

Parental Focus Group Minutes



Date of Meeting: 24th November 2022

Present Morning session: Claire Allen, Isabell Button, Sandra King, Sonia McGiness, Odette Moore, Tracy Sutton, Urszula Thompsett

Present Evening session: Jacqueline Young, Natalie Evans, Lisa Guest, Karolina Frostick

Apologies: Jewel Cole (Governor), Leanne Carey, Helen Weakley, Tracy Hindmarsh, Caroline Griffin

1. Welcome and Introductions

Miss Cronin welcomed everyone, thanked them for attending and gave a brief overview of the agenda.

2. Matters Arising from minutes of 12th October 2022

- Miss Cronin (DC) spoke about Year 11 parents' evening. Parents were asked if they would be happy to have one of the meetings online. Some parents said they prefer face to face and others said that having the option to have it online is good as it can be difficult rushing from work. DC explained to parents that it is very important for the school to have contact with families.
- A parent asked for confirmation on detention timings and if pupils are let out to go to the train station on their own (as the afternoons are getting darker). DC confirmed that pupils who stay behind to do a detention are let out in groups and never on their own. It is very rare that a pupil would be in detention on their own. Detentions have been altered to fit in with train times.
- Please encourage pupils to use water bottles so we can cut down on single plastic usage.
- Mufti Day went well though a large number of parents/carers failed to add the Mufti fee to Parent Pay. This has now been done so we should be able to make a presentation to Dragonflies by the end of this term.

3. Maths Presentation (RJ)

DC introduced Mr Jacobs (RJ), Assistant Principal and Subject Leader for maths. RJ gave a flavour of what Maths is like at St Richard's by showing parents a presentation. Click [here](#) to view.

RJ explained to parents that it is very important for children to know their times tables and how to perform written calculations; addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. RJ showed parents examples of these calculations on the screen and explained the 'bus stop' division method. A couple of parents asked if pupils are allowed to use different methods if they find them easier. RJ confirmed that teachers don't mind which methods are used, as long as pupils reach the correct answer, accurately.

RJ demonstrated the 'lattice' multiplication method which is recommended for pupils who struggle with written multiplication. This method is shown to every pupil at St Richard's.

Year 7 pupils are tested on their numeracy skills when they arrive at St Richard's. Tests are taken to check if gaps have appeared over the summer and to place pupils in the correct sets. Sets are flexible and reviewed regularly. Heavy focus on numeracy.

RJ explained to parents that a nurture group is available for pupils who need extra support. Pupils study the same topic but there is more focus on numeracy. Two teachers in the Maths department (who do not have a tutor group) work with groups of pupils during tutor time. RJ explained that nurture groups can help pupils achieve very high results. Can also help with confidence.

Numeracy support can be found on the website by going to 'Learning → Numeracy → then clicking the link at the top'. Here, you are able to view step-by-step instructions on how to use Mathswatch.

Once logged in to Mathswatch, pupils can find the topic they need support with and view videos explaining the methods. There are interactive exercises to complete and worksheets if they prefer to work on paper. Parents can help support by encouraging pupils to watch the videos, even if they are confident with the method.

Parent Question: Teachers ask that pupils aim to get 80% in their tasks – why do they not ask for 100%? RJ explained that pupils are encouraged to get above 80% but that they should know their strengths and weaknesses. Pupils should put effort in to their homework and spend the correct amount of time on each question. Pupils can ask for more support by taking a screenshot and sending it to their teacher. Pupils are not expected to spend hours on one task. Don't want pupils to feel as though they have failed.

Query from parent regarding some questions requiring difficult language in order to be marked correct. RJ said he had noticed a couple, but to please let him know if parents come across any questions like this.

Pupils need to remember to show workings out. Pupils are encouraged to keep the back of their books open to show the teacher.

Year 10 and Year 11 - parents find that some teachers have a preference for Mathswatch and others have a preference for Hegarty. Yes, this is true.

The maths department follow a mastery approach; Depth before Breadth. RJ ran through schemes of work. RJ explained that all pupils do the same task but once they are capable, they are set work at a deeper level.

Parents should please keep an eye on pupils 'Googling' answers. Teachers are able to check how long a pupil has spent on each answer and can tell which answers to investigate. Pupils are reminded that there are support videos to help with each set of questions on Mathswatch. RJ showed parents an example of videos available.

Parents suggestion: Please could the maths department provide a 'Do's, Don'ts, Facts and Fiction' sheet to help parents support their child complete homework?

Action: RJ said he will try to create a handout for parents explaining all the different resources available to parents and what they should be looking at.

Mathswatch can be used for revision (can access by clicking 'Videos'). Doesn't have to be set work. Can select by qualification, Key Stage, tier, grade, topic. This is one example on how to revise, every child needs to find what works for them.

RJ showed parents MathsGenie. Great website for general recapping and fantastic for exam revision. Pupils can access lots of past papers. Able to see breakdown of where

marks come from. Can see workings. It also shows a teacher taking the exam – live, so it takes the child through the thought process.

Parent Question: What is best practice in the classroom? RJ explained that the maths department meet every fortnight to discuss. The department uses a document 'What Makes Great Maths Lessons'. Teachers can refer to the document at any time. RJ (Subject Leader) and LMT regularly visit classrooms.

Parent Request: Please could a tutorial on Hegarty be organised for parents?

Action: RJ will ask a member of the department to do a demonstration. Miss Cronin suggested asking a member of staff to do a video which could be sent out to parents or placed on the website.

Parents asked about enrichment in Year 9 onwards – tends to be UK Maths Challenge.

4. **Option Choices**

Evening Group just felt there should be a chance to do one more option.

5. **Book Covers**

Evening Group spoke about the value of the book covers and how much the pupils valued them. Felt they were inclusive. They like the prompts. Felt subjects such as Geography, Spanish and RE were particularly good. One concern – little recorded on assessment.

6. **School day – timings/subjects covered**

(Will be covered at next meeting)

7. **Welfare/Wellbeing (anxiety)**

Miss Cronin (DC) explained to the group that the school is struggling with a number of pupils showing anxiety. Some parents are relying on school to act as therapists. Some children are struggling going to lessons.

DC asked if children are presenting as more anxious at home? General consensus is no, but it was suggested that some parents could be struggling more themselves, since Covid, and this is being passed on to their children.

DC handed parents a booklet on 'Support Services at St Richard's' (click [here](#) to view) but explained that though St Richard's will always try to support pupils, there is a limit to what is available at school and that staff are not therapists.

One parent referred to the difficult times we are living in, particularly because of social media.

There is a real concern that the language children are using online is changing and becoming more normalised. Parents agreed but admitted that it can be difficult to know if a child means what they are saying (i.e. if talking about suicidal tendencies). DC asked parents if they thought that holding a talk on suicide might help give parents/carers the tools to support their children. Some parents suggested that a 'general' parenting course may be better as some children may not feel comfortable about their parents going to a talk with just one focus. DC said we may be able to organise something through the church. Other suggestions from parents included:

- a strategic session on online behaviour, detailing techniques and how language is used
- a wellbeing theatrical performance (possibly something parents and pupils can watch together)
- Discussing topics in RE lessons (DC confirmed that this already happens)

Parent Question: A parent asked if St Richard's would contact parents if they believed a child had suicidal tendencies. DC confirmed that they would.

Parent Question: A parent asked if pupils have enough outside space and enough to do. DC explained that this has been limited due to the Chapel being built. However, there are lots of sports activities taking place before school, during lunch time and after school. She agreed to look at the offer at lunch time.

8. The Crest

Parent Question: A parent requested information on how to start working towards The Crest. Information can be found [here](#).

A parent asked who is assessing The Crest this year. The Pastoral TA's in the Hive. This, to be re-advertised.

9. Parental concerns/queries

- One parent felt there was not enough maths homework in Year 8 / Year 9 and requested extending tasks for those who complete work quicker.
- One parent raised that watching maths videos can take longer than the homework time allocated.
- Assessment. Book Covers do not record the progress being made. Little results in books so we cannot see how our child is getting on. Need a greater sense of our child's progress.
DC said a Profile will be issued at the end of this term for Year 8 and Year 10 and then in January for Year 7 and Year 9.

10. Requests for future agenda items

(Will be covered at next meeting)

11. Any Other Business

Attachments

- Support Services at St Richard's. Please click [here](#).
- Advert – Creating a suicide safer environment for our young people. Please click [here](#).
- Maths presentation. Click [here](#) to view.