

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS AT THE PARENTS' FORUM JUNE 2011

CURRICULUM

	Question:	Response:	
1a 1b	What plans does WGS have to extend languages available – Mandarin, Spanish Could Spanish be offered as an additional language choice from Year 7?	JVD	None at moment. Many reasons for this. We currently offer three languages: German, French for Year 7 plus Latin or Italian in Year 8 Therefore three languages in KS3 – must do at least one at GCSE plus can do two. Believe we do offer an excellent choice of languages and choices. Trying to offer broad and yet balanced curriculum but it could be argued we could offer Mandarin or Spanish, but we are a small school with year groups of an average of 85 students. It would have an impact on both Italian and Latin. If we were bigger i.e. 120/140 we would be able to offer more. We are going to offer samplers of all four languages to Juniors.
		PAH	It was six years ago when we introduced Italian using the skills set of the existing staff.
2	Could the school introduce an IT qualification – not a GCSE to be completed in a modular way during Years 7-9?	NJCA	Have adjusted the curriculum to include this. Looking to create ICT for Year 8 and continue into Year 9. Looking to track all subjects to see what ICT they have i.e.spreadsheets in maths. Need to be very careful to get it right and get a qualification in a couple of years time.
		Question	Are students in Year 8 currently doing ICT? They do it in blocks of time in PSHE.
		Question	Will they carry on? Only in individual subjects. Will go to subject Heads and make sure all is covered in their topic.
3	(a) Does the sex education have to be quite so graphic and vulgar?	PAH	(a)Two booklets being referred to. They are graphic, informative, educational and relevant for each year. They're not vulgar, not just given out, issues are explored in class with videos. We would say they are necessary in terms of educating children. They are written in response to the kinds of questions that Year 8 students are asking. Our Head of PSHE had an input into the production of the booklet. Students write out questions then teacher takes them away, looks at and comes back with answers anonymously. All literature is approved for us by the Family Planning

	(b) Can parents have a copy of what their children are to receive to prepare them?		Association who you could ask for a copy if you wish. (b)Yes Mrs Fogarty is taking over PSHE from September and it will also be available through the website.
4	How important is International Baccalaureate (IB)? Will our students be disadvantaged when applying for University placements?	SH	HMC performed an analysis and they found no evidence that those schools not doing IB were being disadvantaged by top universities. The Russell Group also did a survey and also found the same results. Oxbridge representative claimed there is no advantage to his knowledge, over any other universities, for students gaining admission. SH has asked admission tutors of several universities and their response has been they cannot prejudice against students. A levels are as valuable and hold as much credibility at the IB level. There is simply no reason for switching from AS/A2 provision to anything else at this school.
		BMB	A year or so ago, IB was in the news Labour wanted to get rid of A levels and introduced the Cambridge Pre-U – A* has now squashed these – A levels are so known and trusted by employers. They suit our students so we won't disadvantage them.
		JVD	We are also developing the AQA BACC Extended Project, looked upon by universities as beneficial. Getting some aspects of IB, will be of benefit to our youngsters. It is what is good for our youngsters not what is fashionable.

DRUGS

	Question:	Response:
5	An anonymous questions was asked about drugs.	It is part of our PSHE programme for Years 9, 10 and 11. It is a big issue in society educating youngsters about what is out there. Used to have an outside speaker but he died. Policy in Red Book, will not tolerate at this school. If any youngster brings drugs into this school, he/she won't be in for very much longer. If someone comes to talk to us needing help, outside of the school, we endeavour to help and take appropriate action.

REPORTING

	Question:	Response:
6	A request please – can we have the end of year report a bit earlier as having it on the last day of term does not allow for any comments/discussion we may wish to raise.	<p>BMB</p> <p>BMB answered questions 6, 7 and 8 by showing a Power Point presentation and explaining the merits of it. He explained that it wasn't finalised yet, but that parents will be informed before it 'goes live'. These report grades are unique to WGS, and are internal only, not what they will get at GCSE. Basically, 'effort' will be changed to 'approach to work', A* will be very rare and we will be looking at the whole progress of reporting i.e. half term Christmas, half term Easter, half term end of year. Long reports will not have grades, the long report to be brought in just after May half term to suit parents by not being the last day of term. The last day of term Report, will go home with exam grades achieved. Would like to think of reporting in terms of three years of schooling: KS3/4/5 and sixth form – see them as one whole package with Parents' Evenings. Formal Parents' Evenings never obviate your right to contact the school. KS4 has a 2 year cycle – Years 10/11, with 3 x Parents' Evenings. Year 11 at beginning of academic year. In Year 10, will have done modules and want feedback. Looking at way forward. Lower Sixth, mock results, followed by Parents' Evening. As such, the change won't be much different. Can report back to you more, communicate with you more. Once finalised, will be sent out to you. No system is ever perfect.</p>
7	Why is there only one parent-teacher meeting and why, within 1 month of commencement of school? I feel there should be one more in the middle of the year.	<p>BMB</p>
8	Could you please explain how teachers arrive at their report grades for attainment as there appears to be inconsistencies here?	<p>BMB</p> <p>It will vary from department to department. It is up to the teacher who looks at their mark book and see grades achieved over the specified term. 10 = A's, B/C = 9/8's Hoping that these will be discussed in departments to come up with a criteria that all departments can agree on across the board.</p>
		<p>Question</p> <p>Have issue/problem with attainment – i.e the fact that some will give 1 when only got few marks for attainment, then some will give less when they got more.</p>
		<p>BMB</p> <p>The system is very confusing.</p>

	Question:	Response:
		Question Would like to be clear about how attainment is awarded.
		BMB At the moment, with some, C3 means that it's satisfactory and others it's not good. It hoped that with this new system it will work better. We'd appreciate feedback once it's running.

FINANCE

	Question:	Response:
	Because the question of the removal of the facility to pay monthly without paying an administration charge has been asked of the Chairman of Governors, this will not be covered here but be taken to the next Governors meeting on 17 th June.	
9	Why was the increase of 9% on music tuition not notified to parents in advance of inclusion on the summer invoices?	JVD There has been no increase on music tuition fees in the last year. From 20/01/12, they will go up 3%
		Question Presumably paying retrospectively, there will be one term will no bill?
		JVD Do not know. Apologise but you need to see Di Hartshorne in Finance for this answer.
10	If cost control is a key area of concern, not to mention the effects on the environment, why are many lights left on in school when unoccupied e.g. Big School at 1am during the Easter holidays?	JVD Need to remind staff to turn off lights after they have left the building.

UNIFORM

	Question:	Response:
11	Is the uniform being modified again and if so, when will parents be notified?	JVD Parents were notified in half term letter and again with end of term letter.
12	How will changing the uniform again improve teaching or learning?	JVD There is not a top school that doesn't have a smart uniform. It simply reflects the standards of the school. There is also a great opportunity with the forthcoming quinqucentenary / 2012 anniversary to introduce 2 of the new uniform policy i.e. a red tie with the 1512 crest designed by student. In addition: Grey kilt for Years 7-9 – brighter and smarter than current Grey skirt Years 10/11 Grey trousers – to lighten the emphasis on black One supplier has been identified to avoid confusion and offer reasonable cost structure Also new blazer badge – full crest of founder Tie, trousers, skirt all change from September Blazer badge may be an issue at this stage however

What about Year 7 girls, whose parents buy kilt for Years 8 and then have to buy skirt for Year 9?	JVD	They can wear kilt in Year 9 if they want.
What about trousers?	JVD	They can opt to wear trousers if they choose.

