

Our Ref: PB/yjc

May 2014

To: Members of the Liaison Committee
of the School Parents' Association

Dear Parents,

BROMSGROVE SCHOOL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

**MINUTES OF THE LIAISON COMMITTEE OF THE
SCHOOL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION**

THURSDAY 15th MAY 2014

I have pleasure in enclosing the Minutes for the Meeting of the Liaison Committee of the School Parents' Association, held on Thursday 15th May 2014.

Yours sincerely

P St J Bowen

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DEPUTY HEADMASTER

Enc

BROMSGROVE SCHOOL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF THE LIAISON COMMITTEE OF THE SCHOOL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION
THURSDAY 15th MAY 2014

1. Attendance

Anita Rose	Sc Chair
Jo Osborne	Sc Treasurer
Andrew Saker	O
Jo Hill	L
Bob Stather	WG
Aileen Staniland	Hz
Ritsa Solomou	O
Bridget Nisbet	Ly
Mandy Bridgman	WG
Delia Stokes	Ws
Cerys Luckman	L
Amanda Baxter	Ws
Sue Weston	Ly/Hz
Jo Goucher	Ws
Dawn Hubscher	Ws
Hayley Buckley	Ws

Apologies

Jim Bridgman	WG
Karen James	E

School

Mr Philip Bowen	Deputy Headmaster
Mrs Catherine Maund	Assistant Pastoral Head

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 13th March 2014, including Action Plan

The Minutes were approved as read.

Catering – Agenda Item

Ex-changing Room – Actioned

Parents’ Evenings – Actioned

Sports Tours – Agenda Item

Exam T/T – Actioned and bring up for next year.

Bus Shelter – would be completed for September.

3. Chapel Suits - Raised by School House

The parent asks whether the School can think about the possibility of doing away with the chapel suits, which are not required very often and are an additional expense. The boys find them very itchy, hot and uncomfortable. Would it be a better idea to have a navy blue blazer if a replacement was required?

The APH commented that this was under review and we would report back. We knew the concerns. If it was dispensed with and we needed a replacement we would also have to look at girls’ uniform.

4. Rain Shelter For Car Park - Raised by Lyttelton House

The DHM informed representatives that one would be constructed. Several parents stressed the importance of where it should be sited. The DHM would discuss this with the Bursar.

5. Lyttelton House - Raised by Lyttelton House

A Year 8 parent visited Littleton and was shocked and disappointed as to the state of not just the physical building but also the fixtures and fittings. Can we be advised as to when a refurbishment is scheduled and is it not possible in the short term to at least provide decent desks and chairs in the studies. This was mentioned in the last meeting. No specific dates/details were given which would be appreciated I think by many of the parents with children coming up from the prep school who passed comment on it.

The DHM commented that he had received several concerns and we were aware that Lyttelton needed refurbishment. He had spoken to the Bursar and some new furniture would go into the House this Summer. A condition survey of the day houses was being undertaken. The first priority would be refurbishment of the original buildings – TC and Haz. That would obviously need very careful planning. Lyttelton would then be considered. At present the focus next academic year would be on the Dining Hall.

6. Catering - Raised by Lyttelton House and Lupton House)

- a) *Please could you include the ongoing food issue on the agenda so that we can discuss the action taken since the last discussion? The email below is from a parent who's son joined the 6th form in September. He came from a state school and I am dismayed to hear that he too has complained. Having taught in state and public schools myself and visited many of each, my overall impression has been that public school catering has been of a superior quality. Not in this case according to this new parent. The only point that I can think of, which will probably be mentioned by lots of people, is the quality of the food at lunchtime. (LY)*

"I have heard many children, including my own complain about the quantity and quality of the school meals over the last year. They say that there are fewer choices, smaller portions and poorer quality. I hope they can go back to the previous standard." (L)

The DHM noted that concerns were still reaching us via pupils and parents. The main priority was the boarders whose home it was. Breakfast was excellent and Sunday brunch. There had been pupil concerns about supper in the week though various well-received changes had been made. The Bursar had recently instigated a survey of all boarding pupils and that would be analysed.

Various comments were made. Two parents had eaten at the dining hall earlier in the year (with the DHM and APH) and had been pleased. That offer was always open to parents. Choice was wide though it was noted rigid refilling times could mean choices were limited for some at certain points.

The Bursar was very aware of issues and we would report back.

- b) *I am concerned about the food being provided at school, in particular that nuts are being offered on the school premises. Whilst neither of my children have nut allergies, I strongly believe Bromsgrove school should be a completely nut-free environment. Having taught in state primary schools for many years, this was an issue that was addressed a long time ago and I am surprised it is still not resolved here. Recently, I attended a Ladies lunch at school and was horrified to find a beef and cashew nut main dish and then a dessert that consisted completely of a variety of crushed nuts in a pastry crust. There was absolutely no need for that to be offered on the school premises. The school needs to have a coherent approach to this.*

The DHM commented that there was one particular serious case that he and the Bursar were closely involved in. A parent had raised significant concerns regarding our policies and procedures regarding nuts. This was being actively looked into as a priority and was a major item at the H and S meeting (chaired by a Governor) the following week. We would report back. Things had run smoothly in this area of catering and health but we were now seeking and taking advice from various bodies.

7. Allocation of Houses: Prep to Senior School - Raised by Lyttelton House

I would like to know how the children are split up and whether friendships are taken into account. Prep school are saying that the process is done now by senior school, which is different to how it was done previously, where children were at least asked to name friends they would like to be with and generally did get at least one friend. This doesn't seem to be the case now and I would like to understand why not. Our son has spent 2 years building up a nice group of friends only to be completely split up from them

all next year. I just don't understand why and can't seem to get any answers. I know they are all mixed up again for lessons, but the houses do play a significant part in their daily routines and their loyalty is very definitely to their house.

The DHM commented that the system had been changed two years ago so this was the second year of operation. The friendship element had been taken out – it had been getting far too complex, intense and unworkable. Other than Sibling and OB connections or severe pastoral reasons and avoiding a concentration of scholars/team players/musicians etc it was done at random. This year 5 parents had e mailed; he had replied; spoken to two by phone and had seen just one family with daughter personally and they were now much happier. That was a significant reduction on previous years. There was no perfect system. He preferred the latest system but every September went round the L4th studies and they just beamed at him – whatever the system. There was hardly an issue and certainly not on house placings.

We could turn it round the other way – the DHM saw positives. When children left for University they might not know anyone in 10000. Likewise for gap years and jobs. Through these rites of passage we grew as people.

He understood the anxiety – Year 8 only knew Prep and the form teacher system. Quite rightly, we made much of the houses. But this idea that they would almost never see their friends again was a misconception– 90% of the time they were not in house, they were in lessons, lunch, HOY, games. It was still the same community. They also made new friends. It was far too rigid to have a system intricately based on friendships which is what it had been and it upset children far more.

It was noted that some Year 8 parents felt that external parents could choose their House. The DHM commented that it was not always the case that they went to the House they visited. We spread externals across the houses.

8. Tabled Items

a) GYM – Raised by School House

My question relates to use of the gym by pupils. My understanding is that at present, pupils can use the gym once they are 16. My son's birthday is at the end of August and he will be gutted that all his friends can use the gym when he won't be able to - it does seem slightly unfair. Would it be possible to change the ruling on this, e.g., that they can use the gym when they are in 5th form, or Lower 6th?

The DHM commented that due to H and S and legislation and guidance, pupils could not use the gym until they were 16. As with driving and voting it was 'life' but he could see that it could be divisive within the year group. He believed it would be wrong to say to pupils above 16 in the 5th Form that they could not use it because some pupils were under 16 throughout the academic year. Representatives generally agreed but we would discuss at a House parents' meeting and with Mr Mullan.

b) CAR PARK - raised by Hazeldene House

Over this last school year it has become increasingly difficult to pick up children leaving school between 5-5.30pm. The number of available spaces is usually non-existent meaning a lot of parents double park or. My perception is that there are a lot of non-school people using the car park with small children doing sports activities. Whilst I have no problem or difficulty with the school sharing it's fantastic facilities with the wider community I believe it's also necessary to have car parking facilities which reflect this

general use and make it safer and easier for people with children at the school to collect their children at the end of the day.

There was a general view that there were insufficient places – could the car park be extended southwards? Parents noted that there were many people coming for lets eg. swim club at pick-up time. A parent had also come in at 10.00 am and there were virtually no spaces.

The DHM commented that 6th Formers would park at Housman Hall again from September. That would help. He would raise the issue with the Bursar. It was acknowledged that lets brought income to the School but also that many parents picked up on local roads. The DHM was again concerned at girls being picked up on Worcester road and ‘dodging’ traffic. It was agreed a survey of parked cars was worth undertaking to determine exactly who was there. The DHM noted that every day a range of visitors came and some days there were conferences. There were considerable pressures for such a large School.

c. Sports Tours Lupton House

After being told the cost of the tour and committing to participate students are required to raise additional funds for the tour. In reality the parents pay the fund raising extra costs. The students have little time in practice to raise the funds and it is difficult asking for contributions/sponsorship from others when this is a tour/holiday for the students. It would be better to be told the full cost from the outset.

The students are often provided with a fair amount of sports kit for the tour (at a cost) but then are not allowed to use this at school.

This led to detailed discussion about how to fund major sports tours – various parents were concerned by pressure on pupils to raise money eg. getting tables at dinners, turning £10 into £100. Sometimes it was parents (and relatives) paying over and over again. For some parents a big function was another costly expense.

The DHM believed good practice was for the tour leader at the outset to meet parents and pupils and for costs to be raised – to define in detail the tour cost but also to add potential extras and what might need to be raised at events and were parents happy with that? A proper ‘system’ was needed going forward for various major tours not just sport. Parents had expressed some concern about the girls’ tour fund-raising. There were many positives about the way the rugby tour was being addressed.

Another issue was how much pupils were expected to take as pocket money for any meals.

Parents would welcome a two year lead-in to a major tour. The DHM commented that a matrix was being produced across the system on trips so parents knew what to expect and plan for. It had been too ‘ad hoc’.

There was concern that pupils came back from tours and were not allowed to use the kit. The DHM noted that after a rugby tour boys wore the blazers to matches on a Saturday. There was some concern that some items were not being used from the recent cricket tour and it had all been extra cost. The DHM would look into that.

d) Sports Events Kit Lupton House

There appears to be inconsistency as to when the students can have hoodies/T-shirts/kit to recognise their participation in high profile sports events. It is generally not allowed. Yet pupils from other schools at the events generally wear "event" kit which acts as good publicity for their participation in high level sporting events/finals. Please could this be re-considered.

This led on from the previous item. The APH would look into it. The DHM noted that at many such events obviously normal school kit had to be worn to avoid a proliferation of various items of kit.

9. Proposed Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 13th November 2014 in Old Chapel. 7.30 pm for 7.45pm.

10. General Matters

The Treasurer made her report. There were no new bids. The DHM would see Finance re bills due. The PA Commemoration lunch was doing well; the DHM would include a reminder in the next Newsletter.

11. AOB

The Chairman read out:

'Does anyone ever feedback to the groundsman/gardeners how fantastic the School grounds look? The garden around School House and the new rose garden at Prep are lovely. There are a lot of keen gardeners as parents and it was a pleasure walking around getting ideas and admiring the work '.

The DHM commented that we did but it was very gratifying to receive this. He would mention in the next Newsletter.

The Chairman also expressed thanks of various parents for the Book and recent Presentation. The DHM was grateful for PA sponsorship.

12. ACTION PLAN

1. The APH would report back on Chapel Suits **Act APH**
2. The DHM would discuss the siting of the bus shelter with the Bursar. **Act: DHM**
3. The DHM would report back on day house refurbishment **Act DHM**
4. The DHM would report back on Catering/Policy regarding Nuts **Act DHM**
5. The DHM would report back on 5th Form use of the Gym. **Act DHM**
6. The DHM would discuss car parking with the Bursar and report back. **Act DHM**
7. The DHM would report back on Sports Tours and Sports Kit **Act DHM/APH**