

## **Magna Academy Parents' Forum Meeting- Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> March**



- A big thank you to our Parents' Forum for their time and contributions to our meeting.
- The theme of the meeting was **assessment and reporting**

### **PRESENT**

Mrs Montgomery, Mrs Rennie, Mrs Dominey, Mrs Terry, Mrs Gibbons and Mrs Cockwell, Mr Buller and Mrs Stafford

**The parents' forum welcomed Mr Buller to the meeting who led the session on assessment and reporting.**

### **What is working well with assessment and reporting**

#### **Parents' evenings**

The feedback from the year 10 parents evening before half term was very positive. The appointments with the teachers were really helpful in terms of understanding the progress being made in that subject.

#### **Moving from the ASPIRE setting**

Moving away from the rigid setting was welcomed by the parents' forum. In the past some parents reported that when children were always in the lower sets there was a concern about the conduct in those classes and concerns that learning and progress was affected across all subjects. The parents were also very pleased that the rank order of results was no longer published and read out in assembly.

#### **Effective Revision**

There was positive feedback on the effective revisions materials that have been shared with parents.

#### **Quality Assurance of the assessment**

The parents' forum were impressed and approved of the amount of intervention and the approach taken in the quality assurance of the assessment process. There was also approval for the way in which students analyse the feedback and mark schemes after the mock exams

#### **Doing a great job**

There was agreement that Magna Academy is doing a great job and is really well organised with assessment and reporting.

## **Questions from the parent forum**

### **Why has the academy moved to mixed ability teaching groups?**

Some in the parents' forum queried why there was mixed ability teaching and how students can make the same progress in mixed ability groups. Some parents expressed a preference for sets based on ability.

Mr Buller explained that in Magna Academy some subjects are taught in sets based on ability and some subjects are taught in mixed ability groups. This depended on what is shown to be most effective in terms of student progress in that subject based on academic research. Mr Buller explained that academy decisions will always be based on academic research to ensure the best outcomes for students. Research shows that in maths and science students make the best progress in classes that are set based on ability, however in humanities students make good progress in mixed ability teaching groups. Furthermore the way in which Magna Academy now organises classes is far more inclusive and beneficial for all students.

### **Tiered papers**

Some parents questioned about different level papers for different subjects. Some parents in the forum did not realise there were different levels of exam papers for some subjects and requested that this information is made clearer during parents' evenings.

### **Assessment for exam access arrangements**

There was a query about access arrangements for external exams. Mr Buller explained that access arrangements for external exams last for two years. Therefore the priority for assessments for access arrangements is given to years 10, 11 and sixth form students ready for the external exams.

### **Effective Revision Homework**

Parents requested that when students have their exams, rather than self- quizzing or other homework they should be allowed to solely focus on revision. Parents thought it was a good idea to also use DEAR time to revise during the exam period.

### **Communication**

The parents reiterated the request that information is communicated in a variety of ways. For example using Facebook, the website and twitter. Furthermore it was requested that there are text message reminders about booking parents' evening appointments.

### **Frequency of assessment**

Mr Buller explained that the frequency of assessment is no longer completely fixed. It depends on the subject and the duration of the topics being taught.

### **Advance Notice for examinations in 2022**

There was a query about how helpful the advanced notice information has been. Mr Buller explained that the advanced notice information from the exam boards was shared with parents and has informed what is examined in the current mock examinations. Furthermore the advanced notice information will inform the focus for the remaining lessons and revision before the final exams.

### **Ranking within a class**

Rather than rank order within a class or year group, students' progress is now measured using Age Related Expectations. There was agreement from the parents' forum that this is a better system than the whole year group fixed ranking that used to take place. However at times, there was the suggestions that it would be helpful for parents to know whereabouts their child was placed within the Age Related banding. For example your child is making expected progress but whereabouts in that band are they positioned?

### **The return of lesson 6**

There was a query as to why Magna Academy no longer has the mandatory period 6 and instead the voluntary RA sessions for year 11 students. It was explained that this allows Magna Academy to run enrichment clubs for students. Although exams results are important, the experience and skills that students develop in enrichment clubs are also really important in terms of students' broader educational development and preparedness for their next steps to higher education or the world of work. Therefore Magna Academy has tried to set up a system where Raising Achievement revisions sessions are being run and enrichment can take place. Mr Buller reminded the forum that attendance at the prom was dependent on attending RA sessions. Therefore although not compulsory, there is an added incentive for attending.

### **The meeting closed at 6.15pm**

## **Examples of communication working well:-**

### **1. Google Classrooms**

Work is clearly set out, structured well and dated. The quality of tasks and resources are strong. Parents found that less is more; this refers to clear and simple explanations being most effective as opposed to multiple documents that can be overwhelming.

Rather than the work posted being called by their unit or topic number, parents found work that is clearly dated to be more helpful. Parents also like the work to be uploaded in advance so the expectations for the week are clear and parents can plan the week with their children.

### **2. Response to emails**

Parents found that responses to emails either to Heads of Year came very swiftly and there is a good deal of responses to questions on Google Classrooms.

### **3. Communication regarding our policy to online learning**

The recent letter explaining the academy's online learning policy was very comprehensive and helpful for parents.

### **4. Magna 5s**

This is a new proposal from the academy to start this term. Magna 5s would be a five minute video which provides advice, information and guidance about how parents and carers can support their son/ daughters with aspects of their education at home. Magna 5s is not about what happens in school, but ways in which parents and carers can extend or support the learning that takes place in the academy. We know that our parents and carers want to support the work of the Academy and support their children's learning, but that they also have very busy lives. Therefore Magna5s will be easy to access at only five minutes long with practical activities that are proven to make a difference to children's education. The Parents' Forum were happy to make suggestions of topics for Magna 5s and to view some pilot videos to provide feedback.

**Suggestions to build on communication between home and the academy:-**

| <b>Suggestions from the Parents' Forum</b>  | <b>Our response</b>   |
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| <p><b>Weekly/ fortnightly parents bulletin</b><br/>           This bulletin would remind parents about key events coming up the following week in the Academy. It would provide information about any changes and developments, for example COVID updates in our current situation. The Parents' Forum would be happy to suggest headings for the bulletin. Some suggestions are;</p> | <p><b>Weekly/ fortnightly parents bulletin</b><br/>           We already use our website to keep parents up to date with what is happening in the Academy. The website acts like a bulletin for parents with all the information that has been requested already available. A new website is currently under construction that will be easier to navigate. The new website will enhance communication and we hope to invite potential consultation in the near future.</p> <p>We would like the Parents' Forum to review the new website before it goes live.</p> |
| <p><b>Upcoming key events</b></p>   | <p>For upcoming events there is a calendar on the website. For policy changes there is a section dedicated to all policies.</p>   |
| <p><b>Policy changes</b></p>  | <p>The Principal has written detailed letters each time there has been an update related to Covid 19 and all past letters are listed on the website for reference.</p>  |
| <p><b>Staff changes</b> and how the school is being affected by Covid at the moment (eg. if high numbers of teachers are being affected by illness/having to self isolate, we can expect more cover lessons).</p>   | <p>There have been very few staff changes this year and all details of changes in staffing are outlined in the Principal's letters. Staff absence would not be something we would report on.</p>  |
| <p><b>After school Clubs</b> on offer and how students can sign up to them (when relevant again) .</p>  | <p>Once we are allowed to start extra- curricular activities, clubs, dates and times will be published on the website.</p>  |
| <p><b>Live Lessons</b></p>  | <p><b>Live Lessons</b></p>  |

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| <p>There was widespread understanding of our approach to online learning following the more recent letter. However there was a feeling that to ease students' feelings of isolation and for some socialisation live lessons were needed.</p>  | <p>From the beginning of lockdown sixth form students had been receiving live lessons.</p> <p>After a thorough consultation with teachers and scrutiny of guidance and best practice, parents and students were informed of the live lesson timetable on January 21st.</p>  |
| <p><b>Develop feedback, assessment and reporting to parents in lockdown</b></p> <p>Some parents expressed concerns about not knowing how well their children are doing and how much progress they are making. Some parents felt they needed to know more than whether work had been completed- ie- what standards are being achieved online? Some parents queried about when they would have a report and what our current plans are for parents' evenings.</p> | <p><b>Develop feedback, assessment and reporting to parents in lockdown</b></p> <p>The Academy had a full assessment and reporting calendar for the year across the full age range. We are now in the process of restructuring this calendar to meet the needs of our students and parents in these unprecedented times. A new assessment and reporting timetable is under construction focusing on exam classes first. Year 11, 12 and 13 already have new timetables in place. The Academy is also putting in place new plans for reporting and carrying out parents evenings. The Academy will keep parents informed of the updated plans.</p> |
| <p><b>Detail, transparency and the bigger picture communicated to parents</b></p> <p>There was widespread agreement that the more recent letter about our approach to online learning was comprehensive and really informative. There was a suggestion that all communication should strive for this level of explanation and ensure parents are provided with the bigger picture about the reason for policies and decision making.</p>                        | <p><b>Detail, transparency and the bigger picture communicated to parents</b></p> <p>We strive to keep our parents well informed of our decision making, and any changes and key events happening in the Academy. The Principal produces a thorough newsletter every half term and will do so more frequently if deemed necessary.</p> <p>New Futures, STEM and online safety newsletters have been produced and will be published every half term.</p> <p>Parents were involved in a full consultation process before revising the behaviour policy and in the implementation of the personal development programme. There</p>                   |

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|   | <p>are frequent letters sent home to parents and an up to date website.</p> <p>Last year, as part of the curriculum consultation, parents were invited in to the Academy to meet with the Principal and Vice Principal for a question and answer session. Furthermore, before the Covid 19 restrictions were put in place, the Principal held coffee mornings to help communicate the vision of Magna Academy. These will resume when allowed to do so.</p> <p>However, we obviously welcome feedback from the Parents' Forum and have started this forum to strengthen the link and understanding between home and the Academy.</p>  |
| <p><b>Magna 5s about how to use Google Classroom</b></p> <p>One parent in the forum has downloaded Google Classroom to their phone. This allows parents to read all the comments made in Google Classroom on their phone. Messages about uploading work, messages from the stream, feedback for work all come through on their phone. This saves logging on to other devices. Could this function be shared with other parents?</p> | <p><b>Magna 5s about how to use Google Classroom</b></p> <p>A guide to using Google Classrooms was sent out on November 18th. A link to watching a video to support with using Google Classrooms can be found here- <a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1spRv7ZkbZM_YMxhe9wRgPH1UiT18eENq/view?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/file/d/1spRv7ZkbZM_YMxhe9wRgPH1UiT18eENq/view?usp=sharing</a></p> <p>There is also a a remote learning section on the website- under the tab called learning- found here <a href="https://www.magna-aspirations.org/713/remote-learning">https://www.magna-aspirations.org/713/remote-learning</a></p> <p>The App for Google Classroom can easily be downloaded- go to Playstore/ Google Classroom/ Install or if you own an iphone, the app will be found at the App store</p> |

