

Ipswich Academy Council Meeting

9 May 2023 at 5:30pm

Attendees

Mr Fox – Interim Principal

Louise Leah – Academy Council Member - Minutes

Julie Trout – Academy Council Member

3 parents in person

2 parents online

Introductions

Previous Academy Council meetings have been held during the afternoon. Following feedback from a number of parents that this was not a suitable time, and to try to increase the number of parents attending, this meeting was arranged at 5:30pm. This still didn't attract a big turnout but it was agreed that the next meeting would also be at this time to continue to trial this.

Catering/Canteens

Mr Fox explained that the canteens have been split into year groups. Hot food is available to all children. Years 7, 8 and 9 use the red and blue canteens (approximately 700 students). Years 10 and 11 use the grey canteen (approximately 400 students). Some students will purchase the 'grab and go' options and sit elsewhere on school grounds to eat. Dr Fox reported that this separation of year groups is working much better, with a reduction in waiting times and an increase in the amount of children eating outside.

There have been reports of inadequate portion sizes. Mr Fox has spoken to staff about increasing the amount of food available and asked them to reduce the cost if a smaller meal is offered. One parent mentioned that if their card wasn't working, the child is told to put food back and they go hungry. Mr Fox clarified that students should be told that they can go to the back of the queue and can then still access food when the majority of students have been served. No child should go hungry due to issues with their cards not working or insufficient funds. There has been a change in supplier this year and the quality has improved.

Mr Fox advised that the school is looking to move away from Squid and use Bromcom or a fingerprint system in the future. He also advised that if there is a balance on a child's squid card at the end of their school life at Ipswich Academy, Squid will charge £5 to get your balance back, so he advised that



parents ensure money is spent on meals and leaves a zero balance at the end of year 11. One parent has reported being double charged – Mr Fox asked that parents report examples of this to him and he will investigate, as he has done for others.

Strike

Mr Fox reported that there was a consistent number of teachers striking on each occasion – approximately 20 teachers each time, so the school is not able to open to all year groups when these are on strike. Teachers have rejected a 4.3% pay increase and £1,000 bonus. Parents may not be aware that this increase would be expected to come from individual school budgets which would take money from resources/upkeep of building etc, so teachers have rejected this. Mr Fox advised that there could potentially be more strikes in the future.

A parent thanked the school for remaining open for Year 11's and for the online work that was available.

Science lessons

Mr Fox advised that the Science teacher left mid term and this has been difficult to recruit to. The post has now been recruited to and lessons have been rejigged so that all students can access science lessons. Also, when Year 11 students leave, there will be some more teaching time available so another rejig may happen.

Parents Evening

Louise gave an overview of the feedback from parents following the recent face to face parents evening. Parents liked face to face format (after previously doing this online). The feedback was very positive – the booking system worked well, parents had a 5 minute slot with each teacher but didn't feel rushed, conversations were kept to time, and it was great to see children's work and test scores.

It was felt that it would be helpful to hold future parents' evenings in a bigger hall, so that conversations were not overheard by other parents, and also large signs to show where each department was based.

One parent commented that the year 7 parents evening is held very early in the school year – Mr Fox said this was done to communicate with parents about how they are settling in. Feedback from the year 11 parents evening was that teachers took their time and explained their progress well. Mr Fox wants teachers to praise effort as much as attainment.

In year 10, there will be 2 parents evenings to ensure that parents are up to date as the students go into exams.



Uniform

Uniform was discussed and a few things clarified:

- As parents are aware, blazers are no longer compulsory and are optional, the price of blazers have been reduced in the PMG shop in town.
- Children can wear a school sweatshirt with a school badge or plain black sweatshirt.
- White shirt and a tie.
- School trousers must not be not tight fitting nor leggings.
- Plain black shoes. Trainers are acceptable as long as they are completely black.
- Hair colour needs to be natural.

A parent reported that their child had been disciplined for having long shoelaces – Mr Fox asked for these issues to be discussed with him.

In light of the cost of living crisis, parents are grateful that uniforms are cheaper and flexible.

Reports

Mr Fox explained that more detailed reports of students' progress will be coming home to parents.

Lockdown procedure

There was a recent situation where the school had to go into lockdown and children were not allowed to leave the premises. Despite many rumours, Mr Fox clarified what had happened. At 3:09pm, the school received an email about a threat to people in the building. The school followed their school lockdown procedure calmly, which has previously been practised. Police were informed and confirmed that it was a hoax. Parents were concerned that they didn't know what was happening at the time. When it was safe to do so, Mr Fox sent out information to parents about what had happened.

Knife crime is still a concern for parents. Mr Fox did invite Paul Standsby, the campaigner who found knives near to the school, to come in to discuss the issues, but Paul declined.

There was a recent fight on Clapgate Lane, involving many students from Ipswich Academy. Any incident that occurs off school premises will need to involve police as it is out of the jurisdiction of the school, however, the school will work with the police, students and parents to ensure incidents are dealt with. Particularly, if students are involved in a serious incident at the weekend, parents are encouraged to call the police and not wait to discuss with school on Monday.



There have been some incidents of students 'cherry knocking' on doors on the way home from school. Police have advised residents to consider getting a Ring doorbell and report incidents to 999. The more incidents that are reported, the more that can be done.

The police have conducted some assemblies with students and will be attending more in the future.

Parents reported that it is difficult to get a call back from staff. Mr Fox would encourage parents to keep trying, as recent staffing issues have affected the availability of staff.

Any other business

It was questioned whether the level of violence is rising or is it the rumours of violence that is escalating? It was felt to be a bit of both. In the last 2-3 weeks, there has been an increase in incidents of fights at break times/lunchtimes. Mr Fox reported that some of these arguments are over minor things which can be resolved calmly, but with others egging them on, the incident escalates into a fight. There was an assembly at the end of the day today. One of the options being considered, is to split up year groups at lunchtimes/break times, though Mr Fox doesn't want to punish the majority but may have to as there is currently a bit of a 'herd mentality'.

Staff are now wearing Hi-Vis jackets at break times/lunchtimes and at the end of the school day, to increase their visibility so students can locate a member of staff quickly if needed.

