

Minutes of Staffordshire University Academy Parents' Forum

Monday 10th July 2017, 6pm

Venue: Staffordshire University Academy



Present:

Mrs Hillier (Principal), Mr Hollins (CEO), Mr Williams (Chair of Governors), Ms Owen (Vice Principal), Miss Brittle, (Assistant Principal), Mrs Haffie-Hobday (Assistant Principal), Mr Andrews (Assistant Principal), Mr Williams (Director of Teaching and Learning), Mrs Holyhead (staff governor), Mr J Andrews (staff governor).

Parents Present: 24 families present

Minutes	Action
<p>Meeting Opened 6pm</p> <p>Welcome The meeting was opened by Mrs Hillier who welcomed all and made introductions. Mrs Hillier provided an explanation as to the purpose of the parents' forum and that this was the first one of many.</p> <p>Matters Arising/Action Plans Mrs Hillier explained that SUA is on a journey, she was appointed as Principal in October 2014. The following March (2015) Ofsted visited and judged the school as 'Requires Improvement'. During this inspection the academy was judged as 'Good' for behaviour and 'Good' for leadership and management.</p> <p>The team and the ambition hasn't changed at SUA. As a result of the previous inspections we were informed SUA could not have another (third) Requires Improvement judgement.</p> <p>The most recent Ofsted inspection came after two weeks off over Easter. Students take time to settle back into academy routine following every break. The behaviour witnessed on day one of the inspection was not typical behaviour from our students. During day two there was no poor behaviour seen throughout the academy.</p> <p>The report focuses on disadvantaged students. The figures compare student progress within the academy to all children nationally. Mrs Hillier indicated that the curriculum is fit for purpose but had not been in the past and this has affected the results with children taking too many qualifications.</p> <p>A reporter from the Express and Star is attending a meeting on Thursday at the academy with Mrs Hillier to discuss the findings of the report.</p> <p>SUA will be inspected again during the next Autumn term. A monitoring visit letter will be produced as a result of this stating whether the academy has taken action at an appropriate pace.</p> <p>In relation to the data, Mrs Hillier showed a power point presentation with examination results for the past two academic years. In August 2015 29% of students passed their</p>	

English and maths GCSEs to an A*-C grade. In 2016, 48% passed English and maths to a grade of A*-C. It is important to show that there has been improvement in the data. The areas of improvement were detailed/highlighted.

26 students this summer have picked to study a GCSE in a modern foreign language because they wanted to; this is a real change of opinion and a real improvement.

The academy has planned for a lot of additional resources to support the work of the maths department. From the data, the academy is definitely going in the right direction, we want this to happen even more quickly.

Strengthen Leadership

Mrs Hillier explained that the academy have taken rapid action in response to the report: Mr Allsopp has been appointed as a new Vice Principal. Working alongside Ms Owen and the rest of the senior leadership team. Mr Williams and Mrs Burns have been appointed as Directors of Teaching and Learning to create an Extended Leadership Team focussing specifically in supporting the development of teaching.

The academy has submitted a draft 'Statement of Action' plan, to Ofsted for consideration, for next year. Ms Owen has visited other schools within Staffordshire who are supporting us directly with teaching and learning. We have received additional funding from the Trust (SUAT) to support new developments. Colleagues have visited other schools to obtain best practice and share ideas and gain support.

Challenging Education have been appointed to support middle leader development and will be challenging our data through half termly data meetings.

A zero tolerance behaviour rule has been applied across the academy and, as a consequence, we have increased exclusions since the report. Previously students received 3 warnings in a lesson, however now they only receive 1 before a detention is set. New systems will be in place for September.

Last week SUA were pleased to welcome 170 Year 5 students from local primary schools for an Activity Day. Also 128 Year 6 students attended the previous week for two Transition Days into the academy ready for their start with us in September. Feedback from all events was very positive.

The academy held Open Mornings last week for parents to attend during a normal working day. This was an opportunity for any family to come and see that the behaviour here is not typically as described in the report. Feedback from visitors was very positive.

During the Open Mornings 30 families attended. SUA want to increase communication with parents and in an effort to do so we have issued a Data Collection sheet to parents in the post today asking for up to date email addresses which will enable letters and correspondence to also be sent via email.

Part of the reason we decided to introduce this Parents' Forum is to enable parents to be part of the journey and challenge us and provide comments and feedback for us to act upon.

Mrs Hillier highlighted the Ofsted Statement of Action key priorities.

It was confirmed that Sixth Form got a Requires Improvement judgement overall.

September changes

For September, to support behaviour and progress, we have appointed three Heads of Year with teaching capacity.

The current Pastoral Coordinators are non-teaching members of the team.

Heading our Creative Faculty Miss Humpage will be joining the team.

Mrs Logan has been appointed as our new Attendance Manager.

The form time will be moving to the start of day, 8.45am, students will therefore be, "ready to learn" with the relevant equipment.

A new planner has been designed with space for parents to sign. We have received feedback in relation to lack of homework which Ms Owen is leading from September.

The academy will be hosting a split lunch during period 4 to ensure that students can access the canteen facilities available.

Targets are currently being reviewed as feedback from the inspection was that they were "too ambitious".

The maths department will be relocating upstairs and building work is taking place during the summer to accommodate this.

We are looking at how we report to parents and what this will look like in the new year – Mr Allsopp, the new Vice Principal, is leading this.

Communication: Parental Questions and Answers

- Parent: Communication with parents is only negative, no positive feedback is ever received.

Ms Owen said that this was an important comment. Interesting to get feedback from the point of view of parents. In the new academic year we will be looking at praise postcards and more positive phone calls home. We know that students want to make their parents proud. There will be a real focus on positive interaction with parents. Miss Brittle added that in the new planners, mentioned earlier, there will be reward points to enable parents to see what their children have been achieving.

- Parent: It is just as important to reward students for good behaviour as well as discipline them for bad behaviour.

Miss Brittle said that we do use rewards points and these are given to those students who get it right all the time. Ms Owen added that the majority of our students are happy and rewarded regularly.

- Parent: Parents used to sign student planners. SUA seem to go back to what worked well before.

Ms Owen responded saying that some things have worked and some things need to be reflected upon. We want to ensure that we have good communication with parents.

- Parent: There are not enough parents' evenings per academic year. Parents want to know about their children and want them to do the best they can.

Miss Brittle said that we want to open up that communication with parents and the academy. It is important for us to receive feedback and we will look into this for next year together with extra one-to-one sessions to discuss progress.

- Parent: Report data does not give parents enough details about where students are.

Mrs Hillier said we are looking at reviewing the reports, as mentioned previously and that Mr Allsopp will be leading this in the new academic year. She said we recognise that the reports this summer have not been as clear as parents have wanted but this has partly been down to the new grading system that all teachers are also becoming more confident with. Ms Owen confirmed that she had received feedback from the Year 10 reporting system and that parents will see a different reporting system in the next year.

- Parent: Pastoral Coordinator has left, student is upset, was told that pastoral coordinator would remain with students during their time at the academy, now this is not happening.

Mrs Hillier said that we are unable to prevent people leaving and moving on. Ms Owen confirmed that Mr Porter will be Head of Year 10 and 11, together with an experienced pastoral coordinator, Miss Fetcher. She reassured parents that once you get to know members of staff your children will be comfortable.

Year 7 students through to Year 11 students all have varied and different needs within the academy. All the pastoral coordinators are experienced members of staff and Ms Owen said SUA believe that it is beneficial to the students to be allocated a pastoral coordinator within year groups who specialise in those year groups based on their skill set and knowledge. Mrs Hillier said that it is important to meet the needs of students, however, students also need to make progress so we are strengthening these systems.

- Parent: Social needs are also as important to parents, what is pupil premium?

Mrs Hillier confirmed that these needs go hand in hand.

Mr Hollins said that at its simplest, it is driven by the income of the family. For the last number of years that is how the government report it, it doesn't mean low ability/low aspirations. Purely driven by income of the family.

- Parent: Student starting in September has not achieved SAT grades they'd hoped for.

Feedback provided was that we provide extra support/interventions to monitor student progress. A new Head of Year, Mr Shepherd, has been appointed and a significant part of his role will be focussing on progress and support.

Mrs Haffie-Hobday indicated that we have conversations with primary schools, for communication/reading, looking at a child's best work. This is used so we can make an assessment of ability prior to their arrival. She also explained that in a letter, recently sent home, we invited parents to encourage their children to take part in a reading challenge over the summer. Lots of the primary schools use 'Accelerated Reader' and we do too at SUA.

- Parent - Teachers communicating with children – Student only found out about an English speaking exam today. Students feel like they have lost time in science with having 'stand in' teachers.

Ms Owen explained SUA did have some science teachers leave us earlier in the academic year. We have appointed two new science teachers already and another starts in September.

Mrs Hillier confirmed SUA is fully staffed for September. The staff who are leaving this summer are leaving for career progression. Three teaching staff have undertaken a 3 day maths teaching conversion course this month. SUA have invested in internal staff to increase capacity across maths and science departments.

Mr S Andrews, Assistant Principal, confirmed that he cannot wait to teach maths; he is one of the colleagues who has completed the conversion course. As a teacher you learn how to deliver outstanding lessons. Having been on the training it is about bringing great teaching and learning skills to bring back to share with the department. His knowledge will bring in alternative ideas and a different dimension. Mr Andrews is equipped to deliver at the level required.

Mr Williams, Director of teaching and Learning, said he also attended the conversion course and is confident that staff can bring knowledge and teaching experience that can enthuse more students within Maths.

Mr J Andrews, Head of Faculty, said that results and teaching and learning has really improved in building for the chance to deliver to Key Stage 5. More students this year chose geography over history. Numbers in geography have gone up and he is confident that with a brilliant head of geography in post the student engagement in the next 12 months will be even better.

Mr Hollins said that there is a problem nationally within maths. Few applications for the maths PGCE courses. Staff used to get a bursary of £25k to do the course. From a Trust's perspective we are encouraged that SUA are working towards the completion of conversion courses attendance as a solution. Nationally the recruitment of secondary teachers is falling. The starting point is the teaching and learning with excellent teachers.

- Parent: Need to ensure that children get consistency of the teachers. Different teachers confusing for the students.

Ms Owen said that stability is key for us. We are focussing on providing one teacher as much as possible next year and it is really important for our students.

- Parent: Behaviour issues start when cover is required.

Mrs Hillier said that our students, like those in other schools, don't like change – we do our utmost to keep hold of staff.

Mr Hollins said that although there has been a big turnover of staff in the past for the size of academy, not many staff are leaving in the summer and lots of appointments have been made to support areas of concern.

- Parent: Will you invest in staff currently

Mrs Hillier confirmed that we have 6 staff doing masters degrees within the academy with Staffordshire University. We invest in Continued Professional Development of all staff. We have enlisted the support of two outstanding schools who will be doing CDP with many departments across the academy. Our current staff will have lots of support across the board, we are ensuring that we are investing in high quality teaching. We have also appointed four teachers to support other teachers with their teaching strategies as coaches.

- Parent: Work experience: How do you decide who gets a visit and who doesn't. My child did not have a visit during her work experience. Her work placement was 16 miles away. How do you determine who gets visit?

Mr S Andrews said that all students should get a visit or at least a phone call during work experience. Every work experience placement has checks carried out on it for health and safety and insurance purposes. Mr Andrews apologised that a visit had not taken place and reassured parent he would follow this up.

- Parent – There is no consistency in the lessons in the carousel. More creative and music wanted.

Mrs Hillier said that unfortunately, due to changes in the way schools are judged, Creative Arts subjects have been squeezed nationally. SUA are really keen to have these subjects running; we publish carousel sessions on our website. We need to invest curriculum time in EBacc – history and geography, English, maths and science.

- Parent: Will there be more after school clubs?

Mr S Andrews said that in our academy we do value The Arts as we know the additional benefits these offer our students. Yes that will happen, we have made a new appointment, invested in equipment to continue to develop Arts within the academy.

- Parents: Not all schools are being criticised.

Mr S Williams said that as a new member of the team he commented how it is surprising how much SUA offer. The school he came from did not offer catering or DT at Key Stage 3 which shows the breath of curriculum at SUA.

Mr S Andrews said that we have explored the Entrust option with music lessons and that we would be carrying out further investigations again in September. We would ensure that parents are kept well informed.

- Parent: Why do we offer 2 language subjects?

Mr J Andrews confirmed that Spanish is not being offered next year as we are focussing on raising the standards of one language.

- Parent: Will the floor space within the academy decrease with the work taking place?

Mrs Hillier said that there was a disproportionate amount of space on the second floor that did not align to the curriculum. We have empty classrooms on the top floor. Teachers are supportive of the alterations and there will be lots of space remaining for the creative subjects.

- Parent: Global Values, mentioned in Ofsted report, it seems like it is a waste of an hour.

Mrs Haffie-Hobday said that the Global Values focusses on a personal, social, health programme. It was started this academic year for more life skills development. Topics have included: bank accounts; mortgages; income tax; personal health; hygiene and life in the adult world. When students leave for Sixth Form or college these topics help. The government have now made the content within Global Values part of the statutory education. The subject allows student to ask questions and provides dialogue between teachers. We are aware of mixed response views, however we are ahead of the game as it is compulsory as of next year.

- Parent: How are you tackling the Bullying situation?

Mrs Hillier said that on the morning of the inspection a 2 hour anti bullying production team were in the academy, sadly none of the inspectors attended this production. SMSC has been reported as good and is delivered in our Global Values lessons. The Kirkland Rowell Survey feedback, last November, indicated that responses were good and achieved an outstanding grade for Global Values. If bullying is ever identified it is dealt with promptly and a log is kept in the academy and parents are always informed.

- Parent – behaviour here is a problem, low level disruption, causing the most disruptive students to get all the attention.

Ms Owen said that we are aware that behaviour is not perfect, we are dealing with this and adding strategies. If there are any issues we will support and deal with these. We are not in denial, we want to make sure that we deal with this and ensure that your children are getting the attention that they need to be successful. Overall it is a small minority of students, but we have not dismissed this and we will be doing more drop-ins to lessons next year too.

- Parent: It is about supporting the staff that are struggling with classes and behaviour

Ms Owen said that recent appointments have provided an opportunity to have that open dialogue. We want to operate an open door policy and will support staff. The new Directors of Teaching and Learning have been appointed to also support these areas.

- Parent: Structure of homework, sometimes there is a vast amount of homework. Homework that is done is not being marked.
- Parent: Standard of homework is not very good, sometimes produced on a scrap of paper.

Ms Owen said that we are looking at the homework next year and that she will be leading on this. We want to reassure parents that there is a plan, this came from feedback following the recent Open Mornings. Clear week by week homework will be issued and we will have the overview on our websites with links for support on our website. We will make sure feedback is there for your children.

- Parent: The praise postcards are great, it would be nice to have rewards/presentation in assemblies.

Mr J Andrews said that we are moving towards weekly homework in humanities. We received some great work in classrooms from the home learning projects and we have taken on board students comments and written feedback in their exercise books. We will be increasing the reward system and providing certificates to give even more recognition of hard work. Students do fantastic creative work and we will ensure that parents know that they get feedback for the homework done.

- Parent: Students are allowed to use mobile phones during lessons.

Mr J Andrews said that he is an advocate for technology in classrooms. It is about it being used appropriately and the teacher directs the use when appropriate.

- Parent: What is the position in relation to the 1-2-1 devices?

Mrs Hillier said that a letter has been sent out offering parents two options moving forward asking them to get back to us by the end of term. When the devices were offered to us in 2015/16, 79 families purchased the surface devices. Mrs Hillier apologised that the devices had not been fully utilised in lessons, however as the majority of students do not have them, we found it was not possible to teach using them in every lesson. Some parents are happy and they want to keep devices, the alternative is to return the device to the academy and cease payments. Further detail will follow in the letter sent out.

Date of the next meeting

The next meeting date 25th September 6-7pm

Agenda items

Update on actions since the first Parents' Forum meeting

Data – target setting and reporting to parents	
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Homework	
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Any other business	
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Meeting closed 7:30pm	
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