeping apart around the school to create bubbles. We will have to look hard at what social and wellbeing opportunities will exist in school. Unfortunately, we not have the answer to that question.

Building Update: Paul Heery

We are waiting to sign the legal agreement with Nottingham County Council. Our Solicitors have been in touch with their Solicitors' but we are finding it difficult for anyone to commit to the agreement because people have been put to do other things during this crisis. We cannot proceed until we have a legal agreement. It is frustrating as we have a design we are happy with but are unable to move forward. Apologies that we have no more positive news but I will get out an update to parents before the end of term either directly or in the newsletter.

The new Relationships & Sex Education Curriculum:

This year in the period of time we have not been at school, most schools have been tasked with launching a new curriculum 'The Relationships and Sex Education Curriculum' and the plan was in March to start consulting with parents and speaking to parents about the details of this. Clearly amid everything that has gone off, that has not been top priority but we will at some point come back to you and ask parents opinions on things. Jenny Read will be leading on this.

Jenny Read: We are an early adopted school so a lot of our curriculum is already in place. The Government has now said that it is not now necessary for schools to begin the compulsory RSE Education from September and that we have until of Summer 2021 to get the curriculum fully in place. We will be writing to parents in September to give full details of the curriculum. In essence for our school not a lot is changing. We have always had comprehensive PSHE and Citizenship lessons. This will have far more impact on schools who have not had these lessons and for schools of a religious nature who have not included or had sex education as part of their curriculum. We have had these in our curriculum for at least the last decade. For us there will not be a big change but we have a legal obligation to inform parents that we are launching this in September. We do not want to overwhelm parents and students when we do not know what school will look like in September. More information will be sent out about this after the holidays.

Heidi Gale: We have had several emails coming in thanking individual teachers for their pre-recorded lessons, for work which has been marked and assessed and just generally thanking our Tutors for the conversations they have had with parents and students.

Q: What can parents do to support the school?

What you are doing by attending these meetings and listening to what we are doing and working with us is a big support in this time of navigating through something that we have not been through before. It is very difficult to know if we are doing things right and if we are getting the balance right but I am appreciative that the rest of the Leadership Team and staff and parents are all working together. I know it has not been easy with working, home learning and we are ready to get back to some sort of normality. Thank you also to parents for all your support. If you want to pick the phone up for anything please feel free to do so.

Q: Is the present Bramcote College building fit for purpose?

Paul Heery: Our first priority is to make sure the building is safe and we are confident that the building is safe and fit for purpose. There have been some repairs to the steps up to Science. It is frustrating that we are paying for things that will probably have a short lifespan. Some remedial works have been identified and these will be done over the summer. We are confident that we can continue to deliver learning in a safe environment until we get the new school and there are some things that we will need to do now which will be included in our Risk Assessment. We will continue to maintain the building but hopefully without spending too much money. All the electrical wiring is sound, safety checks are in place and the site is being continually assessed.

Q: Will food be available at school?

We are discussing this with NCC who are our providers and a [aren't survey has been sent out to find out what level of food services we will need to provide for September. Plans are in place and more information will be shared as soon as possible.

-oOo-

Date of next meeting: Thursday 17th September (which allows us to reflect on the first two weeks back in school)

To register your interest for the next meeting please email:
parents@bramcote.college