

28 May 2021

Dear parents and carers,

### **Feedback from Year 7, 8 and 9 Parent and Carers Forum**

It was my pleasure on Wednesday morning to host (virtually) the second of our parents and carers forum, this time for years 7, 8 and 9. As I mentioned in my last letter we will continue to offer the opportunity of forum meetings into next year.

As with our last forum, a number of the questions were specific to years 7-9. However, there were some more general questions, which we felt would be beneficial to be shared with the broader school community. The notes are arranged by the topics we covered.

**Catering** - we were joined by our catering provider, Accent, for this topic. Accent reassured parents and carers that healthy eating is at the forefront of everything they do. They have experienced some issues around the food they are able to offer due to the current restrictions but were working hard to overcome these challenges and always looking at alternative menu options. For example, it was no longer feasible to run the salad bar, but boxed salads were available. Unfortunately, food choices have been compromised, as food has to be served in boxes, but they are constantly reviewing their options. There had been some issues with certain options running out at Sevenoaks, however this has been rectified by reviewing the menu and there is still a vast amount of choice available. Accent were confident that this will be fully resolved after half term.

Some parents reported that they have experienced issues making contact with the catering team to discuss their concerns and Mr Oliveira said that he would be happy for parents to contact him directly by email at [DiegoOliveira@accentcatering.co.uk](mailto:DiegoOliveira@accentcatering.co.uk) and he will do his best to help and would welcome any comments or suggestions.

**General Covid matters** – students do not currently have access to their lockers due to the current restrictions in place to stay within their bubbles. To access lockers, many students would need to cross bubbles. Any changes to this are dependent on the Government briefing in June, but we are hoping it will be feasible for them to be back in use in September, if not before. Students are encouraged to only bring in what they need for that day. If they have any books that are particularly heavy then they can speak to their form tutor to find a temporary home for them. The vast majority of students are in the same room, so the amount of time carrying bags around is minimised. The use of the science labs for the KS4/6 bubbles only has been necessary to enable GCSE and A level student to complete work in labs for their courses. Ideally, we would like to see all students back in the science labs, but what we have done is to protect bubbles, and this in turn has resulted in fewer Covid cases than other schools. Year 11 and 13 finish this week and once any additional work in relation to their portfolios has been completed, then the Science department will look at when KS3 can get back in the labs.

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Students are currently sitting at the same desk to minimise contact. Normally they have a different seating plan in each class. How they are seated is not reflective on behaviour, but in relation to a student's need, teachers are responsible to ensure students are getting the best possible opportunities. Any you have any issues regarding this, please email your child's form tutor who can liaise with their teachers on that.

**Heavy bags** – students have extra books for supervised study and some have reported being unclear which subject was on a particular session, so were carrying in all three books. Mrs Bone confirmed she would speak with the relevant team to ensure this information is shared with all students.

**Consultation evening** – lengthy discussions were had at the Year 10 and 12 forum and shared with parents in the last communication. Parents have been offered the opportunity to contact their child's teachers and were again encouraged to send in any questions. Mrs Bone is looking to address this and hoping to share information with the community this week around parents and carers coming into school (dependent on restrictions being lifted). The school is also looking at the way it operates consultation evenings and a survey will be sent later this week. The advantages of an online system mitigates the difficulty teachers have when they teach at both campuses and being able to speak to everyone. We will be asking for your opinions. We have identified an organisation we would like to use if we did move to online consultations. It is our intention that consultations will resume in a more traditional form from September, however we will await the outcome of the survey. We reassured parents and carers that if teachers have any concerns about your child, they will always contact you. Meetings have been arranged where concerns have been raised. Form tutor reports at the end of the year are all about writing a longer piece about interactions with your child and will provide you with that more personal information about your child.

We are looking at consultation evenings for September and will prioritise Years 8, 11 and 13 in the first few weeks. We are also aware that some parents and carers have never visited the school and as mentioned above, are looking at plans to allow parents and carers to come in and meet with form tutors.

**Communications about year-end tests** – there was a knock-on effect on the timing of year end tests due to being tied by regulations and awaiting final arrangements from JCQ around the Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs). The amount of work going on outside of this is astonishing and our staff have worked extremely hard. It has not been possible to run both sets of tests at the same time due to waiting on dates on exam classes and building in time for staff to mark the assessments. Whilst we appreciate it was not as early as we would have liked, we are doing our best to ensure all students get the experience in the end.

Staff are preparing students for the assessments in lessons. There is no expectation for students to be revising over half term, although we are aware many will wish to. We are looking at how much they have picked up on what they have learnt this year and to see genuinely where they are. We are continuing to look at how percentages work when reporting back to you, all subjects mark in different ways. Percentages are set based on expectation and performance of a student in that subject. They are measured against outcome at GCSE of students of a similar profile. We expect to be predicting grade 6-8 across board. We do not publish individualised target grades at KS3 as it is important for them to make their decisions on GSCE choices based on what they find interesting and challenging. This is just a progress measure to see if they are where they should be. Our average progress score is 1.0.

**Wellbeing** – this is very important to us as a school and is something we have significantly invested in. PSHCE is designed to support the students. The school has increased its school counsellor team to four, in addition to appointing two nurses, who are not only there to support physical but also emotional health. The pastoral team are working with form tutors to look at the PSHCE programme for next year. Form tutors work closely with students and get to know them exceptionally well. We are working to support students so that they are able to identify normal emotion and when they need

extra support. We are very excited about our new Director of Inclusion, a specialist in SEN and supporting students, who will be starting in September.

**PE kit/uniform** – the general consensus was that allowing students to wear their PE to school was a positive move, as it meant they were having an hour-long lesson, as opposed to 40 minutes before, plus minimised the amount of lost uniform. Opinions on this will also be included in the survey to parents and carers. Informal feedback from students was that they want to keep it. Students are currently allowed to wear trainers to school and we will be asking if this is something you want to see continue. If agreed it would be plain black trainers. School uniform was not a priority this year, as the focus was on getting students back in classrooms and learning, feeling happy and safe. We do have standards but did make the decision not to focus particularly heavy this year on uniform.

**Supervised learning** – this is timetabled for this year only. How it is delivered is planned and prepared by the department the subject is based on. It is being delivered by teachers who are timetabled for that group. It looks at gaps in learning and specific topics and areas and knowledge rather than skills. It is necessary this year but will not be part of the long-term plan.

**Curriculum** - from September, Years 7-11 will have four hours of PE a fortnight. Dance is included in the PE curriculum.

Following a question regarding the Maths curriculum and whether it had been followed over the past few months or was it a case of filling gaps, students are moving forward with the planned curriculum. You will see a repetition in some of the work as the curriculum is designed to circle and pick up familiar topics but each time bring in more knowledge and information. The school works closely with individuals where extra support is needed in both English and Maths. It identifies and offers support where needed. Extended learning is identified by our staff and their student's individual needs.

**Class changes/streaming** – students in Years 7 to 9 are taught in class groups, with the exception of students going into Year 9 taking up an additional language. Changes take place when they go into KS4. We do not set or stream at Weald as we do not believe in capping possibility. Mixed ability teaching, where there's a narrow band of ability, supports everyone better.

**Clubs** – we are working closely with all departments to see what clubs we can offer within bubbles and opportunities will increase and this will be communicated to you. The trampolines are being looked at and the Science department are looking at what they can offer. An advert has gone out for someone in school to be head of extra-curricular activities and we will invest in that to focus on offering a range of opportunities across the board. This was also an issue high on the trustee's agenda.

**Achievement points** – the awarding of achievement points is tracked to ensure a consistent approach across school. There are a multitude of instances for students to achieve those. Eco Club are launching eco points, and students can be rewarded for a number of different reasons, not only for answering questions and speaking up in class.

**Student council** – this has continued to run. Form reps feed into the year group reps, who in turn feed into the sixth form school council team. Feedback from these meetings is astonishing and how our students articulate is marvellous. They have covered a number of topics including eco issues and uniform. Meetings have been taking place via Teams but they would normally meet in person.

**PTA** – the PTA was disbanded with a view to launch Friends of Weald. Unfortunately, Covid put pay to the planned launch, which was put on hold as we want people to come in and get involved. We are looking to relaunch in September and are very excited about this. There will be a member of staff taking a lead on this.

**Staff turnover** – due to a maternity in the MFL department, temporary agency staff were being used. Unfortunately, not all had been what we wanted or been able to stay. We are looking forward to that member of staff returning. We had to prioritise another member of the department to work with our exam groups but do want to stress that your children are not less important, we had to take the decision based on that priority. This has also been the case in Art.

**Sevenoaks** – Mrs Bone is Headteacher at both sites and splits her time between both. We also have an amazing team of senior leaders who work at both, in addition to an Assistant Head whose office is at Sevenoaks. Following a question around behaviour management, this is generally dealt with by form teachers and heads of year. Behaviour is dealt with in a consistent manner regardless of campus.

Building work continues at Sevenoaks. In addition to this, improvements have been made at Tonbridge with windows recently being replaced. We are committed to ensuring opportunities for students are equal between the two campuses. There is not currently a sixth form at Sevenoaks, but when we do have one they will have a study area and common room, the facilities offered between the two will be the same. TWGSB annex will open at the Sevenoaks site in September. Sports facilities will be shared with us and our PE department and TWGSB are working closely together. New outdoor sports facilities are coming in January next year and again we are working closely with TWGSB, Trinity and KCC. Each school will have its own multi use games area (MUGA), and the field behind is being developed for sports and will be shared between the three schools. Facilities available at break and lunch times.

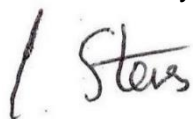
**Help Year 7 to develop social skills, friendships, development** – heads of year are looking at this and we now have learning mentors in our student services team to support this. We are very aware of the need to support them, but this needs to be done in person. Our students are lovely kind caring individuals and we regularly see them regularly other students and delivering last year 7s to their classrooms!

**Use of phones/kindles** – our policy is that we do not allow devices that connect to the internet. We are aware that because students have their bags with them, that phones have been sneaked in. Phones are confiscated and always given back at end of day. Next year we will be going back to lockers, so students will only need carry with them equipment for next lesson. This will reduce the opportunity to carry their phone. We do not currently allow Kindle devices; however, we will speak to our librarian to find out a little more about these devices. We will update you on this.

We consistently receive lovely messages of thanks to staff, which share and makes it worthwhile, so thank you very much.

I would like to thank all those who attended and sent in questions. As a trustee of the school having this regular link with the parent and carer body is really important, and something the trustee board value. If you have any questions or queries in relation to the notes from this meeting, please contact [school@wealdqs.org](mailto:school@wealdqs.org).

Yours sincerely,



**Ms L Stevens**  
Co Vice-Chair of Trustees