

THE BARLOW RC HIGH SCHOOL PARENT FORUM

16th January 2012

Staff: Mr R Cormack (Deputy Head Teacher) & Miss K Carr (Marketing & Communications Manager)

Minutes

1. **Introduction to Parent Forum** – Mr Cormack opened the meeting and explained his role within the Parents' Forum, following Mrs Steele's retirement. He explained the format of the Forum and how it is an important way for the school to hear and take on board parents' views, opinions and suggestions and to respond to their comments and queries. Mr Cormack explained that Ofsted and our Governors are keen to see how we involve parents and how he is keen to advance this involvement.

2. **Barlow Life** – Mr Cormack explained the format and reasoning behind the introduction of Barlow Life. He distributed a list of activities available as part of the extra-curricular programme.
 - a. ***A Year 8 parent stated that whilst her daughter loves the activities, she gets a lot of pressure from her peers about staying in school when it is not compulsory for her to do so.*** The general feeling amongst parents was that the programme should be compulsory for Year 8s as well as Year 7s. They felt that many would enjoy and benefit from the activities but at the moment are being lured away from school by their friends. Mr Cormack explained how participation for more pupils in Barlow Life may currently be restricted as it relies on funding and outside agencies to provide the activities. The school is aware of this concern and is reviewing the provision.

 - b. ***Parents stated that they are worried about where children are going when they are given this early finish,*** mentioning that there is not always someone available at home, to care for them or provide supervision. The school is aware of this concern and is reviewing the provision

 - c. ***Parent stated that the early finish may be letting the image of the school down.*** The parent recognised that overall, the school's image is improving throughout the community but suggested that the early finish on Wednesdays may be detrimental to this, as the pupils are seen to be 'hanging around'. Mr Cormack raised the point that there may be misconceptions in the community as people may be unaware of how the school timetable works and how Wednesday afternoons are used effectively by teaching staff.

 - d. ***Mr Cormack explained how attendance is up on Wednesdays*** demonstrating the popularity of the Barlow Life programme. He stated how Barlow Life offers positive experiences; including the enrichment opportunities for Year 7s and leadership opportunities for pupils from other years who help to run activities. Feedback from pupils has also been positive.

- e. ***Year 10 parent stated that Wednesday afternoons had been fantastic for her daughter*** who has been able to go to the gym every week as part of her PE GCSE. She felt this was valuable. She suggested more revision and booster classes for Year 10s on Wednesday afternoons so they are more spread out over Year 10 and Year 11 and pupils can access sessions in more subjects.

ACTIONS – The Barlow Life programme will be reviewed as part of an on-going process. Mr Cormack will feed back the opinions received to the Leadership Team. He will look at investigating the possibility of extending the Barlow Life programme to include Year 8s as part of a compulsory timetable by monitoring potential funding and the voluntary assistance available. Mr Cormack also stated that the safety of children whose school day ends at 12.45pm on Wednesday would be reviewed. The availability and use of teaching staff on Wednesday afternoons to provide activities and booster sessions is a further consideration. The marketing of The Barlow Life programme is to be reviewed so that parents and the wider community are aware of ALL its benefits.

3. **Timetable** - A discussion about the current timetable followed:

- a) ***Parent raised issue that he had only just become aware that the two week timetable no longer exists.*** Mr Cormack explained the benefits of a one week timetable and how it works more effectively, ensuring both pupils and staff are better prepared. He also explained the benefits of the six periods, followed by RICH time at the end of the day.
- b) ***Parent asked how the earlier start of lessons at 8.20am had affected punctuality.*** Mr Cormack explained that 'registration' was moved to the end of the day so that the first lesson becomes more valued rather than being regarded as 'dead time', thus increasing punctuality. Mr Cormack explained that this change, made in September, was a shock to many pupils' systems, however, the intervention strategies for persistent lateness has helped improve punctuality and the early start has helped improved pupils' focus on learning. ***Parent asked others in the group if they were happy with the early start; all agreed that they were.*** Mr Cormack also explained the benefits of the new 'Family' groups and their position at the end of the day, when pupils can 'check-in' with their Family Tutors.

ACTIONS – All comments to be fed back to Leadership Management Team. New website will include more information about how the timetable works.

4. **VIVO Reward System** - Mr Cormack explained why the VIVO system has been put in place and gave an online demonstration as to how it works.

- a) Parents who had not logged in before saw the benefits of the system and felt encouraged to log-in and use the system. ***Parent stated how her daughter logs-in regularly to show her what she has been rewarded for. She stated that the system was very good.***

- b) **Parent asked if the VIVO system was more work for teaching staff.** Mr Cormack gave a demonstration of how quick and easy the system is to use. Parents agreed.
- c) Mr Cormack stated that some parents may have issues that the school is 'paying' its pupils to behave. **Parent said they thought that the system would encourage pupils to behave.** Parents agreed that the term 'reward' was fitting and the general consensus was that the scheme encouraged positive behaviour.
- d) **Parent asked how realistic points scheme is for buying products.** Mr Cormack gave a demonstration to show the kind of products available and stated that the scheme is still in its early days and pupils are able to save up points to work towards bigger and better products.

ACTIONS – the new school website will provide a direct link to the VIVO website and also offer information as to how the system works.

5. Classrooms

- a) **Parent asked about the possibility of Year 7s staying in one classroom and teachers moving around to them.** Mr Cormack stated that this is in place for our Nurture Group as part of an extended transition programme. He explained why it may be more difficult to extend this to whole year groups and that the majority of students welcomed the access to different specialised learning environments that are on offer in secondary schools.
- b) **Parent asked if time was lost as pupils moved from different areas of school for their various subject lessons.** Mr Cormack explained how the move from class to class was managed by teachers and respected by pupils, helping to create quick and fluid transitions between classes.

ACTIONS – All comments to be fed back to Leadership Management Team

6. School and the community

- a) **Parent mentioned how much they enjoyed the Christmas carol concert at the school** and suggested that investing in more events and inviting the local primary schools and community to attend, would help promote the school.
- b) **Parent also stated that the carol concert held at St Cuthbert's was very good.**
- c) Other positive comments from parents were that **the school is looking much better** from Parrs Wood Road and that the **staff presence of teachers in the area at key arrival and departure times is good.**
- d) **Parent asked how building work is coming along;** Mr Cormack said we are working to schedule.

- e) *Parent asked if there were any issues with regards to the development of the new Metro line.* Mr Cormack and other parents felt that there were no issues as the tram lines will be fenced off.

ACTIONS – Kathryn explained the importance of feedback from the local community as to how the school and its pupils are perceived. She requested that if the parents have any further thoughts or hear opinions and views about the school, that they feed them back to her. Parents all have Kathryn's contact details. Kathryn will compile a list of both current and potential events that the community are and could be invited to, to help showcase the school.

7. Parents also mentioned:

- Concerns about pupils smoking behind the Science Block
- Possibility of workshop for parents to help them discuss sex education with their child; as mentioned in November Parents' Forum
- Concern that their child was not receiving homework every day

ACTIONS: Information to be passed on to Leadership team and appropriate actions taken.