

Brighton College Parents' Forum

Thursday 18th September 2008

1. When children get back from Thursday games there are no baguettes left. Can the school please ensure this is dealt with? One suggestion is that the children order in advance at the beginning of term and that a member of staff hands them directly to the children.

Mrs Fiona Carnes, Head of Catering

During the first few weeks of school we judge the number of baguettes we produce on the week before usage. Once everyone settles into a routine we can then judge more clearly what we need to produce. Last week we had reduced the baguettes by 30 as we had so many left over but this week the uptake on the baguettes was higher so we now are producing more. Also the pupils do know they can go through the servery for lunch if they want to.

2. I would like to raise the issue of school dinners - I know it has been raised many times, but I feel that it cannot be ignored. My daughter arrives home from school every day feeling hungry. When we discuss the options for school lunches she tells me how small the portions are. This is not just the meat; this is pasta, rice, potatoes, i.e. not necessarily expensive produce. For example, she said that they were given the equivalent of a sixth of an average size pizza. These are portions that will not sustain a normal growing child especially for the length of the college day. No allowance appears to be made for varying portion sizes across the year groups. It makes a mockery of the greatly publicised nutritional content of school dinners when the size of the portions does nothing more than encourage the students to go and buy chocolate and crisps from the PAC. It is also ironic with the school's ethos of feeding and nurturing the whole child, when my daughter spends the whole afternoon in classes hungry. This is surely no way to encourage a mind to be focussed in lessons. I am confused that the school's meals provider in its other guises caters for the state education sector and in this area I hear from other parents with children at schools that portions are adequate. Why are the students of Brighton College having to suffer small portions? The queuing system makes it impossible to ask for more.

Mrs Fiona Carnes, Head of Catering

At lunch times we do manage the protein items and potato/pasta etc in the servery as we have to serve a lot of people in a short amount of time and it is quicker and portion controls can be kept. The senior students

help themselves to the vegetables, soup, salads, cheese, dessert and bread each day. Most pupils if they would like more ask and are usually accommodated. I would recommend you come in unannounced one day for lunch to have a look at what is on offer and judge for yourself.

3. Would the College consider providing lunch menus on a weekly/ monthly basis to avoid duplication of meals at home?

Mrs Fiona Carnes, Head of Catering

The IT department are looking at putting the menus onto the school intranet so parents can see what is on offer. Also the menus are sent to the houses each term for displaying or distributing.

4. On baguette day for the Upper Fifth, my son has often arrived to find there are none left, particularly if this follows a rugby session. Is this a common complaint and what can they do either to get fed with something or reserve a baguette in the morning perhaps?

Mrs Louise Kenway, Deputy Head

Pupils should all have provision of adequate food – of course – and baguettes are always a popular choice on the appropriate day for each year group. The catering department use the year group numbers as a guide and do make sufficient baguettes so there is no reason why a pupil should go hungry. We had a blip last week, but have looked at this, and also are considering supplementary foods to go with the baguette, such as a cake or some other snack.

5. Could the school please clarify the position of the Café de Paris? During the Summer Term the Café was closed for 3 days. This coincided with the Dance Show and many parents were left with nowhere to meet their children or to wait for them at the end of rehearsals. On another occasion the Café had to close at 4.30pm for a Common Room Meeting. This resulted in the staff having to tell parents that they would have to leave at 4.30 regardless of arrangements made to meet children. Is the Café a facility for the children and parents of the school or something which can be utilised by the school?

Mr Richard Cairns, Headmaster

The Café is a college facility which is used for a variety of things from boarders' talent shows to staff meetings. When it is not being used for a college event or meeting, parents are welcome to use the facilities but it would be unwise to assume that the café will be available without first checking with the staff there.

6. Why are the Fifth Form again missing out on lunch choices? On a Tuesday they are expected to attend a Science lesson during their lunch break, queue and eat their lunch and change for Games. At all other times they are the last to enter the Refectory when there is little or no choice of food left. They also have to allow Sixth Formers to queue jump which is very unfair as these pupils are able to make their own arrangements e.g. going into Kempton for food. Would it be possible for those children who are missing lunch to order baguettes in the morning?

Mrs Louise Kenway, Deputy Head

We have a system whereby the 5th form lunch staggers: lesson 6 ends at 1:10pm for L5th for half of the year and 1:15 for the remainder of the year (and then reverses) so that they all have a chance to be at the front of the queue. A very small number of pupils in the U5th have a science lesson period 7 (after games and lunch) and for these pupils we are flexible about the rules which require all others to change into school uniform before entering the dining room. As regards Sixth Formers going to the head of the queue, this was an issue we raised with 20 4th and 5th Form School Council representatives this week. Unanimously, they voted to keep this tradition in the expectation of benefiting from it in due course. Baguettes are an option that we can look into.

7. Why isn't there a 2nd hand uniform sale at the Senior School?

Mrs Louise Kenway, Deputy Head

The school uniform shop carries a number of second hand uniform items which are of good quality. Some Housemasters and Housemistresses do keep the odd spares around in houses which they may be happy to sell or lend should the need arise. There is also, I believe, an informal trade between departing U5th and new 4th Form. If any parent would be willing to organise an end of year clothes sales, we would be delighted to hear from them.

8. The children have to go to school at the week-end for various events (matches, services, open mornings). Could these be kept to no more than one per week-end? For example on Sat 20th there is an Open Morning and matches in the afternoon. The children will have no other choice than to do their prep on the Sunday and there will very little time (or none at all) left for family life.

Simon Smith, Second Master

Calendar meetings are held towards the end of each term to keep such pressure points to a minimum. For example this year we moved the new

pupils' chapel service away from the weekend of rugby house matches. Inevitably, however, the beginning of the Michaelmas term has a number of weekend events that are dictated by other demands, such as the fixture lists of other schools and the optimum time for Open Morning.

9. Why are there so many sports fixtures? My daughter is in the 4th form and has a match almost every Saturday this term. Along with other school commitments such as the open day, chapel, harvest festival etc this leaves very little time for homework and family life.

Simon Smith, Second Master

Every leading independent school has a tradition of sport on a Saturday and here at Brighton we believe strongly in sporting opportunities for all, hence the number of B,C and D teams we try to put out. Playing at a more lowly level often leads to the sort of long-lasting satisfaction and pride as playing for the 1st team. In addition, it goes without saying that sport is a healthy outlet for energy at the end of the working week; and moreover provides an opportunity for parents to meet each other on the touchline and over a cup of tea. Pupils are asked to attend a Sunday chapel once a term and occasionally an Open Morning on a Saturday.

10. I have been asked to raise with the Parents Forum the fact that parents have not been receiving the minutes of our meetings, despite previous requests. Can we please put in place a robust mechanism that ensures that minutes of all meetings are circulated and that this is done on a timely basis?

Mrs Dorcas Sherwood, Headmaster's PA

I would like to offer my apologies if you have not been receiving the minutes of the Parents' Forum. They have been sent via different methods and at different times over the last two years, either with Headmaster's end of term letter, e-mail, or attached to the newsletter. In order to ensure that they are not omitted in future, I propose that the minutes are attached to the college's weekly newsletter, on the Friday of the week after the Forum has been held. This will allow sufficient time to ensure that any additional points raised can be properly addressed and also to allow sufficient time to get the document to Mr Ollosson for inclusion. This can be built into my diary on a regular basis as a task for completion one week after each Forum has been held.

It was suggested that, to save paper and postage, the minutes be circulated by email with the newsletter the following week and also be attached to the website. Dorcas Sherwood to action this.

11. Has any progress been made on setting up a second hand text book shop and also supplying parents with a book list at the start of the school year?

Mrs Louise Kenway, Deputy Head

As with uniforms, pupils' text books are often not in a good state by the end of a two or three year course and hence would be hard to sell on. Pupils do pass on books to friends though and, again, some in house sales do happen. With constantly changing specifications we have an added complication which means that old text books are quickly out of date. With respect to a book list: this is something that has been put together in the past and we should resurrect. I will pursue this. Parents should note, though, that the school probably provides books cheaper than they may be able to purchase them for, since we buy in such large quantities.

It was suggested that, with the new GCSE and A-Level specifications, Heads of Section should canvass HoDs and put an up to date list together. This should be sent to parents. Whilst it was not expected that it would be the norm for parents to buy their own books, in the case of siblings handing books down, it was felt that this may be sensible. Mark Beard, John Weeks and Leah Hamblett to action.

12. Could the school confirm whether Sixth Form Scholarships are available to current members of the Upper Fifth who hold Scholarships and/or Exhibitions? What is the procedure for current College pupils who wish to apply?

Mrs Mary-Anne Brightwell, Director of Admissions

Sixth Form Scholarships are only available to pupils who join new into the Lower Sixth. They are not available to existing pupils moving through from the Upper Fifth. The rationale behind this is that exiting pupils have already had the opportunity to apply for scholarships when they joined at 13+. The Headmaster does make some honorary scholarship awards to candidates who do not already hold awards and who have performed outstandingly in their GCSE examinations. Whilst these carry no monetary reward, pupils are accorded the status of academic scholar for their Sixth Form years.

13. Can the school please explain the new effort grades and the reasons for the change?

Mrs Jo-anne Riley, Academic Deputy Head

The new effort grades are 1 for 'outstanding', 2' for very good, 3 for 'satisfactory', 4 for 'unsatisfactory' and 5 for 'poor' effort. I sent all parents and Houses detailed copies of the grade descriptors at the start of the term, but will also put them on the intranet as well to make them accessible. They are displayed in all the Houses.

We changed to a five point system to reduce the incidence of pupils being given 2s for good effort, when an average of 2 was considered a cause for concern. This was a very common complaint from pupils. The new system encourages personal learning, high academic standards and independence with the 1, but also allows for a distinction to be made between 'very good' and only 'satisfactory' effort, which the old system did not. All the grade descriptors are specific and detailed.

14. Are Brighton College considering any move towards Environmental Science as an A-Level?

Mrs Jo-anne Riley, Academic Deputy Head

Not at this time, no. Chemistry, Physics and Biology are amongst our most popular A-Level subjects and provide an excellent preparation for University work in Scientific Areas.

15. Why is the cervical cancer vaccine not free?

Mrs Kirsteen Vernon, Sister in Charge of Health Centre

The Government initiative at the beginning of the campaign was to vaccinate Year 8 girls only on the NHS. School nurses based in the community are coming on Thursday 25th September to the Prep School to vaccinate Year 8 girls (with parental consent) – the Government initiative free NHS vaccine. They will receive their second and third doses over the next few months.

A *new* initiative by the Government is that Year 13 girls will now be offered a free NHS vaccine from their own GPs in the next few months.

The Health Centre, headed by Dr. Sue Lipscombe, wrote to parents of every girl in the Senior School in May 2008, offering their daughters the chance to have the vaccine 'Gardasil' at the private cost of £240.00. This charge is the exact cost of the vaccine from the pharmacy. The vaccine comes in 3 separate doses. Each vial costs £80.00 and is given 8 weeks apart. We have since given 20 girls their first doses with more girls taking us up this term already.

The vaccination is most successful when given to girls not yet sexually active, so we offered the vaccine to older girls so they would be covered in the near future, rather than having to wait for the NHS. Parents were advised to contact their own GPs to see if they were offering the vaccine for their age group child, before coming back to us for the private vaccination.

This was a service that we thought would be helpful. We never intended parents to feel they must take us up on the offer.

There was some disagreement about the availability and cost of two different vaccines for this purpose. Health Care Centre to check government guidelines and ensure that pupils are offered vaccines as recommended.

Additional questions

Lost Property

Some parents were concerned about some over zealous cleaning staff in houses that had thrown away expensive items of clothing and pupils' files at the end of term and also were concerned about the availability of the Security team to assist with lost property.

It was agreed that the cleaners should be directed more closely over disposal of items at the end of a term. Given that the security lodge is manned full time, it was suggested that the status quo remain in terms of lost property arrangements.

Gym option for games

Parents were interested to know whether a gym session was available as a games option for pupils. Mr Nicholson outlined the availability of two off site gyms as a games option but noted that these were both limited in capacity and very popular options. U6th were always given first choice. Mr Cairns went on to outline plans for the development of a new cardio-vascular and weight training room in the school in the future which will allow more pupils access to this option during games time and will be available to boarding pupils in the evenings and at weekends.