

Ipswich Academy Council Meeting

17 April 2023 at 5:30pm

Attendees

Principle - Samuel Fox

Principle - Abbie Thorrington - online

Louise Leah – Academy Council Member – Minute Taker

Claire Cooper – Academy Council Member

Julie Cann – Academy Council Member

8 parents/carers in person

11 parents/carers online

AGENDA

1. Introduction and Apologies

Mr Fox welcomed parents/carers to the meeting. He encouraged parents/carers to raise any issues relating to their individual child, directly with himself or Ms Thorrington. The purpose of these meetings is to raise general issues.

2. School Day Timings from September

Mr Fox outlined a proposed change to school day timings. He explained the purpose for this suggestion. This would allow the school to offer children 4 options instead of 3. There is also a need to increase the amount of IT lessons and reading plus lessons offered to each year group. This change will enable children to access 32.5 hours of education a week.

Parents/carers have several concerns:

- The school day finishing at 4pm on Wednesdays would mean that children would be walking home in the dark for some weeks in winter.
- The earlier start of 8:40am each day may be difficult
- There is quite a long time between the day starting (8:40am) and lunch break (1:20pm)

Parents/carers could also see the benefits:

- By ending the school day at 3pm on most days, children doing after school clubs would finish earlier
- The offer of 4 options is good (better for pupils who need a certain number of GCSE's to get into a course etc)
- There would only be 1 lesson after lunch which is manageable when they are getting tired.

There will be a consultation process with parents/carers and pupils. Ipswich Academy Staff and the Paradigm Trust have already been consulted and are happy with this proposed change.

3. Homework

This is set online for some subjects but is not consistent. Parents/carers commented that pupils do not get feedback on their homework and this is demoralising for them. Mr Fox will be asking pupils for their views on homework in the coming weeks. There have been problems with Sparx homework. Parents/carers also felt that if all homework is online, this is difficult to do on a small screen if pupils only have access to a mobile phone device at home.

There is concern about the lack of homework, particularly in Science and English. Mr Fox replied that this was largely due to the high volume of supply teachers that the school currently has. It was felt that pupils need sufficient time to complete homework so they can enjoy family time/leisure time etc. Mr Fox said that homework should mostly have a 2-week deadline.

Parents/carers commented that teachers are not signing the planners so parents/carers have stopped as they see no value in continuing.

Mr Fox informed the meeting that the school is developing a new website which should be going live in August.

4. Uniform

Mr Fox thanked parents for their support in following the uniform policy. The school has been clamping down on leggings as these are not part of the uniform policy as they can be thin and see-through and revealing. The school has been supporting parents by buying uniforms to give out. Parents have put comments in planners, advising when they would be able to purchase new uniforms and this communication is very helpful. This problem has greatly reduced in recent weeks.

Mr Fox is aware that year 11 pupils only have a few weeks remaining so wouldn't want parents/carers of year 11 pupils to be buying any new uniform at this stage. Pupils can try to make do with what they have and parents can write a comment in the planner.

5. Staffing

Mr Fox thanked parents/carers for their patience while the school had a difficult time with staffing levels and had a high level of supply teachers. He advised that the school often had 7 to 8 supply teachers a day, alongside the schools own cover teachers. He has recently appointed a new Head of English and Deputy Head of English. The school has also been recruiting for a Science teacher post. There were 2 long term absences in this department.

He has struggled to recruit teachers to the French teacher positions, despite advertising 4 times. This is a national problem.

It has also taken time to recruit in the Maths department.

Miss Mills will be coming back from maternity leave soon, in her role as Assistant Principal.

He expects the school to be fully staffed by September.

Parents/carers asked why so many teachers had left. Mr Fox responded that there has been a mixture of promotions and teachers getting positions closer to their homes.

Parents/carers have commented on the Facebook page that:

- Supply teachers have been redoing old lessons instead of teaching new lessons.
- Supply Teachers are not awarding house points, double house points should be awarded on Fridays.
- A Supply Teacher was teaching Maths in the Science lesson.
- There were occasions where pupils had a whole day of Supply Teachers.

Mr Fox sympathised and said he was doing everything to recruit suitable staff, including:

- Considering Apprenticeships/Internships
- Considering changing from French to Spanish but these are also difficult to recruit to.
- Considering overseas recruitment but found it difficult to make a suitable judgement when you can't interview in person/see them teaching etc.
- When there has been good supply teachers from an agency, he has sought to recruit them, and this costs the school a 'finders fee' to the agency.

The problem is easing and the school currently has 2 supply teachers working in school.

6. Behaviour and Sanctions

Mr Fox explained that behaviour points are given for positive behaviour and points are taken away for negative behaviour. A parent was concerned that the negative points would prevent the child from gaining end of term rewards but Mr Fox clarified that the overall balance of points is used for this.

There were instances where consequences are given too quickly for minor things. Mr Fox said staff should be working to the 'Circulate – Check – React' way of working and are told to give pupils a warning, followed by time and support to correct their behaviour, before giving consequences. He encouraged parents/carers to let him know if this isn't happening.

Some pupils had reported to parents that they didn't feel recognised for their positives.

One parent commented that their child didn't receive any detentions in their 5 years there but received no recognition. Yet another student who was rarely there, was rewarded for improving their attendance. Mr Fox said he is trying to change the culture of the school so this doesn't happen.

A parent commented that their child was told they had a detention, so they went to do it. But when they arrived, they were told their name wasn't on the list so they went home. The next day, they are told they didn't attend and now had double detention. Mr Fox asked parents/carers to let him know if this happens.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A parent/carer asked if the syllabus was available for parents to see. Mr Fox said this will be available on the new website which will have a section for each year group.

Mr Fox thanked parents/carers for coming and said that he is available for parents to discuss individual issues their children are experiencing.

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