

Notes from the SMAS Parents Meeting for Year 6 held on 18th December 4pm

In attendance; Marion Standing, Gill Gooch, Mia Standing, Mrs Brown, Kate Bembridge, Kirsty Stone, Rubina Alam, Lorraine Doyle & Kirsteen Roberts

6 parents

The Head opened the meeting by thanking parents for attending and explaining the teacher/TLA plans for year 6 for the rest of this year as laid out in the recent letter.

The head went on to explain the reasons for this;

- vacancies had arisen from agency staff on short contracts
- extensive searches had been carried out by the LA, Diocese and others to secure a replacement without success.
- After extensive discussions, internally and externally it was agreed that the best option was to replace with 1 teacher (Mrs Brown) across two classes, boost the number of TLAs to 3 and add extra support from lead year 5/6 and other areas.
- This would provide the most stable solution for the pupils who have already had a lot of change.
- The pupil to adult ratio would be roughly 12:1 which is better than in an average class.
- The work of the TLAs would be overseen by the teacher who would also be managing work plans.
- Teaching would be more fluid to address individual needs with the “team “ of teaching staff the key.
- the head explained that this style of teaching has worked well in the past both in SMAS and elsewhere
- Additional Maths support will also be put in place

Parent: Why can't the school recruit a qualified teacher?

Answer: Teachers are in short supply and are not attracted to a failing school especially where they have choice. Even if we could recruit, that might not be the best option as a new teacher takes time to settle, may be from abroad and therefore not up to speed with the curriculum and experience suggests that experienced teaching staff are a better and more consistent option for the children. On balance, the Head believes that this option presents less work for the existing staff than supporting a new post, so that more time can be focused on the children

Parent: Can the decision be appealed/ challenged?

Answer: No, it is for the Head to put in place arrangements for teaching which the Strategic Management Board, the Governing Board, the LA and Diocese have all supported.

Parent: What redress do we have as parents if the children do not pass their SATs?

Answer: Detailed assessments have been carried out for each child to ascertain the progress that they have made and the expectations of them for progress ahead of SATs. The school is NOT saying that every child regardless of ability or current assessment will achieve their SATs but they do undertake to ensure that expected progress (better than average) is made from a starting point. Individual meetings can be held with parents to explain assessments and plans for teaching over the next year.

Parent: What is the legal position on 47 children having 1 qualified teacher?

Answer: There is no legal requirement at KS2 for 1 qualified teacher per 30 children.

Parent: What options are there if we remain unhappy about this?

Answer: Ultimately you can seek to move your child and the school and LA would try to facilitate this. However, the Head believed that this would not be in the best interests of the child as it would cause further instability at a crucial time.

Parent: Can my contacts at the Labour Party be involved in some way.

Answer: yes, we welcome any offers of support for the school which can be part of the strategic plan.

Kirsteen Roberts: Asked parents to come forward with constructive suggestions which could support this plan. The following were mentioned;

- Evening classes until 5 for extra work. The Head counselled against this as if children had been working hard during the day they would be exhausted
- Booster Club. To be started next term
- A review of the proposed teaching arrangements in February ahead of the next parents meeting.
- Homework plans to be addressed. Mrs Brown undertook to look at this at the beginning of next term.
- Continue to look for a year 6 teacher. This will be ongoing and something that the head designate will pick up.
- Consider the head designate teaching in year 6. This will depend on the head designate's plans and priorities.
- Evening appointments for parents to be considered.
- Other clubs to be considered for January. This is in hand.
- Continue to improve communication. Underway

Parent: Why was there so little PE in Year 6

Answer: It was ascertained that PE takes place regularly twice a week

Parent: Why was the school being considered for privatization with the White Horse Federation.

Answer: WHF are supporting the school with no strings attached and the subject of academisation is one that we will consider in the future. Currently, the experts in the LA, DfE, Regional Schools Commissioner, Diocese and the school believe that the Multi Academy Trust (MAT) can best support school improvement. Any maintained school that is judged inadequate is directed by the DfE to become an academy with a sponsor who can support it.

Parent: Can we visit a WHF school to see if the children are happy as parents have heard that children are not happy and that MATs do not have to follow the national curriculum and are not judged against the same criteria as maintained schools.

Answer: Nick Capstick, the CEO of WHF will be coming to a parents' meeting next term. Yes, the WHF would be more than happy to have visitors to its other schools. A look at their website also gives a clear picture of achievements and happiness. The WHF follow the national curriculum and all academies are judged on the same basis as maintained schools.

Parent: was at pains to point out that they meant no criticism of the TLAs but nevertheless felt that their child should have a qualified teacher. They were not convinced by the arguments put forward for this being a better option given the circumstances.

Answer: The Head was keen to be judged by outcomes and that an early review to re-assure parents was a good idea. The school and the year 6 teaching team were experienced and determined to do the very best for the children.

The meeting closed at 6pm.