

Abbey College, Ramsey - Parent Forum
Minutes of the meeting held Tuesday 10th November 2022, 4.30pm

1. Welcome

All were welcomed and introduced themselves. The following were present:

A Christoforou (ACH) – Headteacher
C Greyson (CG) – Chair
S Noble (SN) – Assistant Headteacher
J Goodman-Eastwood – DofE Coordinator
C Powell (CP) - Deputy Headteacher
M Lynch – Governor
K Dodsley (KD) – Clerk
A Conway
A Gaillard
E Kamau
R Kilbey
C Lilley
Z Matthews
K Richardson
S Whalley

2. Minutes from the meeting on 12th July 2022

The minutes from the meeting on 12th July 2022 were agreed.

Matters arising

Sports fixtures
Sanctions

3. Homework Update – Sarah Noble

The new homework system is positive and has been reviewed to ensure that what is set is appropriate and supports work in class. The number of students completing homework has increased. If homework is not completed students in Y9-Y11 now receive a detention instead of a tell. There was a group of students in Y10 who were concerned about the volume of homework around assessment time and now homework is reduced in favour of revision around assessments.

Q – Y9 are now getting a decent amount of homework but every piece is on line on an app and there is no work marked. There is concern about the high use of apps as parents are trying to encourage children to spend less time on their phones. Some are completing the work on apps on their way home, so it is not quality work taking place. SN responded that Maths, English and Science have Tassomai which can be completed on a computer as well as a phone app. Apps are self-marking so teachers can see where there are gaps and address this.

Q – is there any mapping done to get an overview of what homework formats departments use? CP noted that a lot of time has been spent on homework and departments have been given principals around homework, but students need tracking to determine any patterns. **Action:** CP to track homework for a selection of students.

Q – a parent agreed with the noted concerns as their children don't concentrate on Tassomai and there are no other forms of homework for physical marking. CP noted that homework should consist of learning to support the work completed in lessons as there is retrieval at the beginning of lessons.

Q – A parent noted that they like the apps and their children sit down and do homework. There is some frustration when there are topics which have not been covered in class. ACH noted that in Maths, Tassomai is an intuitive program that uses the students answers to determine their knowledge level and will add subjects in that could push or challenge the student. **Action:** CP to

explain to students how Tassomai is intuitive and signpost them to resources if there is a topic they don't know about. There are subject knowledge organisers available and staff will know to signpost students to these.

Q – A parent noted that they like the apps as they offer flexibility. Their child has also been set homework to hand in and it was marked with feedback. There needs to be a balance.

Q from survey – parents are struggling to get onto Edulink to see homework. **Action:** School to provide support for parents to get Edulink log in details. It was discussed that there could be some after school support sessions offered with IT present to help people log in, or there could be a Teams option. **Action:** CP to set up Edulink support sessions with J Oswell.

Q from survey – why can't parents message teachers via Edulink? There are no plans to release this function on Edulink. The school is using Edulink as other schools do and consideration has to be given to teacher workload. Communications will continue they are.

Q – Edulink is very useful, but could the 'meet the team' webpage have teachers first names on so that email addresses could be worked out. **Action:** ACH to review. Any enquiries to office@abbeycollege.cambs.sch.uk do get directed to the right person.

Q from survey – some students are asked to print work, can it be submitted electronically? Mostly work can be submitted electronically but it depends on the subject and what the work is. If there is an issue with printing, there is a printer available at school in IT01.

Q from survey – how essential is homework as my son struggles? There has been a lot of research carried out and it is essential part of learning during the teenage years to embed learning. If anyone does struggle, they can speak to the teacher and necessary adjustments can be made. There are staffed homework clubs at break and lunch and a discrete facility available for SEND students.

Q from survey – in MFL, students were told they would get a tell or detention if they do not achieve a certain grade in their homework. CP responded that this may have initially been communicated but there have been modifications over time. The fairest way is if homework has been tried, there is not a punishment. The detention strategy has changed and is being implemented a year group at a time.

Q – There has been some anxiety for a Y8 who struggles with memory, is the school communicating with students about not getting a detention if they do the work and that there is support available? It is about effort and this is communicated. There is a clear guide available for students on Teams. Any issues can be raised with CP.

4. **Duke of Edinburgh (D of E) – J Goodman-Eastwood**

The award was explained. Most of the programme goals are achieved out of school. D of E was hit by Covid, and the organisation has taken time to respond. It is hoped that barriers have now been removed and students on the award can catch up. There are a lot of questions about timescales, but it is led by the student participating. There is a session after school on a Tuesday and there are training weekends. There are 122 students enrolled on the programme and enthusiasm is high.

Q – When will those enrolled start to receive information? The enrolment on to the D of E electronic system is taking place and this takes a couple of weeks. It is anticipated that there will be a meeting in a couple of weeks for induction to the electronic system, EDofE. Students can then choose sections by January.

Q – is there somewhere parents can look to see if ideas are valid? There is a letter drafted to parents which includes links which will be circulated once welcome packs are available. There is a 'for parents' section on how to support as parent involvement is essential.

Q – for a student who signed up pre pandemic and is now in Y12, has the opportunity to participate passed? No, Sixth Formers can participate and they have been contacted and invited to sessions. Uptake has been low, but Sixth Formers should be encouraged to participate and to attend the Tuesday afternoon sessions.

Q – Does D of E contribute to UCAS points? Not at the moment but it is possible that it might in the future. Doing D of E provides opportunities and employers see it as a positive. Employers will be asked to visit and talk about DofE.

Q – when is the expedition? It can only take place between May and October and three possible dates are being looked at in the summer term for students who have met requirements.

Q – is it just outdoor activities? The expedition can be a variety of activities, but doesn't have to be a massive challenge. Taking part in D of E has to be an enjoyable experience.

5. **Fundraising and Finance**

This was discussed first on the agenda.

CG reported that from selling pre loved uniform at pop up shops and online and fundraising activities, the Parent's Forum has donated £500 towards the redesigning of the quad area. G Gerrard-Cook is overseeing the mental health strategy in school and will set up a student group to design a quiet area. **Action:** G Gerrard-Cook to present to the next meeting. ACH noted thanks for the generous contribution.

CG is proposing a 'make a difference' award system of a £100 grant where students can propose an area to make a difference to a group, year, department or team. It is hoped that there can be a termly award and this will be started with Y7. *This was proposed, seconded and approved.*

6. **Items for the next Agenda**

From some parental concerns raised, the following will go on the parent survey and next agenda:

- a) Toilets
- b) Lining up rules
- c) Lunchtime and canteen
- d) G Gerrard-Cook to talk about the quad redevelopment

7. **AOB**

Sent by other parents:

Sports fixtures – is there any way to inform parents of details as there is currently little communication around these which makes making arrangements hard for parents. **Action:** PE department to respond.

Sanctions – Can students respectfully ask staff about sanctions given, is this encouraged or discouraged as they'd sometimes like to know why they have been sanctioned? SN noted that it is encouraged, but sometimes students don't choose their time or words correctly. SN noted that she is creating videos of behaviour in action for students, showing them good ways to do things, such as how to ask why they got a sanction. This will also prepare students for future life to have a mature conversation. This can be productive as there are a lot of nervous students and some don't understand appropriate times. The school wants to encourage strong positive relationships.

Thanks to were noted to all for participating in the meeting.

8. **Date of the Next Meeting**

Tuesday 13th December 4.30

The meeting closed at 5.30pm