

Parent Advisory Council (PAC)

**Thursday 11 July 2024
7.00pm – 8.30pm**

Chair: Mrs McAuley-Eccles
Principal: Dr C Cusick
Head of Sixth Form: Mr Robertson

Agenda:

- 1) Improvement Priorities
- 2) Student wellbeing and mental health
- 3) Sixth Form vision
- 4) SEND (General)

- 2) Ofsted judgement and next steps
- 3) Student wellbeing and mental health support.

Presentation

It was agreed that 4) SEND (General) would be added to the September meeting, to allow questions in the allocated meeting time regarding Tuesday, Wednesday strike action by NEU members.

Dr Cusick shared a slide '[Feedback on School Day](#)'; and highlighted feedback by Houses, with overall preference for hour-long lessons. Whilst it is not realistic to keep re-writing the school day, Dr Cusick would like to trial to allow feedback to review for 25-26.

Member: do students have to sit in a certain way, use the ruler in certain way, therefore reading is not as enjoyable as it could be?

Dr Cusick expanded that ruler-reading was helpful for students with dyslexia; the rulers are transparent but coloured, and helpful to help understand/hear how words are pronounced and also helpful for those who want to read ahead. Focused reading sessions (not as in primary school) look at the formation of words, in a more structured way.

Dr Cusick acknowledged one challenge, that whilst we explain the reason why, some colleagues are not consistent, so students are not used to the new system. Student Voice has addressed this and whilst they do not like the rulers, it is considered necessary at the moment to be done consistently for an extended period for students to commit to it.

Member: can able readers be allowed to read on?

Dr Cusick responded that this should be inclusive. Assemblies in September addressed community and citizenship, and community in the classroom is significant. The universal nature of education means that some have high reading ages and want to read ahead. However, with everyone reading, those in need are being supported. Teachers are given a pack; and with new staff on board, it should be more enjoyable.

The Fresh Start programme still runs and Dr Cusick confirmed that Assistant Principal, Mrs Lloyd, will bring analysis of results to the leadership team, which will be shared with the PAC when available.

Action: Fresh Start results to be shared when available (Dr Cusick).

3) Sixth Form vision (Mr Robertson)

Mr Robertson shared a slide - Visions for Sixth Form – and outlined the five principles.

- 1- Excellent **academic outcomes** – small but academically rigorous, push to achieve great grade results, ambitious destinations, Introducing academic mentoring, every 3wks one-to-one session with form tutors.
- 2- Developing **lifelong learners** – eg politics – want them to pass, really encompassing it into wider academic vision. Giving students to ask difficult questions, admit if they're struggling; asking for help, knowledge to analyse. Want a broad range of credible subjects. 22 subjects – social sciences to hard sciences, humanities. Focussing on 'traditional' academic subjects prepares students well. We're not a further education college. Cultural capital – outside of classroom – school trips, resource in sixth form centre, encouraging students how to think and approach.

- 3- Effective **Pastoral Support** it's a tough transition, how do we put a safety net around them. Mrs Alder – 6th form officer – mental first aider. Some of biggest challenges are anxiety. Just re-vamped 6th form tutors to help learn, develop and grow, 6th form leadership team – Mr Simpson, me – giving tools to stand on own two feet.
- 4- Diverse Enrichment Opportunities. It's about what we do alongside academic. Vision long-term is prefect system, build in agenda where students are comfortable to be ambassadors in the community. Last week we had alumni visitors – one set up small business, one architectural assistant, one female professional rugby player. Exposed 6th formers to ambitious but different opportunities. It's a supportive move of getting on a path to achieve well in school, then when you can leave site, study at home etc. Also looking at enrichment activities. A real opportunity for us as a school to work with the community, not necessarily covered in the community.
- 5- Personal development, Careers, critical thinking, Understanding and challenging world around them, fostering discussions.

Mr Robertson confirmed that students have non-contact periods; and went on to explain some of the challenges faced by them, including:

- the desire for something new;
- better/newer facilities at other schools;
- limited subjects offered compared to further education colleges.

To help nurture and guide Year 11 students, Mr Robertson was interested to hear what parents and carers would look for in a sixth form. The 22 subject range was shared by Mr Robertson, with Dr Cusick adding the collaboration with Stageworks – our students – which focuses on theatre acting/drama as a smaller vocational offer, for one strand. A level Computing was discussed, with T Levels piloted, although this may not be sustainable for a small sixth form, as only 6 students were recruited last year, where 20 are needed. Mr Robertson explained it may need to change depending on update, with Dr Cusick confirming that unfortunately languages haven't been able to run this year due to low update, and this may be the case for next year, along with Further Maths. Year on year some subjects may run, some may not.

Member: Concerns for long-term staff absence in some subjects.

Dr Cusick explained that the intention is always to cover classes, if someone is off for extended period. She acknowledged that culturally sixth form classes have not been covered, but moving forward, Dr Cusick expressed confidence that this will stop. Mr Robertson has put in best practice for sixth form cover, with a protocol in place. Longsands has good contacts with The Ivo and we have in-Trust expertise to upskill teachers, to future-proof such a situation. Students need to attend the library for additional assistance, with a basic requirement of setting high quality cover work which Mr Robertson is addressing.

Member: Limited sixth form information in the Newsletter; celebrations of achievements/rewards notices; sixth form not included in Awards Evening.

Dr Cusick acknowledged this and advised that she and Mr Robertson have addressed this for going forward. In addition, an improvement in dress code will be needed, and for sixth form students to become role models. Consideration is being given to sixth form students joining classes to assist students, and also for their own self-development. Good guidance for sixth form students is needed, including sometimes realistic and difficult conversations if grades aren't suitable.

Longsands is on a clear improvement journey, and this requires people to change, taking people along, raising standards. Dr Cusick did though say that whilst she set up a programme for mini-teaching training as part of the enrichment programme, unfortunately there was no uptake.

Member: How does work experience work in sixth form?

Mr Robertson spoke about a booklet used for the experience, which included feedback from employers which was positive.

Member: Asked about engaging with 'School of Thought' (ambassadors) for different subjects. DBS checked. To talk to 14-16 year old about career opportunities. 14-16yrs Looking at sectors; which could lead into work experience.

Dr Cusick agreed to explore this, and spoke about alumni, and the MedSoc group run well by Mr Ivett in school.

Member: Is the ambition to grow sixth form as the town is growing.

Dr Cusick confirmed there is capacity for 250 per year group and that the vast majority who attend are from Longsands, and she welcomed parent/carer input, including reference to a Yr7 trip to Robinson College which inspired students.

2) Mental Health & Wellbeing

Dr Cusick shared a slide: [Mental Health & Wellbeing 2023](#) and explained that whilst colleagues at Longsands are not mental health professionals, the focus is on wellbeing, student resilience, with staff able to identify when students are struggling.

The mental health element of PD includes:

- staff trained as Mental Health First Aiders (for adults)
- a mental health strand
- acknowledgement of Mental Health Awareness Month (October) and Week (May)
- Mental Health workshops held for parents and carers.

This is one strand of the Improvement Plan.

Need to increase profile of CIS. About signposting to parents to support children etc.

Plan for 2024-25:

- Wellbeing Club at lunchtime.
- Wellbeing ambassadors and Peer mentors (huge capacity for 6th form)

There have been drop-down days before. Dr Cusick is, though, mindful of students who have struggled with changes to their routine, and the consideration needed for supporting them.

Member: Is it an Astrea curriculum map or Longsands Curriculum map? In addition, nothing included for Years 12 and 13.

Dr Cusick confirmed that this is a central map but with flexibility. The Trust core curriculum is being implemented for Year 7 (September 2024), and apologised for lack of KS5 information, confirming it is taught in morning tutor time.

Member: students with ADHD, disabilities, have to prepare long before, and these changes may cause issues.

Dr Cusick agreed this valid point, observing that more time is spent onboarding at Longsands than at previous schools (toilet passes, assemblies, tutor time). With great awareness of the links between mental health and autism, autistic-friendly ways of working will help everybody, which Mr Tutt, Astrea Trust Director of Secondary Education, is committed to.

Member: not all students have difficulties, but what provision is there for struggling students, beyond the curriculum; where do they go?

Dr Cusick confirmed tutors, SSOs (Student Services Officers) can support. In addition, counsellors (Astrea-paid, and external); although more training for mental health first aid. Pastoral staff have excellent emotional literacy skills, but Dr Cusick acknowledged that there is a need for wider mental health first aid training.

Discussion took place about PD lessons which are timetabled. A parent reported student discomfort discussing personal topics with unknown teachers and asked if consideration would be given to taking it out of the timetable.

Dr Cusick confirmed that this has been done previously but student voice consultation indicated it was preferred in the timetable to the alternative of drop-down days. Currently every year group in KS3/4 has 2 lessons per fortnight; KS5 has one lesson per fortnight. Following parent query about disability awareness, Dr Cusick confirmed this is addressed in the It Stops Now programme.

Dr Cusick then invited questions about the recent strike days.

Member: What has it been about?

Dr Cusick was open with PAC members; advising them that it has been about adverse management practices – not consulting enough and staff not accepting the pace of change. She added weekly meetings have since taken place with unions, each concern has been addressed and consulted on with the unions, and solutions found for each point raised. However, more meetings were wanted, therefore the start of the working day was proposed from 8.25am. Unfortunately all offers were rejected.

Action: PAC members to be invited to morning line up early in the Autumn Term, with a report for the newsletter.

Members were aware of social media comments indicating PAC was 'handpicked'; although all acknowledged there was an open invitation for all parents/carers to join.

Member: What percentage of staff are leaving?

Dr Cusick confirmed 21 staff would be leaving at the end of term.

Members were informed of the significant work put into the strike day programme; including external visitor workshops; not wanting students to study from workbooks. However, Dr Cusick expressed disappointment that the Year 7 and 8 students were not as engaged as had been hoped

Members recognised 'you can't please everyone'.

Meeting closed 9.10pm.

Proposed future meeting dates and agenda items:

Thursday 03 October 2024 (proposed change to Wednesday 02 October)

Thursday 28 November 2024

Thursday 30 January 2025

Thursday 20 March 2025

Thursday 15 May 2025

Thursday 26 June 2025