

## Parent's Forum Meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2009

Question:

Why was an interim report sent out dated 10<sup>th</sup> February when the previous one was only dated 27<sup>th</sup> January. Not only is this a waste of postage but the results in some cases were based on one exam done during that time period and this is not a true reflection of the student's grade overall?

**Answer: Jo-anne Riley, Deputy Head Academic**

In the sixth form we give an interim after four weeks each term, but in Lent term there is considerable absence due to exam leave, so really it acts as a check that there are no major problems (though this interim can also reflect work done at the end of the previous term that was done after that term's final interim). Therefore we also do an interim in week 6 before half term which allows the pupils to settle back into classes. We have decided against leaving the interim until week 6 in case any severe problems are not dealt with in the early weeks of term and sorted out before half term. We are looking to see whether some interims can be dealt with purely electronically.

Question:

Christmas Carol Service

Please would it be possible to reinstate a College carol service at Christmas which is open to parents, extended family and old Brightonians. The large event at St Peters is very much missed. It was always eagerly anticipated and was an opportunity for the whole school community to come together before Christmas. If St Peters is to remain unavailable, could the College chapel be used, perhaps as a ticketed event to prevent overcrowding, and even if necessary with separate events for Sixth Form and Lower School. To be followed or preceded by mulled wine and mince pies?

**Answer: Fr Robert Easton**

Yes, after a "fallow" Christmas last year, there will be two services this December, with one primarily for the pupils, and the other - probably at St Mary's, Kempton - along the lines suggested. It is always wonderful to have so many parents, extended family and OBs with us during the Christmas season, and a second service is clearly essential. Some Yuletide cheer will also undoubtedly be available. I agree wholeheartedly with the parents' concerns. We reserve a number of spaces for OBs, especially former servicemen, at the Remembrance Service, but we shall endeavour to have a more professional chaperoning in the future at all services. The Great Hall as a venue shall be discussed.

Question:

Leavers' Ball

Would the College consider, in future years, bringing the Leavers' Ball back to be held in the College grounds rather than at an outside commercial venue. A number of parents have expressed a preference for the event to take place at the College itself - there is nowhere nicer on a beautiful June evening! Presumably the Old Brightonians and other guests would also appreciate coming to the College itself.

**Answer: Mark Beard**

Although a number of parents, staff and OBs come too, the Leavers' Ball is for the Leavers, who have voted vociferously for their event to be held off site in recent years. We had a very successful ball at the Racecourse in 2007 and a highly successful one at the Metropole last year - the venue of choice again this year. Graduation Sunday, held at school, offers an excellent and moving sequence of events for all leavers and their parents (even those sporting hangovers from the ball the night before).

Question:

Fire Practices

While the need for very regular fire practices in the boarding houses is fully understood, please could these definitely not take place early on the morning of important external A-level exams (as happened this term). It seemed unnecessary to wake pupils unexpectedly early on an important day.

**Answer: Mark Beard**

**It is a requirement that a boarders' fire drill take place at least once each term and that it does not involve non-boarders still on-site, such as cleaners, contractors and visitors. The time frame is thus restricted to early morning or late at night. 6.30a.m. was considered the best time to do this as it is not too early to completely disrupt the boarding community and not too late that it would begin to interfere with the start of the College day. First bell for boarders rings at 7.30 a.m. and most are up by then anyway making ready for breakfast and the school day. We will look to see whether the timing could be a little later and try to avoid public exam days.**

Question:

Could the Headmaster confirm when Ms Kenway will be returning from maternity leave to allow Mr Beard to resume his position as Head of 6th Form.?

**Answer: Headmaster**

**Ms Kenway is due to return from maternity leave in April.**

Question:

Bollards

What is the purpose of the removable bollards along the path edges- sometimes they seem to be up, sometimes down? When they are in position they restrict the space for cars passing each other.

**Answer: Mark Beard**

**In order to pursue active traffic calming measures on campus, the College tries to restrict the number of vehicles moving on campus thus making it safer for pupils (most importantly) and staff to walk around campus without the danger of being struck by a vehicle. The bollards enable us to at least restrict the number of cars parking on campus thus making it a safer place to walk through.**

**When there is a particularly busy day or evening at the College eg Open Mornings or Autograph Concerts, the College has always permitted visitors to park in order to allow as many people to attend such College functions. On these occasions (which are not that frequent) the bollards are removed to create more parking space. In answer to the question regarding restricted manoeuvrability of vehicles due to the bollards, staff continually drive mini buses and people carriers within the campus in the areas where the bollards are placed and if one is careful and adheres to the speed limit, there is more than sufficient room to move.**

Question:

Main gates

Please could the main gates be kept open at busy times when a lot of cars are expected to be entering, rather than opening and closing for each individual car? In particular please could they be kept open first thing on Monday mornings when cars are bringing boarders back to school, otherwise often a queue builds up outside the gates causing problems for pedestrians and traffic moving along Eastern Road.

**Answer: Mark Beard**

The purpose of having the main gate controlled in the morning is to ensure that we continue to restrict vehicle movement on the campus whilst pupils and staff are moving about the campus. As a matter of course we obviously allow parents to come in to drop off boarders on a Monday morning because of the amount of luggage and kit they have. Most of these parents are normally very good and as soon as they have dropped off they leave the premises again. With regard to the comments about a build up of traffic in Eastern Road, I and my staff have checked each morning on a normal school weekday and there has never been a noticeable build up of traffic caused by control of the main gate at the College. Any changes to the present system would compromise control and open the door for abuse of the system.

Question:

Second hand uniform

Following on from last term's discussion of this issue, might it be feasible to set up some sort of online forum in which parents could list details of any items they have available and give their contact details?

**Answer: Mark Beard**

**Yes.**

Question:

Chapel seating

There is sometimes confusion amongst visitors over where to sit at chapel services. Please could prefects be carefully briefed beforehand to greet and guide visitors to appropriate seating? And at the end of services people seem unclear which door to leave from. Also at last years' Remembrance Service a lot of people who would have liked the opportunity to mingle and have refreshments were unable to do so due to the queues and crowding in the PAC. Would it be possible to have such refreshments in the Great Hall? (And to ensure people are served quickly?)

**Answer: (Simon Smith, Second Master)**

**We reserve a number of spaces for OBs, especially former servicemen, at the Remembrance Service, but we shall endeavour to have a more professional chaperoning in the future at all services. The Great Hall as a venue shall be discussed.**

Question:

The Make A Difference day was a great idea in principle but there were a number of practical issues. Although students were asked to list what they would like to do the majority of their requests were ignored. Some students did not in fact do anything constructive and those that would normally visit the elderly on that day were told not to and in fact ended up doing nothing when they would have been better off carrying out their weekly visit. Maybe it was too ambitious trying to allocate every student on one day.

**Answer: Martin Lewis/Mark Beard**

**Only about 10% (about 70) of pupils, were not allocated to one of their three options of choice. An "age awareness" workshop had to be cancelled due to illness and three further boys were unable to join an Uplands School project because the Uplands teacher was ill. Some of those pupils were able to be re-directed to an area clean. No pupils who normally do Community Service and would have been available were "laid off". Only those involved with Theatre Royal that evening were unable to attend their community projects.**

All of the pupils who were not on full day activities off site attended Citizenship workshops in the morning. The first session centred around what it means to be a good citizen and the second on our preconceptions about people who live in areas such as Whitehawk. Both sessions were well received, an eye-opener for many pupils and certainly aroused much debate.

Overall, the vast majority of pupils enjoyed a hugely worthwhile day and we have been struck by the volume of positive feedback.

Question:

Many students are not allocated on the Open Mornings. Understandably no one can predict the number of families that are going to turn up but there are often students who have no one allocated to them and their morning is spent hovering, waiting around and it is very frustrating.

**Answer: John Weeks, Head of Middle School**

We have many parents just turn up on spec. We also have prospective parents who register and are allocated a guide and then do not show up. It is very unusual to have more than about 15 pupils not allocated, and it is rare that these are the same pupils after each open morning.

Question:

Having attended the recent options at 18 evening which was extremely informative some parents and students came away disillusioned. Although it is important to be realistic when making university choices students at Brighton College are usually told to aim high and in this presentation the feeling was to perhaps aim lower in order to get into a university. It was stated that seven or eight GCSE A stars would be required to even be considered for Durham or LSE which was a complete surprise. Maybe there should be more emphasis BEFORE the GCSE's are taken as to the minimum requirements at certain universities and that may also have an impact on how many GCSE's a student takes.

**Answer: Mark Beard**

Each year the U5th, before going on exam leave, meet with the head of sixth form in smallish groups to discuss sixth form life and gain a sense of the university applications process. At this time we do mention the need to gain specific sorts of grades for specific sorts of university courses. That said, the constant message to the year group has always been "do as well as you can and get as many A\*s as possible in order to give yourself as much choice when it comes to university application."

More precisely, it is the *proportion* of A\*s in an applicant's profile that universities take into account, not the total number of GCSEs taken. We have written assurance from universities that 9 GCSEs is plenty enough. More information of this sort was included in the Options at 16 booklet issued in September to the current U5th.

The point that Bob Hall was trying to make in his presentation at Options at 18 was that, with only 5 universities to apply to, the wise applicant includes a spread of universities with a spread of entry requirements – particularly as these requirements are often driven by popularity of the course or university rather than the quality of the course. The detailed and personalised advice that Brightonians receive in this area in recent years has meant that all leavers depart for top flight universities.

For L6th parents, more info will be available in the summer term and there is a UCAS evening for them on Mon 9<sup>th</sup> June too.

Question:

The men's toilets on the night of the Seldon at Home Evening and Oxbridge discussion evening were in a disgusting state.

**Answer:**

**The Cleaning Supervisor has been notified.**

Question:

When supporting after hours school functions the parking restrictions within the school seem to be enforced overenthusiastically. On recent occasions I was turned away at the entrance only to find, after I had finally parked the car and walked back into the school, that places were still vacant. When parents are trying to support the school the logic is not obvious.

**Answer: Mark Beard**

**There are a fixed and limited number of parking spaces available and when these are filled the gate is closed. Inevitably, some cars may then leave the campus at any point thereafter and the security team are as vigilant towards this as possible, re-opening the gate as appropriate. There are times, however, when this may not be able to be a priority for them, depending on what else is going on at the time.**

Question:

I have been trying to raise an issue with the Dance Academy regarding my daughter's progress in Modern and Jazz (Silver) for a period of over the 4-5 weeks. She had not done a dance exam for 2 years and had lost interest in attending classes. After two phone calls and two emails raising the issue and requesting a discussion, preferably at a meeting, I have received no response at all. Having asked during the last phone call with their Administration who I should contact for my query the response was inconclusive and still resulted in no call back. Could you please clarify lines of responsibility at the Dance Academy and how issues of concern should be raised so that a response is obtained and a dialogue opened?

**Answer: (Tamsin Dyke, Dance Director)**

**Vicky Allport, who is co-ordinating the dance school this academic year has confirmed that the parents should contact Joanne Moses (01273 704260) to arrange an appointment with Vicky to discuss the matter. She is not in school during the day but is happy to come in at 4.30 any week day by prior arrangement before ballet classes start.**