



CAVENDISH SCHOOL

Notes from the meeting of parents on Tuesday 11th July 6pm to discuss the recent OFSTED inspection report

Attendance: approximately 80 parents attended along with five governors and two representatives from Herts for Learning on behalf of Hertfordshire Local Authority. The Executive Headteacher Mr Gary Lewis led the meeting alongside the Head of School Mr Dave Fisher

Summary

Mr Lewis spoke about the context of the recent OFSTED inspection. This inspection was disappointing but the outcome was not unexpected and was mainly due to the poor examination results at GCSE in 2016. He had arrived at the school in February after turbulence in the leadership of the school. Many new measures had already been put in place to ensure that the school started to improve more rapidly and he was pleased that OFSTED had confirmed that he was leading the school well but it was too early to see sustained impact. He is going to re-launch the school in September with a revised behaviour policy, a new policy on the use of mobile phones and a new programme to improve the culture and ethos of the school. He reassured parents that this programme was something he has put in place at Kings Langley school and has seen a transformation on the culture and ethos of the school. Students at Cavendish were already talking about it and saw this as a good sign. He asked parents to trust him that the school would improve and he was expecting a marginally better set of GCSE results this August.

Questions from parents to Mr Lewis

Parent asked: I have two children in the school – Year 7 & 9 and they get very little homework. It is not loaded onto Show My Homework.

The School responded: It is acknowledged that there is inconsistency between staff especially in the use of Show My Homework. This was a key area they will be working on over the coming year.

Parent asked: Communication with the school is not always good. One parent had phoned four times to speak to a form tutor and had no response.

The School responded: Teachers only have a limited time to make calls as they are busy teaching. However, it is not acceptable for teachers to ignore calls if that was the case. Suggestion was that parents should use email, which would provide a trail to be followed through if a response were not received.

Parent asked: Marking of homework is very sparse- one parent felt that her child's books were barely marked by teachers.

The School responded: That if correct, this was not acceptable and that they would be working on the lack of marking over the course of next year.

Parent asked: Could parents log on to the school system to see what reward points their child has and what they were for?

The School responded: Mr Lewis felt this should be possible and would investigate whether it could be arranged.

Parent asked: I am worried about naughty children and bad behaviour at the school. The new behaviour system seems to imply that having been naughty and getting a C3 detention I can then be good for a little while and work off the C3 detention.

The School reassured parents that these children would not be able to 'get out' of detentions. The idea is that children could be encouraged to improve and then be rewarded for that improvement.

Parent asked: How can teachers cater for such a wide variety of abilities in a tutor group class? My daughter would make better progress if she was with children all of a similar ability level.

The School responded: There is no evidence that teaching children in ability groups ensures better progress for individuals. What we need is more high quality teachers at Cavendish. A good teacher would be able to challenge all students whatever their ability and ensure that the students behave. Unfortunately, some teachers at the school lack confidence and do not have high enough expectations at the current time.

Parent asked: How long will it take to improve the school?

The School responded: The new Year 7 will know one set of standards coming into the new culture and the current Year 7 will be adaptable. It will take a bit longer with other year groups. We expect better results this year and parents will see a stepped improvement year on year. The school anticipate OFSTED returning in about 2 years.

Parent asked: How can the school apologise to students in Year 11 for what has gone on?

The School responded: They could only express regret at this and will do thier best to ensure that it will not happen again, but they cannot re write the past. They wanted to emphasise that the sixth form came out as good in the OFSTED inspection and that they felt that they had been well served by the school.

Parent asked: How long did it take you to turn around Kings Langley School?

Exam results improved after one year and after two years the school was full. Mr Lewis undertook to update parents regularly on the progress on the OFSTED issues.

Parent asked: My child has told me that tutor groups are changing and that there are other changes as well. What is happening?

The School responded: We have to reorganise tutor groups as we cannot run six forms any more due to budget constraints. The school will be reorganising the year group into five forms.

Parent asked: Parents' evenings are unsatisfactory. We only have 5-minute appointments, which are never kept to, and we only have them once per year. I have not managed to see a maths teacher this year. Are you planning any changes to the system?

Mr Lewis felt that this was wrong and he would not defend it. He wants to reduce teacher turnover and wants teachers to stay at the school, but parents must understand that there are challenges to teacher recruitment nationally at present, most especially maths and science. He will look into the organisation and administration of parents' evenings.

Parent asked: What about tracking improvement?

The School responded: Heads of department should be monitoring and reviewing what is going on in their subject areas especially marking of student's work. They will be monitored in turn by the senior leadership of the school.

Parent asked: How are you going to be working with other good and outstanding schools? Will you become an Academy school?

The School responded: We are currently in negotiations to join a small academy chain in Hertfordshire but cannot reveal which schools yet. They feel that it will be beneficial to Cavendish working within a multi-academy trust where you have other partner schools to call on to support you. Cavendish is also in a serious financial crisis due to falling rolls and will need to find more efficient savings. By becoming an Academy and being part of a chain of schools we should see many benefits including financial savings.

Parent asked: I am a father of a Year 10 student and was sold a dream last year by a new head. Why should I believe your dream? Do staff believe it?

Mr Lewis said he has a track record from Kings Langley which proves he can do it. He hopes to improve staff morale and get staff to believe that this school can be good again, but I have to get them to believe in themselves first. Staff feel that we are going in the right direction currently.

Parent asked: If there are staff pulling against your direction what will happen?

The School responded: Not all staff will be with us by Christmas.

Parent asked: I don't understand the current assessment system in the lower school?

The School responded: In September there will be a new system that will be more understandable for parents and students. The school will use accurate predictions of GCSE performance to gauge where a student should be at the end of each academic year.

Parent asked: Will parents be able to log on and see the progress of their children against these new targets?

Mr Lewis said he didn't see why not.

Parent asked: It would be helpful for parents to have a list of teachers that teach my child and their e-mail addresses. Would this be possible?

The School responded: This is already available on Moodle. However, parents must realise that teachers do not have a great deal of time to answer e-mails during the day as they are generally busy teaching. Mr Lewis agreed that the school does need to communicate well with parents and parents should expect a reply within 48 hours. Learning Welfare Officers are the first point of contact for parents if they are not getting replies as they have the time to follow things up during the school day.

Parent asked: One governor has sent his children to another local school since the OFSTED inspections. This does not show much faith in the school.

Mr Lewis had spoken to a number of parents about this. He cannot stop anyone taking their child out of the school and does agree that it is a difficult time for parents, but he urged the meeting to have faith in his ability to put things right quickly.

Parent asked: Have you had extra funding from the Local Authority to help you address some of the issues?

The School responded: Yes, we are getting help especially with improving teaching and learning. Most teachers want to do a better job and some will need some extra support.

Parent asked: Have students had a chance to express their views on the OFSTED verdict?

The School responded: Mr Lewis meets regularly with small groups of students to get their views and feedback

Parent asked: Can we have another meeting like this next term to hear about progress the school is making?

The School responded: Mr Lewis thought that this was a good idea and would be happy to have another meeting towards the end of next term. Parents will all have different expectations and Mr Lewis reassured parents that he was determined that things would be better from now on. If parents do have any complaints, he urged them to make contact individually with the relevant member of

staff. Mr Fisher, Head of School and he would try to ensure that any individual complaints are dealt with speedily if referred to them. It is going to be a difficult journey but he is sure parents will start to see improvement early next term. He promised to write to parents regularly via the weekly newsletter and hold a parents meeting next term.

July 15th 2017