

Minutes of Parents' Forum Tuesday 24th June 2011.

Chair: Dave Wood-Griffiths

Minute Takers: Sarah Shortt.

Speakers: Mr Whiteford, Head Teacher, Miss Lindsay, Assistant Head, Mr Boys, Assistant Head.

Subject: New House system, Extended Learning survey, communication consultation.

Mrs Shortt welcomed Miss Lindsay and Mr Boys to the meeting and thanked them for attending to talk to the parents and carers.

House system. A letter has already been sent to parents regarding the introduction of a House system at Denefield from September 2011. Mr Whiteford came to the forum to explain in more detail how the system will work. He began by explaining that there is a strong commitment within the school to move forward and continue to improve. The House system is being introduced in order to support students in developing their independence and a sense of belonging to the school, with a strong sense of purpose and focus. There will be four Houses, each with their own names and emblems, chosen by the students. Each House will have a designated charity and there will be various House events for them during the year. All teaching and support staff will also belong to a House. A parent asked if this would mean a change to the uniform; the Head explained that they are considering the use of badges to show House membership. The role of tutors is being strengthened, helping them to know their students better and to focus on pastoral care and guidance for the students and increased communication with parents. Next year Mr Whiteford advised that he will want to discuss the idea of vertical tutor groups with parents. Vertical tutor groups include a few students from each year groups 7 through to 11, making them like small 'families' to give students the support of older students. 6th form students, who already support younger students with reading etc, could act as mentors, being linked to a tutor group. One of the benefits of vertical tutor groups include students being able to support younger students, ie Year 10s can help support Year 9s when they are choosing their KS3 options. Tutors would have a maximum of two or three students from a year group, meaning they could give more in depth focus to different groups of students at different times of the school year, for example Yr 7s in September, Yr 9s when choosing GSCE options, Yr 11s during exam time etc. There will be more information about this in the new academic year.

Results of the Extended Learning Survey.

Miss Lindsay then presented the results of the survey she had done about Extended Learning with staff, students and parents. The following questions were asked in the survey and at the meeting:

- What are the merits of Extended Learning? This was in an attempt to discover if Extended Learning is causing confrontation between staff and students if it is not done. On a positive note here very few students said they felt they were given too much homework.
- Would you like to support your child more with their Extended Learning? Many parents responded that they would like to do more to support their children. Suggested ways included Homework clubs, more access to resources, guidance for parents on what is expected from a piece of work and starter ideas. Students may need more support in learning skills to research information, rather than copying from the internet.

- Are pieces of work too hard, too easy or just right for a student's ability? Many pieces of Extended Learning are differentiated into different abilities and most students responded that most of the time they did not find their homework too hard.
- How does the school ensure Extended Learning is valued by the students? Staff are encouraged to make Extended Learning more interesting – for example to research information for use in the following lesson, and to make it different from classroom tasks. Extended Learning is sometimes 'peer marked' by the other students to give a different view on the work. The current system of rewards and incentives is being reviewed and this will be looked at in more detail as part of this process.
- How often is Extended Learning marked? Miss Lindsay answered that the Senior Leadership Team undertake regular book scrutinies and as part of this they are checking to ensure Extended Learning is marked. This is also monitored in Teaching and Learning Reviews and lessons observations. Feedback on marking is given to the leaders of the Curriculum Areas. Verbal feedback to students is also important.
- What are the consequences of not completing or handing in Extended Learning? Sometimes students don't see how a piece of work links to lessons and so perhaps do not consider it important enough to do. Does the school ask students who regularly do not complete Extended Learning why they don't? A few parents felt that detention does not seem to be enough of a deterrent. The current system of sanctions is being reviewed and this will be looked at in more detail as part of this process.
- What would help motivate students to complete Extended Learning tasks? Would more of them complete the tasks if teachers routinely shared the purpose of the work and how it links to the lesson? The role of the tutor will be strengthened from September and part of this will include tutors managing expectations of Extended Learning.

Communication consultation.

Mr Boys asked for parents' views, both positive and negative, on all aspects on home-school communication, including the website, sending home of information and parents' evenings. These views will be collated and presented at the next Parents' Forum in the new term.