

## Parent Council News - Monday 5th February 2018

The first meeting of the parent council was held on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> February. The meeting began with a welcome and introductions. Matthew Hardwick outlined the purpose of the group as a 'sounding board' for the school on a range of issues affecting pupils at the school.

A draft constitution was circulated and feedback was taken from members of the Council. It was agreed that Alessandra Desbottes would amend this (to allow for parents to discuss non confidential issues with wider members of the community) and this was circulated to members of the Council and suggested amendments made. See below for the constitution.

It was decided that the Council would meet half-termly and agreed that every effort should be made to encourage a wide representation of parents to attend the meetings: sharing notes from the meetings widely; informing all parents of the agenda topics in advance; and allowing parents to attend meetings on a one off basis.

A discussion took place about who would chair the meetings and it was agreed that a school representative would be chair but that a parent from the group could be vice-chair. This will be followed up at the next meeting.

Formal minutes from the meeting will not be taken but will rather be presented as 'News from the Parent Council'. This will be emailed to parents and put on the school website on the new Parent Council page.

The subsequent discussion of the meeting was homework where parents shared their views on homework set by school. The main points raised were:

- Inconsistency about regularity, quantity and quality of homework set
- Some parent being worried about children being set too much homework and thereby limiting their availability for other activities
- Some parents feeling that pupils should be set more/better quality homework
- One parent mentioned the Show My Homework website which would allow teachers to set homework online and give parents the opportunity to monitor work set and see whether the work had been completed. This is an expensive option so school is now exploring a similar system offered by Microsoft.
- It was suggested that there needs to be a clear definition of what homework should be
- A suggestion was made that every piece of homework should be individualised but this was agreed to be impracticable but certainly homework should be differentiated to meet the varying needs and abilities of students
- All parents felt that the recording of homework could lead to difficulties regarding its completion. It should be clearly explained to children and recorded in planners. It should be unambiguous and reflect work recently completed in class. 'Finish off work started in class' is not appropriate as a homework task.
- In some instances parents reported that homework was not marked promptly and in some cases not at all. Matthew Hardwick explained that there are some stress points

during the year when teachers are very busy marking exam papers etc., but this does not excuse the lack of feedback to pupils.

- One suggestion was that at these times longer pieces of work could be set allowing teachers a period of time to mark exam papers before assessing the homework.
- Some parents felt that their children were not sure what to do when revision was set as homework and that there should be more input from school on revision techniques
- It was suggested that parents should play a greater role in ensuring that children complete their homework and also that there should be better communication with school if a child is unable to complete it for whatever reason – notes in planners are the easiest way of doing this.
- Some pupils feel a lot of pressure from homework and in these times of mental health issues increasing care must be taken to ensure that pupils have a good understanding of work set in the first place, and understand that teachers will help if they are struggling to complete it.

The meeting closed at 19.00 and the next meeting will take place on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> March at 5.30pm in the Meeting Room.