

## Notes from USH Parent Action Group meeting on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2014

Present: at least 29 parents plus Stuart Woods (Headteacher), Dave Wilding, Maxine Fox and Julie Prince. 41 pupils represented across all year groups, see table below.

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
Boys(21)	8	2	6	3	2
Girls(20)	3	5	4	4	4
Total	11	7	10	7	6

### 1. Relationship Policy (new behaviour policy)

Dave Wilding and Maxine Fox came to the meeting to give a short presentation on the new behaviour policy. Maxine joined USH in November 2013, with the purpose of improving behaviour (from good to outstanding) by eradicating low level disruption, in order to aid learning. Her aim is to embed the school values of Respect, Pride, Ambition, Independence, Trust and Teamwork.

The behaviour policy is now called the Relationship Policy and the key aspects are Expectations, Habits of mind and Restorative Approaches.

- (a) The development of the Expectations was a whole staff exercise taking 3-4 weeks. There are five areas of expectation with the aim of empowering staff to have consistent expectations of pupils.
  - Outside the Classroom – around school.
  - Entry to Classroom.
  - Within Classroom - Learning behaviour and attitude.
  - Exiting the Classroom.
  - Independent/Home Study.
- (b) There are 16 habits of mind that are being displayed around school for pupils to see.
- (c) Restorative Approach – trying to find ways of repairing situations that went wrong, learning how to put right a wrongdoing and how not to get into such situations in future. The focus is on repairing relationships.

Dave Wilding presented some facts and figures regarding behaviour.

- Exclusions have decreased by 64% over 3 years, USH exclusion levels 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest in city for 2012-13.
- Attendance has increased by 2.1% over last 4 years, now 95.8%, best secondary school in city.
- Punctuality, there has been 79% improvement. After 2 late arrivals parents now receive a text and the pupil has to go to the reflection room for 3 days.
- Within school exclusion rates are decreasing.

Efforts are being made to overcome the lack of space and facilities within school that affect behaviour outside class time, for example table tennis tables available in the Hall and football on the MUGA.

## 2. Homework

Kate Stone then asked a few questions regarding the new homework policy. Less than 20% of parents present were aware that the policy had changed or had seen the homework booklet.

It seemed that many parents do not see/look at their children's planners at least once a week.

After a period of discussion in small groups at tables about homework and how the experience could be improved upon there was feedback which led to further large group discussion. Many points were raised; the most common themes are outlined below. Some points were specific to individuals and as such have not been recorded.

- As one might expect opinions about the quantity of homework differed widely from what homework? to far too much.
- Parents felt that timely and constructive marking of homework is vital. Parents really want to see the marked homework come home so that they can discuss the feedback with their children. Many parents commented that they are still not seeing their children's exercise books at home.
- Homework should be appropriate and relevant in content and quantity. It should be meaningful and provide consolidation of work done in class. Pupils should be capable of doing the homework without too much parental input. Homework that is too hard or too large is dispiriting and counterproductive. The amount of homework should gradually build up with year group.
- Consistency of quantity ie homework should not come in peaks and troughs. Given that the homework plan exists and has been distributed teachers should adhere to it. The homework booklet/planner could be easier to understand eg what do letters mean?
- Parents would like clarity of what sanctions exist in response to homework not being done. Some parents felt they would like to know immediately if their child is not completing homeworks, rather than waiting until Parents' Evenings.
- P2Is. Whilst some parents felt they really inspired their children others found their children daunted by the scale of the task and would appreciate more guidance, perhaps by breaking it down into chunks. Many felt the timescale of a month is too long as the tasks still get left to the last minute, so perhaps some monitoring of progress by staff would be helpful.
- It would be helpful to make clear what expectations are regarding pieces of homework eg how much time to spend on it, how many words are required, standard of presentation.
- It was noted that not all homework is done at home; there are opportunities to work independently at after school provision.
- Put homeworks on Moodle. Useful for pupils who don't write it down/make errors in writing down/ lose planner/are absent. [Richard Taunton's College use Moodle very effectively].
- How about Help Pages on the school website for parents/pupils experiencing problems with Gateway /Moodle, especially at weekends or holidays.
- The function/role of Sam learning/My Maths needs to be clearer to pupils and parents ie is it an optional extra for keen pupils or formal homework.

### **3. Communication**

Julie Prince (USH Business Manager) talked about communication between school and parents. USH is committed to trying to provide the information that parents need and want. Copies of the USH Parental Engagement Strategy and Action Plan were distributed but not discussed within this meeting. Julie invited parents to contact school if there is other information they would like or if they have any feedback on the Parental Engagement Strategy.

Upcoming initiatives

- SIMS Learning Gateway – parents will be able to access most of the data that school holds on their child. This is being worked on and should be functioning by summer 2014 at the latest.
- Cashless Catering System – it should be possible to track what food has been purchased on a particular card. (when?)

### **4. Ideas for next time/future meetings**

- Reward System – all aspects, eg transparency, consistency, what do children regard as a reward eg house points. To include awards evening.
- Tutor groups/pastoral care Why? What ? Communication [Stuart informed the group that the whole pastoral care system is currently under review by Maxine Fox, making this good topic for the March meeting so that parental views can be incorporated].
- Trips, could there be more subject related ones or outward bound type? How equal is participation, possibility of using local resources eg Harbour lights (good for English).
- Curriculum matters including GCSE options.
- Prefects, how are they appointed, their roles, what reward?
- Follow up on homework discussions.
- Effectiveness of the Relationship Policy.
- Mr Taylor to discuss the new style reports once all parents have received one (summer term).

### **Other issues raised**

New Style Parents' Evenings – still evolving, improvements will be made as issues arise.

### **5. Next meeting**

Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 7pm