

Notes from USH Parent Action Group meeting on Wednesday 19th March 2014

Present: 17 parents (7 for the first time) plus Stuart Woods, Martin Brown, Richard Corser, Maxine Fox, Julie Prince and Jason Tanihatu.

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
Boys (9)	6	1	1	1	0
Girls(15)	2	6	3	2	2
Total	8	7	4	3	2

1.Introduction

Kate Stone welcomed parents and explained that the purpose of this group is school improvement and it is not the place to raise individual grievances, although of course ideas will be influenced by personal experience.

2. Pastoral Care at USH

Richard Corser (assistant head) and Maxine Fox gave a presentation on how pastoral care will be delivered at USH. Major changes have been made recently after a full consultation with staff and pupils. There is now a Guidance and Achievement Team whose role is “to ensure progress is made by all students in all aspects of school life”. The team will be led by Richard Corser and its activities coordinated by Maxine Fox. The team will be made up of Lead Tutors and Heads of Year, they will all be based in the same office to facilitate communication.

The House system and vertical tutor groups will remain. The USH vision: “As a member of the four Houses, each student will develop a sense of family belonging which will enable students to support their peers with their learning. Tutor time, through the fun and excitement of the daily activities, will develop the character of each student to create their professional learning brand that they will need for their future.”

Houses will be led by Lead Tutors:

- Aviators- Claire Marks
- Engineers- Sophie Dunne
- Mariners- Stephanie Simpson
- Venturers - Sarah Baillie

The Lead Tutor is the face of the House and is responsible for developing a distinct ethos for their House and ensuring all pupils have a sense of belonging to that House with a clear understanding of what that means. A sense of belonging is a good aid for learning, with peers supporting each other. This will be achieved through, for example the use of themed assemblies and a more developed Tutor Time programme with more consistent content across different groups. Each House has a theme tune and slogans developed by pupils. There are Pride Walls for each House where excellent pieces of work are displayed. One pupil from each tutor group is a member of the Student Learning Leadership Team and they will work with Lead Tutors and Heads of Year.

In addition USH now has a Head of Year for each year group. USH Vision:” Heads of Year will focus upon the learning totality of the person to create academic and character success.”

Heads of Year:

- Year 7 – Jason Tanihatu
- Year 8 - Janine Kirk
- Year 9 - Rick Staples
- Year 10 - Kieron Hall
- Year 11 - Sian Roberts

Heads of Year are responsible for monitoring and encouraging progress. They will meet all pupils in their year group and try to get to know pupils as individuals and then build up pupil profiles. They will conduct Power Walks around their year group classes to observe learning in progress and liaise with the Student Leadership Team. The Head of Year will facilitate a smooth transition to the next year. Each Head of Year will remain in that particular year to develop expertise in the needs of that year group. Heads of Year should be very visible and are responsible for the behaviour of their year group.

3. Follow up on Homework

At a previous meeting parents asked if it was possible to give them access to information on what homework had been set for their children and where details could be found. In response the school has purchased an add on to the SIMS system to allow the tracking of homework. Julie Prince gave a demonstration of the aspects of SIMS that would be accessible to parents after Easter, Martin Brown talked about the homework section.

SIMS Learning Gateway- Parents will be able to view the data held by school relating to their child. There will be different log in details for each child. Parent contact details can be updated by parents in real time. It will be possible to view attendance data, behaviour points(good and bad), assessment data , historic reports and comments left by staff. It will obviously take a while for new behaviours to be embedded and there to be consistent use of the system by staff but early indications suggest it has been embraced enthusiastically. The SIMS system is a powerful tool within school as each department can compare its performance with the other departments.

In the Homework section it will be possible to see what homework has been set in each subject, the title, when it was set, when it is due in and whether it has been done. There can also be a hyperlink to full details of the homework. The marking /outcome of the homework will still be in the pupils books, teachers are being encouraged to let books go home more often.

4. Year 7 Experience

Mr Tanihatu talked about the existing transition process, eg Intake evenings, Junior school visits, assemblies in Junior school. He meets all Year 6 pupils who will be coming to USH and discusses each pupil with their class teacher. Parents meet with their child’s tutor.

He also discussed results of a survey of year 7 parents, the DVD produced by pupils about what to expect at school was well liked as were the summer holiday activities although parents would like

more notice of the dates. New parents found early Parents Evenings hard to navigate. Parents would like a more consistent approach to homework from staff and would like to see more of their child's exercise books. Some felt home school communication could be better.

Positive Changes

- A transition booklet is being developed containing information about people, practicalities, ethos, values and curriculum. A draft copy was available for comment.
- More focus on year group, with Head of Year role, themed assemblies.
- Parent and student surveys are being conducted at Parent Evenings and have had an impact.
- Emotional First Aiders (EFA) older pupils acting as mentors for Year 6-7 pupils.
- "Something I have achieved" certificates in school hall during Parents evening.
- Emotional Literacy Support / Nurture group and targeted support
- JET review to give consistency across JET schools and a joined up process.

Comments from Year 7 parents

Summer activity days- could they be spread out ie 2 at start and 2 at end of summer holidays to minimise clashes with family holidays.

Important dates should be communicated to parents as soon as possible after letter of acceptance.

Can Parent Action Group be open to Parents of children still in Year 6 who are coming to USH?

Particular health/welfare needs that are not on Junior school records eg dyslexia, hearing issues etc. How is this information disseminated to staff so parents do not have to explain to every teacher?

Ideas for booklet content

- Map of school
- Timetable for a school day, lunch, how many lessons, how long is each lesson, what to take to different lessons, equipment needed eg calculator
- PE, what to expect, what sports, what kit, showers,
- Medical information
- Anecdotes from former Year 7s about transition – advice to new students
- Information about Parent Action Group
- Information on clubs and how to join them
- Specific details of the hierarchy of who to contact in particular circumstances.
- Make it clear how school will communicate things to parents

5. Next meeting

Next meeting is 10th June.

Kate Stone encouraged parents present to try and persuade other parents to attend Parent Action Group meetings or send their comments along. Parents were reminded that comments could be submitted via e-mail to the contact button on Parent Action Group page of the website or the Ask Shirley facility.