

# Parental Focus Group Minutes



**Date of Meeting:** Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> January (am) and Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> January (pm)

**Present Morning session:** S McGinnus, S King, U Thompson, A Magni, Z Magni, O Moore, P Read, M Singer, C Ashdown, H Weakley, B Byrne, P Laurence, G Delaney, S Carnell, S Agliata, C Allen, T Sutton, B McLoughlin, S Vickers

**Present Evening session:** I Button, E Flanagan, D Holland, A Masardo, K Frostick, J Young

**Apologies:** Natalie Evans, Caroline Griffin, R Hale

## 1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr Barber welcomed everyone to the meeting and began the meeting with a prayer. Mr Barber introduced himself and gave parents a brief overview of his background. Priorities this term include being visible around the school and meeting all staff as he gets to know St Richard's Catholic College.

Parents introduced themselves to Mr Barber.

Mr Barber confirmed that PFG evening meetings will be reverting back to being online from next term.

## 2. Matters Arising (Minutes of 22<sup>nd</sup> November)

No matters arising.

## 3. Newsletter

Mr Barber asked parents for their views on the school newsletter. Are parents happy with the length of the document? Would they prefer it to be shorter? Would they prefer for subjects to report at different times?

Parents' views were that it would be better if things were split into different communications. E.g. Events, key dates for quick reference. Not all parents have time to read 50 pages.

Mr Barber thinks there would be an opportunity for a sizable edition at certain times but that it could be published as a smaller document. Staff still want the opportunity to share/celebrate things with parents/carers.

*Parent comment:* Year 7 parents/carers would probably like to read a longer edition in September but as the years progress, the newsletter is read less and less. Parents commented that many tend to read the news relevant to their child's year group. Head of Year Bulletins are very useful (currently only done for Years 10 and 11). Parents think it would be useful to have Head of Year Bulletins for all year groups.

*Parent comment:* English is a foreign language for a lot of parents. Parents might not fully understand some words used in the newsletter. Educational terminology is not known to all parents.

Newsletter 4 due out soon. Mr Barber told parents he has asked staff to send their news items but not feel they should submit information for the sake of it. If they have an event coming up or items to celebrate – please include. Newsletter is already 10 pages. Mr Barber will send a letter home letting parents/carers know the rationale

behind the shorted newsletter. Shortened newsletter and letters from departments informing parents/carers of trips/dates may be better.

*Parent suggestion:* Possibility of having general sections in the newsletter for example, a section for celebrating achievements as sometimes this is missed if parents/carers only read Year Group information. Information can be hidden by other admin items. Key dates can also be buried – parents agreed that all dates need to be together. Include a termly review and ‘this is what is coming up (dates)’. Keep this information to the last page of the newsletter as parents/carers already know where to find it.

*Parent suggestion:* Could we have an electronic school calendar with key dates added (to include all term dates)?

Mr Barber thanked parents/carers for their contributions and said it would be useful to have their continuous feedback.

#### 4. **Significant World Events Coverage**

Mr Barber explained that St Richard’s is covering the conflict in Israel/Palestine via a variety of different methods (PSHEe / Tutor time / Assemblies / History / Geography / English / speakers / fundraising, charity work) Pupils are invited to talk and to ask questions. Some children can be very moved by current affairs/politics.

Mr Barber explained that his assemblies are usually linked to liturgy but world events can tie into them.

Mr Barber asked if parents thought we should be doing more? Parents commented that it is useful to know how the school is dealing with current affair topics.

Mr Barber told parents that the Catholic Parish of Our Lady of Ransom, St Gregory and St Agnes has kindly donated money to enhance the school’s charitable work.

*Parents commented:* Parents would like to be more informed with regards to why a Mufti day is taking place. They believe more money could be raised if parents/carers have the opportunity to click on a link that explains why the money is being raised. Would be good to have the option to make a bigger donation on ParentPay – add different amounts or ‘add x2 to basket). Add mufti dates to ‘Key Dates’ with information on the cause.

*Parents commented:* One of the last mufti days was a ‘jumper’ day. Some pupils did not take part as it did not appeal to them. A parent explained that it was a trial as mufti days can cause anxiety for some pupils. The thinking around ‘jumper day’ was to take away the stress of finding a new outfit but it caused other issues. At the time it was thought to be easier for children. Mr Barber explained that year groups may be interested in expressing generosity in different ways. For example, Years 7 & 8 expectations could be the same, Year 9 slightly different and Years 10 and 11 - expression of generosity could be their time.

#### 5. **Catering Arrangements**

Mr Barber asked parents for their views on the catering arrangements.

- No prices on individual items (easy to overspend)
- Expensive
- Difficult for parents/carers to find prices online or on ParentPay.
- Easier and cheaper for parents/carers to provide packed lunches
- No vegan options – choice for all children would be good
- Not enough healthy food – doesn’t fill children up
- Not all children want to eat junk food
- Not enough food left for last year group that goes up to the canteen
- Some pupils end up going without lunch

- Unhappy with sugary drinks on offer – expensive, full of sweeteners, unhealthy
- Why are they selling bottled water?
- Queues are too big (puts children off going to lunchtime clubs as they don't end up having enough time to eat)

Mr Barber said he would like to improve speed of service / choice / payment. Mr Hollingsworth (Director of IT Services) is looking into new systems that would enable faster payment and allow queues to go down faster.

Lunch rota – Year 11's are always first, other year groups are on a rota. Year 11s and Year 10s are quicker at choosing and paying for their food – idea for them to always go first? May not be completely fair but could be a quicker way of getting all year groups through the canteen.

Chartwells contract is due for renewal. Mr Barber would like to look into other catering options. He hopes to give parents an update as soon as possible.

*Parent query:* Is there scope to bring catering back in to school? *Response:* There is a cost implication but it needs to be considered. Possibility of taking control ourselves. Parents recognise it will be more responsibility for the school but it could enable us to be more responsive. Worth asking the question. Financially better if catering is produced in house?

*Parent comment:* No vegan options. Only option is pizza without cheese. Would be good to have options Monday to Friday.  
Are allergies catered for? Concern of cross-contamination.

Parents commented on possibility of parents being involved in the catering. Some parents know a lot about food.

Could children be educated on food and link it to the canteen? This could potentially help them make better choices at break/lunch time: if you still really want pizza – look at how it could be made healthier (pizza base / topping) or have it on a named day. All agreed that offering unhealthy food options is a mixed message. Might be better not to offer unhealthy options at all. Would have lots of support from parents.

Mr Barber spoke of his experience in a school who do their own catering. Very positive. Parents/carers could possibly be involved in tender. Will begin to look at opportunities.

*Parent query:* is there a way of monitoring if a child buys for example x2 tray bakes for their lunch?

Looking into different IT systems that could speed up serving time /payment / display name / facial recognition.

## 11. **Any Other Business**

*Parent comment:* Request for homework not to be set for the next day or following 2 days. Some pupils have extra-curricular activities after school and no time to do it. 3-day expectation would be good. Some subjects only give x2 days or x1 day notice. Pupils feel stressed. Some parents encourage children not to do extra-curricular activities for this reason.

*Parent query:* Why do some teachers set homework on things pupils have not yet studied in class. Mr Barber explained that 'Flip Learning' is used to introduce children to new topics before they are spoken about/taught by the teacher. Teachers use different methods but need to adapt expectations. *Parent concern* – pressure felt if pupils/parents don't realise that it is flip-learning. Could be useful if teachers named the homework (flip learning) so parents are aware.

*Parent comment:* Educational terminology / parents understanding. Some parents don't understand some terminology 'D.I.R.T your work'. Glossary of terms would be useful.

*Parent query:* After school clubs – Ultimate Frisbee club not available at the moment. Could it be led by a different teacher?

*Parent concern:* Year 9 toilets are sometimes locked (even during break time). Pupil used different toilets but was told off. Not enough toilets for pupils. Not allowed to go in between lessons. Children not drinking as they are worried about needing to go.

Parents can email Mr Barber with any other queries [mrbarberp@strichardscc.com](mailto:mrbarberp@strichardscc.com)

Parents thanked Mr Barber for important agenda items.

#### *Evening Meeting*

- Would it be possible to ask students which healthy food they would appreciate.
- Can we raise the profile and standard of sport in the school - Steve Dallaway to present 'Vision for Sport' at the next meeting please.

#### **Dates for next meetings:**

9.15 to 10.30am on Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 (in person)

6.00 to 7.15pm on Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024 (online)