



Year 11 Headteacher's Question Time
Tuesday 18th January 2022
1.15 p.m. – 1.55 p.m. – G10

Panel: Mrs Aston, Mrs Cooney, Mr Goetschel, Mrs Leadbetter, Mrs Riley
(Mrs Verma sent apologies but provided written answers to the questions
which Mrs Riley conveyed to the students)

Mrs Riley welcomed the students to the Headteacher's question time session and the students asked the following questions.

Which is the best option for post 16 study, Lordswood Sixth Form or a college like Stourbridge?
Are we still able to apply for sixth form here?

Mrs Leadbetter: In year 11 there are a number of sixth form options. Some students choose to go to King Edward Stourbridge which has a large sixth form of around 1,000 students and offers 'A' level law which some students want to study. Lordswood Sixth Form is much smaller but we know our students individually. We offer a range of courses and we would love you to join us. The deadline date for applications on the website is the end of February but this is flexible and your application will be accepted after this date.

Would you be able to explain the 'no contact' policy? I understand it in terms of social distancing because of covid but students are unsure if it will continue in future?

Mrs Cooney: the 'no contact' policy is partly due to COVID to minimise contact but it is also about respecting each other's personal space and ensuring that there is no inappropriate contact. If a friend is upset then we do understand in this circumstance that you may want to support her, but there should be no walking around holding hands with friends in school. Contact should be a personal choice and we want to ensure that the school environment is a safe place to be, so we will continue with the 'no contact' policy even after COVID restrictions are removed.

Why do we only play 'girls' sports' in PE?

Mrs Aston: There is no one gender sport any more. We have mixed gender basketball, football, gymnastics, cricket and netball, some of which might have been 'traditionally' thought of as female sports and some of which might have been 'traditionally' thought of as male sports. We try and change the range of sports we offer to facilitate all students.

Mrs Cooney: Some sports are included as part of the curriculum such as netball, basketball and would be 'team sports'. Dance is also part of the national curriculum and could be considered a 'female sport' but all genders are expected to do this, including boys in other schools.

Would you consider adding other GCSE options to the curriculum such as sociology?

Mrs Verma: The subjects at GCSE enable all students to progress at post 16 to a variety of pathways. We used to offer sociology in the past, but the outcomes were poor. This then meant students could not take the subject at 'A' level as they did not meet the entry requirements. You can take sociology in our sixth form and the teachers delivering it feel that at that stage students can understand the concepts much more easily and then get better results.

Mrs Cooney: We like to offer you a wide range of subjects that enable a wide range of subjects to be accessed at post-16, e.g. Sociology can be studied at 'A' level without studying it at GCSE and students often ask for subjects like RS, English and Citizenship instead of Sociology.

Why is it compulsory to take French and Spanish for GCSE?

Mrs Verma: Both languages are included in the English baccalaureate. This is a set of subjects at GCSE that keep options open for further study and careers. We want all of our students to have the same opportunities and therefore you will continue with the subject you have been studying since year 7.

Mrs Cooney: There is statistical evidence that students who study a broader range of EBACC subjects are likely to obtain higher grades at GCSE and have a better opportunity of getting into a Russell Group university.

Mr Goetschel: when students apply to competitive colleges, they have an advantage over other students who have not studied a language.

The corridors seem to be getting more and more crowded every day. Would it be possible to put something in place to improve this?

Mr Goetschel: When we had the first lockdown we introduced staggered times during the day but logistically this was very difficult to manage. Since then we have had more staff and student absences and we would not be able to continue with this. A number of years ago we introduced 'triple C conduct' which were sensible rules when moving along corridors, such as students keeping to the left and the right sides of the corridors and walking in single file. We also introduced that students can go directly into the classroom without lining up outside the room until the teacher arrives, which has reduced congestion.

Mrs Cooney: We have moved a number of lockers outside to ease corridor congestion as they are 18 inches deep with another 18 inches if the locker doors are open which created a bottleneck, especially outside the Achievement Co-ordinators office. We have also started to bring students into school at lunchtime via different doors to help ease congestion at the bottom of the stairs.

We could consider asking students to take bags with you at breaktime and lunchtime as this would ease movement around the school?

The students said that they would rather leave their bags in school and would not want to carry these around during their breaks.

What are your strengths and weaknesses as Headteacher?

Mrs Cooney: my strength is my experience. My career has allowed me to work in many different schools where I have gained experience in pastoral, curriculum, teaching and learning and interventions. I have managed to collect best practise from the different schools.

My weakness is that I talk far too much as I can talk for England! I love to talk to staff and students.

How will students benefit from the merger with King Edward Trust?

Mrs Cooney: I have been in a meeting for the past three hours with King Edward discussing the merger. A great advantage is that we will be part of a large Trust and we will be able to get services which will be paid for centrally which will enable them to be purchased at a reduced price. This will leave more money for us to invest in learning opportunities for students. There will also be CPD opportunities, for example, as we will be joining their networks for Lead Professionals and they will share their work practices and ideas with us. This will hopefully continue to improve the standard of education for students.

Why isn't mental health treated in the same way as physical health? Students don't seem to be sent home from school because their mental health is bad and it doesn't seem to be treated as a valid reason for absences?

Mr Goetschel: I am really surprised by this perception as I am very proud of the support we have made available to students and staff especially during COVID. If an absence is supported by a medical professional's letter, then this will be treated in the same way as a physical illness. We also have the Dream Programme in place to support students.

Mrs Cooney: If there is a prolonged period of absence then we support this as long as there is a doctor's note in place. This is exactly the same expectation as we have with physical illnesses.

Would you consider having a student vote to decide what is taught on PSHE day?

Mrs Cooney: PSHE is a national curriculum subject. As a school we study this subject during a full day rather than split it into hours each week. The government tells us what we have to teach over the time that you are in school and there are many things that have to be included.

Mr Goetschel: At the end of each PSHE day a student survey is undertaken and the feedback received from students is considered when arranging the next PSHE day.

Were there times when you were unsure of how you would deal with all issues?

Mrs Cooney: Yes absolutely, but I have a fantastic SLT team to support me; Mrs Adamson, Mrs Verma, Mrs Yorke, Mrs Finucane, Mrs Leadbetter and Mrs Dodd. We meet every Tuesday to discuss plans and issues so I do get a lot of support. I also meet Lead Professionals regularly. It is difficult becoming a new Headteacher, as well as being new to a school, but I have taken the time to learn how the school works before any changes are made.

How do you choose the questions for these sessions?

Mrs Riley: I discuss the questions with Mrs Yorke and we try not to use the same questions more than once. We try to include questions which a number of students are interested in. The minutes of each Headteacher's question time are uploaded onto the school website so you can always take a look at the questions that have been answered previously.

The students were thanked for giving up their lunchtime to attend this session and for asking such interesting questions.