

St Olave's PA Form Reps Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday 21st January 2015 @7:45pm

Location: Main School Library

Attendees: Mr Evans (Deputy Head), Catherine Fleet, Sarah Ide, Lin Limbrey, Harbi Kaur, Rinku Chibber, Narinder Gill, Seema Singh, Julian Grainger, Julie Costard, Francesca Iudicello, Jennifer Franks, Nicky Davies, Rahul Gupta, Archie Coker, Olivia John

Apologies: Dinta Madlani, Jennifer Holland, Alison Spicer, Julie Vouillemin, Sarah Cassidy, Sarah McAleer

New 11+ Entrance Exam

Parents were keen to know more about the new format 11 plus entrance exam.

Mr Evans confirmed that the school is currently consulting on its Admissions Policy and will be doing so until 1 March 2015. Should the draft policy be accepted this would be for admissions in Sept 2016 and would thus affect boys taking the entrance examination(s) in Sept 2015. The need for change has arisen due to the increasing number of applicants to the school and the desire to have as much information as possible on each candidate. The draft policy outlines a two stage process with the first stage testing Logic, Mathematics and English. Pupils who pass the first stage exam be invited to the second stage exam, which will examine English and Mathematics topics in more depth. As with the existing entrance test, any new exam papers will be produced internally and therefore be unique to the School.

Interim Report Follow-Ups

Parents were concerned that comments they'd written on their son's interim report slips relating to specific performance issues had gone unnoticed and had to be followed up by the parents themselves.

Mr Evans was very clear on this point - parents should expect an answer and that if they didn't get one, parents should email the school office directly where their request could be passed on to the relevant person.

Teaching of Sport

A Year 7 parent expressed some concern over teaching methods in the PE Department and the suitability of their approaches to students of differing abilities.

Mr Evans has since spoken to the Faculty and hopefully the matter is now resolved.

The timing of rugby matches

Parents were concerned about rugby training finishing after school when it was dark.

*Mr Evans explained that the starting time of after-school training sessions was constrained by the fact that lessons do not finish until 3.30 pm. However, he reassured parents that they could pick their children up at the Chapel rather than Park Avenue if it was after school hours – please see the full policy on the School website (**Current Olavians > School Policies > Before and after school procedures**). Mr Evans also confirmed that, under normal circumstances, only Year 7 students have practice on Saturday mornings, which is done in preparation for fixtures higher up in the school.*

Lost property

Parents were concerned that even though they had labelled items, things were still going missing.

Mr Evans said that the School has well-established procedures for dealing with lost property (see www.saintolaves.net/lostproperty for details). But with so many boys on site, the onus had to be on each individual to look after their belongings; many items get left at the back of the classroom until the end of term when everything is gathered up and sorted through so boys should try to retrace their steps to find missing things. He re-iterated that the school did not recommend bringing in expensive equipment and suggested that parents remind boys to lock their valuables away in their own personal locker as this was the safest place – no valuables should ever be left in the changing rooms.

Homework requirements

Some parents were concerned that their sons weren't getting much homework and wondered if this was right.

Mr Evans said that parents could access the published homework timetables on the School website (www.saintolaves.net/homework). This would show the regular pattern of work, though this schedule could vary from time to time at the discretion of the staff involved. He did ask parents to try to get the boys used to doing their homework the night it was set.

Extreme disciplinary measures

Parents wanted to know what measures were in place to discipline the boys and how all those involved were kept apprised of what was going on.

*Mr Evans directed parents to the school website where they can access the Behaviour Policy (**Current Olavians > School Policies > Behaviour**). He confirmed that sanctions began with a simple reprimand and rose through a well-defined system all the way through to the ultimate sanction of permanent*

exclusion – thankfully, a very rare occurrence at this school. In the event of an incident, the pastoral team would investigate the matter fully and involve parents if and when it became necessary.

Lunch queues

Parents wanted to know if those attending lunchtime clubs could be given priority in the lunch queue.

Mr Evans said that so many boys do things at lunchtime that this would not be feasible. Boys did have an opportunity to buy a sandwich at lunch or even at first break so that they shouldn't miss out.

School lighting

Parents wanted to know if the school path leading to Park Avenue could be better lit.

Mr Evans said that all of the existing lights are currently working but to install additional lighting would (probably) require planning permission and certainly require additional funding. He did confirm, however, that boys were allowed to wear something reflective to make sure they were visible. A parent enquired whether the new sports bag (available in due course from Graduates Schoolwear) would contain reflective elements – Mr Evans has since passed this request onto Graduates and the company are investigating options.

Spanish

Parents were interested to know if Spanish A level would be re-instated given that some boys were taking it at GCSE level.

Mr Evans re-iterated that with regard to the financial outlook nothing has changed: the School is anticipating further Sixth Form funding cuts next year. The school tries to offer as broad a spectrum as possible at A level. There are currently ten A2 subjects running in Year 13 with low single figure uptake and unfortunately there is a limit to the number of such courses that the School can support. Demand for Sixth Form languages is very low across the board but the School continues to offer French, German and Latin at A-Level and Greek at GCSE (in the Sixth Form). Options to share staffing resources with other local Sixth Forms have been investigated but such arrangements are very problematic to organise and so it is unlikely to provide a solution.

Cost of water

Parents thought that the price of a bottle of water from the catering company was too much.

Mr Evans clarified that flavoured water cost £1 a bottle but still water was only 50p. He reminded parents that the PA funds four water coolers around the school and that boys could fill up a bottle for nothing whenever they wanted.

Reporting absence

Parents felt that reporting absences by 11.00 am might be too late if something untoward had happened to one of the boys and they hadn't made it into school.

Mr Evans said that the 11.00 am stated in the Absence Policy was the time by which parents had to report absences. The Attendance Officer would contact the parents shortly thereafter to check why a student wasn't in school.

Issues with staff

One of the Form Reps asked what the procedure is should a parent be dissatisfied with a particular member of staff.

Mr Evans asked that any such issues should initially be directed to the Head of that department.

Kukri

(Questions that had been put forward on the topic of the School Sports Kit Supplier had been rendered void ahead of the meeting by the announcement that the School would be changing its supplier from Sept 2015).

Mr Evans explained to parents why buying sports kit through Kukri had been discontinued. He said that the school had remained dissatisfied with the service provided and after exploring several options had finally settled on Graduates of Orpington as they were able to provide the most competitively priced kit of good quality. It is possible to order online via Graduates and the new kit should be in place before the summer holidays, in time for the new Year 7 intake. The new kit will be similar to the Kukri kit so boys can continue to wear their old kit. As before, there are only five key items that need to be purchased from the official supplier and all other items are generic and can be bought from other stores. The PA second-hand sales are also a source of good-value uniform.

Spring Ball, 21 March 2015

Lin Limbrey was present to tell everyone about the Ball and to confirm that the pre-booking discount was available until 30th January (reducing the cost of a ticket from £55 to £50 per person). She reminded everyone that the Ball would be held in the Main Hall again, that guests would receive a welcome drink before being seated for their 3 course meal. They have also hired a top band "The Hit Men UK" which should make for another fantastic evening. Black tie is optional.

Date of next meeting

Wednesday 29th April, Main School Library @ 7.45pm.