

Abbey Grange CofE Academy

Minutes of the Parent Council (PC) Meeting 26th September 2016

Present: Mike Kemp, Janet Bove, Catherine Kershaw-Guy, Marion Kemp, Paul Cooper, Emma Hawker, James Fenton, Stephanie Cassidy, Martin Lamb, Richard Hamlin, Jane Hollick, Timothy Jacobs

1. Chair's opening remarks:

Mike thanked Janet for chairing the last meeting and welcomed Jenny Thornton, Assistant Principal, as guest speaker.

Mike mentioned that, as Chair of Parent Council, he had received an invitation to attend the dedication of the new Hall and is proud to be able to represent us there.

He further mentioned the Open Evening on 29th September. Janet and Marion will be attending to serve refreshments for PTA and will also be able to provide parents with information on Parent Council, if requested. Mike welcomed any other PC members to attend if they wish.

2. Apologies:

Susan Field

3. Reward system – guest speaker Jenny Thornton

Since its implementation last September, the 'pyramid' positive reward system at Abbey Grange has become fully established. Jenny shared with PC members the Pastoral Strategy to strive for excellence (this is included in the school's one year plan). The positive reward system is one way of encouraging excellence and positive behaviour in students.

Jenny gave a brief review of how the system works and how and when vivo points are allocated. Staff reward students for things such as:

- good work;
- positive achievements; or
- participation in extra-curricular activities.

Teachers will have a limited number of vivos available which are allocated to students electronically. Students can track vivo points through their personal vivo account, and can share this information with parents as details of the reason for receiving vivos are also documented.

Jenny highlighted other ways that the school rewards positive behaviour, such as:

- verbal praise;
- positive comments in student planners;
- 'praise letters' from subject leaders;
- recognition in presentation evenings; and
- being given prefect status in year 11.

Feedback from students has also led to new strategies in raising the vivo reward profile and making attainment of vivos more popular with students. These will include student voice involvement in looking at types of vivos available and advising school on buying the ones that will be more popular with students (e.g. shopping vouchers), and vivo apps on the iPad to make vivo accounts readily accessible by students.

More regular Inter-Abbey competitions are being encouraged and school assemblies will also have more focus on rewards, to encourage students' positive behaviour to enable both themselves and their 'team' to achieve rewards. This will include Abbey vivo reward league tables which will be displayed within school.

Feedback from PC members here was that encouraging positive behaviour and rewarding effort was seen as a good thing, and the move to more 'interesting and useable' items on the vivo website would be welcomed by students. However, concern was expressed that too much competition and rewards may encourage students to improve behaviour and learning for 'reward's sake', rather than for the actual enjoyment they may gain from personal learning and development. It is hoped that rewards such as positive comments from teachers for specific achievements (such comments can be added on the vivo account when these are issued, as well as in student planners, work books and as letters home) will encourage students to take enjoyment in learning and gaining knowledge.

PC members have suggested that information on rewards received could be linked to the milk planner in the future, so parents would also be able to access this information. Jenny advised that this may be possible when the new 'SIMS' system is up and running.

4. **Minutes and actions from last meeting**

Marion apologised for a couple of spelling errors and the minutes were approved once these had been corrected.

Dates for future meetings have been circulated to members. It was noted that the school calendar has listed start time for meetings as 6.15pm but members agreed to keep start time to 6.30pm for future meetings.

Members' photographs – not all members had sent their photo to Paul and it was therefore decided to take a group photograph at the end of this meeting. This will be added to the PC information board.

5. **Matters arising**

Action – Paul still to contact P.E. department regarding possibility of secure lockers for storage of valuables - such as mobile phones.

Staff e-mails – Paul shared information that, as part of the school's ongoing work on 'parental engagement', D. Rigby will be looking into staff access generally, and whether individual staff e-mail access for parents would be appropriate.

PC members stated that they have had positive experiences with the current system, where access to members of staff is via the general school e-mail. They found this system efficient and had queries relayed to the relevant person when they were not sure who to contact.

Members understood that teachers may be more vulnerable if parents have direct e-mail access, and also suggested benefits to this in certain circumstances, for example where ongoing communication between a teacher and parent is needed for a particular student.

6. General school and staffing updates shared by Paul:

It has been a busy start to the new academic year and Abbey Grange Academy is very happy with the strong performance delivered in its GCSE and A level results, a summary of which can be found on the school website. A full report of the results has been sent to the Governors, and subject leaders are in the process of reviewing results.

Progress of high ability gifted students is one of the school's top priorities and the focus will be on stretching these students.

An updated version of the self-evaluation form (SEF) will go live on the school website shortly.

7. Any other business:

Mike thanked Jenny and Paul for their input, before going onto 'AOB's'.

Website updates – as part of Parent Council's yearly plan to continually assist in improving the school's website, a few areas have been noted by members as requiring attention:

- the "subscribe" function for downloading the school calendar isn't working;
- not all parents have received the e-mail sent out on 22nd September with the calendar as an attachment;
- the ECHO booklet has not been fully updated; and
- some information on the website, such as the addition of new teachers and changes to the leadership team, still need updating.

Action – Jenny Thornton has kindly offered to pass the above to the relevant I.T. person for actioning.

Abbey Grange on Facebook - Abbey Grange now has a Facebook page and PC members who have accessed it found it really interesting and useful.

Action – PC members on social media to share the Facebook page with other Abbey Grange parents.

8. Date and time of next meeting:

Tuesday 18th October 6.30 – 7.30pm Chapter House

(Please note the change of day from Monday to Tuesday for this meeting only, due to another event taking place in school on the Monday).