



FELSTED PARENTS' GROUP MINUTES

7.00-9.00PM, MONDAY 13th JANUARY 2020

COMMON ROOM DINING ROOM

(Please note the meeting takes place over dinner)

1. Attendance

There were 36 in attendance, including CJ Townsend, GWS Masters and NIJ Little, representing all 10 of the houses

2. Minutes from previous meeting

The minutes from the previous meeting are available on the Felsted website (<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1572259044/felstedorg/irbpiaxoam92uyf6hpmx/Felsted-Parents-Group-Minutes-071019.pdf>). Various actions were reported as follows -

- i) The sports code has now been published and is alongside pitches.
- ii) Revision over Easter - Plans for staffed venue in school to be signed up for, details to follow.
- iii) Food being too rich - Passed onto catering.
- iv) Unifrog lack of clarity - Has been communicated to 6th form parents.
- v) Medical cover on match days - Will be Doctor and Physio for Rugby and for all other fixtures there will be first aid trained staff, and fully staffed medical centre onsite.
- vi) Sports kit prep to be in line with senior - Now with prep school to decide.
- vii) Local MP to visit night shelter at Felsted Mission - HM waiting for election to be over and will now contact him.
- viii) Long haul trips and impact on the environment - Will be looking into this further and try to offset the environmental impact by planting trees and engaging in local projects. Acknowledgement that there would never be a zero carbon footprint but we needed to show that we care.
- ix) Looking at scholarships and bursaries - Consideration around the possibility of focusing more on means testing rather than on talent. There is a paper going to the Governors on this and it will receive feedback soon.
- x) Follow up to talk by Luke Roberts on internet use - this is covered in PHSE.

3. Items from house meetings

Due to the full agenda, it was agreed that items from house meetings would be followed up through the houses on this occasion

4. Three key areas of focus this term and how parents can support these

- High standards of behaviour and setting these standards
- An ethos of aspiration and a strong work ethic
- Getting everyone to engage with opportunity in the school

This was a wide ranging discussion, but started with an outline of the school's approach in identifying the 10 characteristics of good behaviour (Respectfulness, Adventure, Integrity, Sense of Justice, Fun, Honesty, Generosity, Humility, Welcoming, Aspiration), the process for delivery, and the request for parents to talk to their children about these ideas. A parent highlighted the importance of **recognising and rewarding** those doing the right thing. The process will take place over 4 weeks (initially) with a review at the end of the four weeks, and will include Assemblies, Tutorials, use of Prefects and use of Newsletter. It was agreed that we (the Felsted community) needed to be able to get behind a set of core values, but also that we needed to explain and educate about the benefits of these values, not take them for granted.

A parent asked the question 'what are we doing differently?'. A key question - this is about being explicit in expectations, recognition of success, and tackling shortcomings at an early stage. The engagement between pupils, school and parents was seen as crucial in helping this to move forward effectively.

A suggestion was made of an **anonymous email address** for raising concerns/whistle blowing, as pupils do find it difficult to confront issues themselves.

The discussion continued to look at work ethic, where the school is looking at a drive across the year groups, using senior pupils to express what makes them successful with their work (and what mistakes they made), as well as again outlining the qualities of a good worker. One parent raised the concern over students **working too intensely** and creating added pressure, which is something for teachers to be aware of, while another pointed out that there can be **language stigmatising those who work**.

In looking at Engagement, the key was that the school needs to clarify the benefits of participation, track what students are doing, and intervene where there is a shortfall. It was felt that there wasn't always consistency across the houses in what is expected of individuals. This will be a key focus for the school in the second half of this term, and we will be looking at ways to make the **Diploma** a better tool for tracking and recognising student engagement.

The general view of the discussion was very supportive, and parents found it helpful to clarify some of the core expectations of the school, and to understand how the school was seeking to improve these areas.

Action - return to this topic at next meeting, with feedback from parents, and update from school

5. Challenges facing young people into the 2020s - and what we can do to help them to face up to these

- Fear of uncertain future
- Social problems
- Digital technology

There was a good discussion about how much students were genuinely affected by these concerns, and whether some of them (digital and social issues) were more to do with parents.

One parent suggested running some **drop in sessions** where children could share concerns for their futures (climate change, exams, fears for work or going to uni, war etc). Another parent made the point that the world has resolved many past catastrophes, and that it can be tempting to be too fatalistic, when actually there is a lot of hope and positivity in the world.

There was general agreement that this topic was one to talk to young people about, but in as positive a way as possible. The school should continue to work on **teaching skills for future benefit** - life skills, budgeting, finance, loans, preparation for university. It was seen as important that this information was also shared with parents who could reinforce and support any messages.

Action - school to audit 'skills for future benefit' and report back to committee, and to investigate drop in sessions

6. What kind of school will Felsted be in 2030?

- The role of boarding in the school in the 2020s and beyond
- Developing the site
- Adapting the curriculum
- Exploring wider opportunities

Mr Masters spoke about the importance of the boarding ethos at Felsted, as core to the aim to develop character in all students. This was not about everybody boarding, but using the full day and the full week to enable qualities like independence, autonomy and personal responsibility, as well as learning from mistakes, self reflection, and inclusivity, among others, to be nurtured. A global outlook, and building resilience are crucial.

In the plans for the site, the new Marshall Teaching and Learning development will begin shortly, and should be open for September 2021. There are plans alongside this to develop 6th form teaching spaces, and following that, to increase the sixth form, by adding an additional boarding house (focused on 6th form students), as well as updating of Ffrome Court at FPS.

The curriculum will continue to be academically focused, but with a flexible approach, particularly in the 6th form. T Levels will be launched shortly, but we are not likely to adopt these at Felsted, instead looking for some more accessible A Level options.

The school is also keen to look at its options for bringing in further income, including looking at a foreign campus Felsted, to support the work being done with the Summer School.

Action - these details will be available in the school's strategy for 2030, which will be available later in this year

7. Partnership work update

A brief update was given, outlining the importance of the school engaging in partnership work, even after the outcome of the recent election took away some of

the immediate pressures. The school is looking at creating sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships, both through departments, and through whole school, but there is still work to be done in this area.

Action - updates will be given to the parents group, and more widely, once details are a bit clearer

8. Speech Day 2020

Mr Masters reported that there are plans to change the way in which Speech Day is done, so that houses are more together. This would change the catering arrangements, but would help with greater integration of the school on this important day. Those present were positive about the changes, and we will be going ahead with this different format this year, to see how it goes!

9. The role of the parents group - how can we make it most effective?

- Representation
- Selecting items for discussion
- Communication

It was felt that the group would be more representative with more men, and some representation from international students' parents (although it was recognised that this was not easy to achieve).

The format of this meeting, with the school putting forward items of strategic importance (mostly) worked well. The view was that a range of approaches across the year would keep the meetings relevant and varied.

There is much difference across the group as to how they communicate. Some attend the house meeting, and the school meeting, but nothing more. Some gather information from other parents beforehand. Some share outcomes from the meeting. The question was asked as to **what does the school want?**

Action - the school can consider options, and communicate to the group, so that there is clarity over expectations

10. AOB

There was no other business raised.

11. Date of Next Meeting

- Monday 11th May 2020, CRDR

CJT

21.01.20