

Ipswich Academy Council Meeting

13 December 2023 at 5:30pm

Attendees

Principal - Abbie Thorrington

Principal - Samuel Fox

Louise Leah – Academy Council Member – Minute Taker

Claire Cooper – Academy Council Member

Julie Cann – Academy Council Member

Kevin – Academy Council Member

5 parents in person

1 parent online

AGENDA

Introduction and Apologies

The meeting was held at this time to make it more accessible for parents to attend, who were asked to vote on a preferred time. Five parents joined in person. Unfortunately, there were some issues with the online link, which were eventually resolved and one parent was able to join online.

Welcome back Abbie

The school has welcomed Abbie Thorrington back from Maternity Leave. Mr Fox and Ms Thorrington will be Co-Principals. Mr Fox was Assistant Principal previously, alongside Ms Thorrington as Principal, so they are used to working together. There are lots of benefits to this and Paradigm Trust has been supportive of this model. The working pattern is:

Ms Thorrington – working Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays (off on Thursdays)

Mr Fox – Not working every other Friday.

Homework

Feedback from parents was that Sparx has been really good for maths homework. It is adaptable to students' learning and gets harder or easier to respond to students' previous answers.

The school giving negative behaviour points when homework is not completed; one parent felt that isn't effective as students won't fear this but previously they would fear detention for non-completion.

Green sheets are given out in lessons for students to stick in their books. This has a list of students who are being praised. Though a parent commented that her child hasn't been on these which is disheartening when they have tried their best.

Planners – parents reported that they are signing these each week but there isn't anything to see in the planners – Mr Fox said this will be used more from January and students will be writing in it more.

A parent had put in the planner that their child's tie was stolen and the teacher saw the note and resolved this.

As part of the new reward scheme:

- Some children have been given vouchers to jump the lunch queue (but some children are packed lunch).
- Some children have been invited to a Cinema event at school tomorrow as a reward in French. They will be watching a French film and having pizza.
- One parent reported that their child was in the top 10% of their year and was rewarded and this was a real boost to his confidence.

Overall, parents are seeing positive behaviour being rewarded and are pleased with this.

Squid Pay/MCAS app

The school is moving away from Squidpay, and everything will be on My Child At School app. Parents are advised to use up the money on Squidpay by Wednesday 20 December as there will be a charge of £5 to withdraw any left over money. Parents are encouraged to download My Child At School (MCAS) app, which will be used for lunch money, payment for trips, behaviour, attendance, reports etc.

Communication Expectations

Parents have had difficulty getting responses when they have raised issues with the school. Mr Fox explained that staff may not be able to get back to parents immediately as they are dealing with issues in school but will get back to parents in due course. All the emails that go through reception are accessible to Ms Thorrington and Mr Fox.

Mr Fox explained that the most efficient way to get a response is to email reception at Info@Ipswichacademy.org.uk so that emails are directed to the most appropriate person. Parents are welcome to email Mr Fox, but he may not have all the information needed to deal with it, someone else may be more appropriate and he may not see emails till late at night. He will then deal with them or forward them on to the most appropriate person, but this causes a delay.

He encouraged parents to chase up any outstanding queries if they haven't had a response.

Uniform

The PE uniform will be reviewed soon. Mr Fox advised that parents may wish to hold off purchasing the logo PE tops as there may be some changes to this.

The school does have some IA badges available if people want them to add to plain black jumpers.

Parents reported seeing lots of girls in tight leggings (some of which are see through) – Mr Fox will be addressing this as they are not part of the accepted uniform policy.

The school would welcome donations of uniforms, which can be passed on to parents who may be struggling financially.

Hair and make up – Mr Fox clarified that only natural hair colour is allowed. The issue of the excessive wearing of makeup will be addressed in the future. There was some discussion about some discretion for the gentle use of makeup to cover serious acne and the extremes of eyelashes, thick make up etc. For Health and Safety reasons, false fingernails are not allowed (for example, could be ripped off by a ball in PE). Hopefully parents will be on board and supportive when these issues are addressed.

First Aid and Illness arrangements

Mr Fox explained that the school has a Defibrillator in reception. It is a requirement for all schools to have one. There are 16 First Aid trained staff across the school, who are all trained to use it. First Aid Training is kept up to date. There is a suitable supply of first aid kits across school and there is an annual audit of these to ensure all items are in date.

Mr Fox explained that if a child feels unwell, they should alert the teacher. If needed, they will alert the first aider/parents etc. The child will be encouraged to remain in school and a parent can choose to bring in paracetamol etc to assist with this. If the child is not well enough to stay in class, they are brought to reception or allowed home. Students have been contacting parents saying they are unwell, who then turn up to collect the child but the teacher has not been made aware of the issue. In the first instance, students should alert their class teacher.

A parent asked if a child can be given tablets to take to school (i.e. paracetamol for period pain). Mr Fox clarified that students can bring in medication and can self administer. The school has checked the legalities of this, and this is ok. Children should be advised not to share medication with others, tablets should be kept in their original blister pack and only a small quantity given (i.e for that day)

In response to a question from a parent, Mr Fox explained that if a child has a care plan or medical records with specific instructions (i.e. if the child complains of tummy ache, they should be allowed home as this is a chronic issue), the class teacher can access their records via My Child At School from the classroom and will act accordingly.

Supply Teachers

Mr Fox explained that there has been a high number of staff absences so this has resulted in more supply teachers being used. A lot of these will not be continuing after January as contracts come to an end/staff return to work. Mr Fox is aware of the Issues, and these are being addressed. He has a list of Supply Teachers that he will not allow back to work at the school. Please continue to raise issues with him.

He currently has adverts out for permanent qualified teachers who will be employed to cover lessons, rather than relying on agency staff. This will also reduce the spending on supply teachers.

A parent reported that some children behave negatively when they have Supply Teachers and these teachers are not consistent with sanctions. There is a member of staff that does go round and check on those lessons that have supply cover. Please continue to raise issues with Mr Fox.

Behaviour and Sanctions

The school has sent a letter to parents recently about improving lateness and sanctions for poor behaviour. If a detention is given during morning lessons, the child will have a detention at lunchtime. If they miss this, they will be given a 40 minute detention after school. If this is missed, they will be kept at school until 5pm on Friday. This is working as a deterrent. Some parents have raised concerns about their child walking home in the dark and in these situations, school staff will work with parents to identify a suitable time for the detention to be served. The MCAS app should alert parents of a detention, but parents reported that they don't always get notified. The child can message parents to tell them or ask Reception staff to do this.

Parents had reported that the Hub was not working as a punishment as it was too relaxed and students were just sitting about. The Hub is now manned by staff from the Senior Leadership Team every day so this should improve the use of this as a punishment.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Exam Invigilators – if any parents would like to invigilate exams, please contact Mr Fox.

After school clubs – Parents reported that they have not had information about after school clubs recently. Mr Fox will look into this.