



FELSTED PARENTS' GROUP MINUTES

7.00PM, MONDAY 7th OCTOBER 2019
COMMON ROOM DINING ROOM

Please note the meeting takes place over dinner.

1. Apologies

Rather than apologies, all those present were asked to sign the attendance sheet. There were 32 parent representatives present, representing nine of the houses.

2. Minutes from previous meeting

- i) Parents had suggested asking for pupil feedback on activity programme - ***this will take place in the second half of term***
- ii) The issue was raised of the cost of text books in the sixth form - ***where possible, text books are being bought by the school to be borrowed by students***
- iii) Mobile phone policy - ***current policy to continue***
- iv) Sports results - ***website now running results***
- v) Sports fixtures - ***the school has shared the code of conduct. There was general approval for behaviour of Felsted parents, but concern raised over behaviour of other schools in two fixtures this term. ACTION: Director of Sport to consider publishing code of conduct by pitches***
- vi) Sports dinner - ***steps are being taken to ensure that this is free for pupils to attend***
- vii) Revision over the Easter break - ***plans are in place to provide places to revise in school. ACTION: Lettings department to ensure venues are available***
- viii) In Weekend change - ***initial feedback seemed to be positive***
- ix) Felsted Footprints - ***parents were encouraged to help children to collect sponsorship money. For the next Whole School Charity Event, communication will start during the second half of Summer term in preparation for the event in Autumn term***

3. Items from house meetings

CJT explained that the house meetings were intended to look at house specific issues, but any school wide issues should be brought on to the main meeting. It was noted that Mont's had not had a meeting before the main meeting on this occasion, but will be encouraged to do so in the future.

- i) Food - there was some concern over older girls not wanting to eat in the LRH because the food was too rich. It was suggested that plainer food should be served, with sauces separate. **Action - concerns passed to catering manager**
- ii) Unifrog - parents were not clear about how to access unifrog for university applications. **Action - LMS asked to communicate to parents about Unifrog**

iii) Medical cover on match days - a question was raised as to whether we have sufficient medical cover for sports fixtures. **Action - CSK to review cover, and communicate via newsletter about what provision we have**

4. Managing internet use

CJT outlined the challenge of supervision of internet use with 4G, and soon to be 5G, as well as the pupils' use of Virtual Proxy Networks. The supervision of filtering and blocking is no longer as effective as it was a few years ago, so the school is now checking internet use by location (through volume/time use through network points), and putting more emphasis on physical checks of internet and device use in and around the school. Parental support is very helpful with this. **The talk by Luke Roberts to Year 9 parents was welcomed, and it was suggested that this should be shared more widely. Action - check PSHE programme for delivery**

5. Whole school sports kit

There was strong approval for a coordinated sports kit from Prep School to Senior School. It was felt on balance that the change of school uniform between yrs8-9 was still important. **Action - Sports kit point to be passed to FPS parents group to ensure wider support**

6. Google Reviews

Mrs SZ Walker (Director of Marketing) asked parents whether they could add Google reviews on the school, as this will have a positive impact on the school's ranking in searches. If you search for Felsted School in google, scroll down you can then add a review - you may need to sign in.

7. Strengthening the right culture at Felsted

CJT outlined the approach this year to build culture, through a focus on three key areas: Academic, co-curricular and behavioural. These are picked out in three questions that the students have been challenged to ask themselves:

Am I working as well as I can?
Am I taking opportunities outside the classroom?
Am I contributing positively to the lives of others?

These questions have also featured in the Newsletter, and will continue to be used across the school, through assemblies and other opportunities.

8. Politics and Independent Schools

CJT gave an update from HMC, which followed closely on from the Labour Party Conference. The movement to abolish independent schools has received some criticism, but has helped to normalise the discussions about VAT on fees, and the introduction of business rates. There were some very positive suggestions from the group about some of the ways that the school could more positively demonstrate its impact on the local community. For example -

- Get the local MP to visit the Nightshelter at the Mission (Stephen Timms, Labour)

- Make sure that there is more information put out about areas where we are having an impact (helping Homeless in Chelmsford, Mental Health with Young Minds etc.)
- Demonstrate the difference that pupils make after school (for example, Sarah Brook and Sparkle, Matthew Spacie, Magic Bus)
- Note the difference the school can make to the individual, even in just two years, and build up some case studies to share

Action - review our marketing of public benefit, and make this a focus

9. Should houses be mixed?

This was a controversial topic, that brought a lively debate among those present. The views expressed included that this was not something that we should be doing at all, to worth considering for 6th form houses (with suitable security!), to possible in the day houses, although certainly not universally supported.

A very valid point was made about the importance of having a place to 'switch off' back in house, and in mixed houses; having some segregated areas seems important.

10. Considering environmental impact of matches, trips and tours

CJT said that the environmental impact of playing matches was (in his view) justifiable because of the benefits of the fixtures. There was general agreement to this point.

In terms of overseas trips, the general view was that people wanted their children to have opportunities that these provide. It was felt that any trips going out should have to justify going further afield on opportunity/cultural grounds, and should at least consider some form of off-setting to the environmental impact. The parents felt that the school should consider planting more trees to offset the carbon emissions.

Action - all proposed long haul trips to provide justification (for going so far) before being given approval

Action - school to look at possibility of environmental projects to off-set impact of long haul trips

11. The trend for more day pupils - direction of travel for Felsted

CJT told the parents that the intention was very much to maintain Felsted as a boarding school, and steps were being taken to retain the number of boarders. However, as the school has grown, the number of day pupils has increased also. This has meant an over-sized Mont's (for which adjustments have partly been made with Deacon's taking some day boys), and Manor is also large now.

There is work to be done to ensure that boarding numbers remain strong, but the affordability was raised, and is very much in the mind of the school.

There is also consideration being given to different forms of boarding in Year 9, to provide greater flexibility for the future.

Action - school to produce 'boarding benefits and values', and further updates during the course of the year to be given to this group on any proposed changes

12. Scholarship and Bursary Support

CJT raised the idea of reducing the financial support available directly for 'awards' (scholarships and MSAs), and instead providing the award, but putting the money towards means tested support, to which award holders would be able to apply.

The amount of financial support would not go down, but it would be given to those who required the financial support. There were some questions about how this would work, and a comment that this could still not address the question of affordability in any way. [This is more about appropriate allocation of charitable funds (which bursaries and scholarships are) than trying to address affordability directly.]

There was general positivity towards this approach for the MSA awards, but a little less certainty with scholarships, which were recognised as being important for recruitment.

Action - school to look further at this proposal, with consideration of taking forward for MSAs for 2020 application.

13. AOB

CJT asked for feedback on the Year 9 event from Saturday. There was a positive response, and request that the pupils should hear the same messages about impact of technology on behaviour.

CJT highlighted the upcoming Digital Detox day (Thursday 10th October), to mark World Mental Health Day.

A question was raised about water at pitch side for fixtures.

Action - CSK to look into this to ensure that all players have access to water

14. Date of Next Meeting

- Monday 13th January 2020, CRDR

CJT

15.10.19