



Year 9 Headteacher's Question Time

Tuesday 17th May 2022

1.15 p.m. – 1.55 p.m. – G10

Panel: Mrs Cooney, Mrs Verma, Mrs Riley, Mr Fox

The students were welcomed to the Year 9 Headteacher's Question Time and the panel was asked the following questions:-

Some students feel uncomfortable when teachers pick students to answer questions in class when they don't know the answer. Could students put their hands up instead?

Mrs Cooney: Students shouldn't always feel comfortable when learning as learning is supposed to push you outside of your comfort zone. So no, we won't be switching to hands up questions because there will be some students who will never volunteer to answer. Teachers use targeted questioning (when they pick a student to answer) so that they can gauge where there might be gaps in learning or understanding, it's an important tool in the classroom. It's recognised as the best way of using questioning in the classroom. Ofsted also requires targeted questioning as it is a way for teachers to constantly assess how students are learning and their levels of understanding.

When will we be put into our GCSE sets?

Mrs Verma: This information is almost ready for circulation. You should all have had letters yesterday confirming your options, you will get your paper timetables next week. These won't list your teaching groups but you will know your rooms and teachers by Friday next week. This will also be on EduLink in due course.

Why did our Ofsted rating go down?

Mrs Cooney: As we discussed in the assemblies about this, there is a new Ofsted framework which means that they are looking for different things when they look round schools. Lordswood was last inspected 15 years ago so the framework and expectations have changed a lot since then. While we had already begun to make changes according to the new framework, we're not quite finished yet and so the grading reflects the fact that we're still working on those things.

What are you going to do to help improve the school after the recent Ofsted report?

Mrs Cooney: I love this question, I love that you're already looking to the future! You will all have read the report so you will know that one of the things that Ofsted picked up on was that the curriculum wasn't ensuring that students make connections between their knowledge. To address this we have already had some teacher training looking at cognitive load theory which means that teachers will know best how to use lessons to aid your learning. We are also looking at the curriculum provision itself and next week we have a visitor in school who will be helping us with this. We are going to be tweaking our curriculum plans for September and SLT have been looking at the school development plan and we now have a new plan written for the next three years. One of the things that this plan focuses on is curriculum and so we are already in discussion to add DT to the curriculum.

We are also planning some changes to post 16 as we need to offer an extra 40 hours in line with government requirements. We are also planning on timetabling extra curricular activities for sixth form so that we can track who is taking part in what.

So there are going to be lots of changes, a lot of which will happen behind the scenes so you might not necessarily see them.

Would it be possible to have more halal options at lunchtime?

Mrs Cooney: This is something that you can ask your Review Group Council Rep to take to the School Council. The Council can then arrange a meeting with Aspens who provide the canteen food to address this. We also have to take into consideration the space in the canteen as well as adhering to all religious stipulations around food and preparation.

Can we have more vegetarian options in the canteen?

Mrs Cooney: Again this is something you can ask your Rep to take to the School Council. We don't actually run the canteen from within school, it is run by an external company called Aspens who have a standard menu which they use across all their schools. However we do have Nigel who is a trained chef and is sometimes able to make slight changes to the menus. We also have to make sure that we avoid waste so it's all about balancing the options available to ensure that we waste as little as possible.

Can we have more student polls to inform school decisions like the changing of the school day?

Mrs Cooney: We did carry out a consultation with regards to the changes to the school day, this went out to parents via the bulletin and parents then shared their opinions and also some on behalf of students. We have introduced a new student bulletin which will enable us to get messages to all students every week. However it may not always be appropriate to consult students on every decision that has to be made regarding school.

We have a good School Council and the Reps act as your representatives on that Council. The government very rarely asks the population for their opinions on changes that have to be made, the last time this happened was on the subject of Brexit, so we have to trust that those we vote into power make the right decisions for us. To mirror this, you need to trust that the Rep you voted onto the Council will make the right choices for you.

Mrs Riley: There is no subject that you can't ask your Rep to bring to the Council, they may not always be able to feedback with the result you wanted but that is still you having your say. You can also ask Reps to carry out polls in your review group so that everyone's opinion is counted on any subject that is important to you.

Would you consider clearing out the garden round the back of the school and possibly starting some sort of gardening club?

Mrs Cooney: Extra curricular activities always come up at Question Time. In principle I have no objections to a gardening club but you have to remember that extra curricular activities are only offered on a voluntary basis by staff. Teachers in school are paid to teach, they are not paid to give up their spare time to offer clubs; any clubs that are offered are done so out of the goodness of staff's hearts.

Perhaps in the summer term we could have a mass tidy up of the grounds, we can look at this nearer the time.

Mr Fox: I have tried to set up a gardening club on two occasions and when it came to running the club, only about three students came. So students requesting a club doesn't always mean that enough will come to make it viable.

Is the school doing Duke of Edinburgh and how do I participate?

Mr Fox: Yes, Year 9 will be given the opportunity to take part in the DofE scheme. I am hoping that I will be able to allow you to sign up next half term so that you can start the activities in the autumn term. At the moment I am trying to catch up on the two years the current students have missed out on because of covid so I don't want to sign up new students until I am able to dedicate the correct amount of time to them.

Why aren't more trips being organised for the year groups that missed out because of covid?

Mrs Cooney: Some trips have taken place since covid but it would be impossible to catch up on all of them. We also have to bear in mind that trips take an awful lot of organising and are expensive. Due to the current economic climate, we are very aware that not all parents would be able to afford to pay for trips so we have various considerations to weigh up like cost, loss of time in the classroom, staff capacity etc. School finances are also really squeezed these days and so, due to the fact that we are legally not allowed to stop students from going on day time trips because they can't afford it, we cannot afford to cover the remaining costs.

In summer, can we eat our break and lunch food outside on benches and on the grass?

Mrs Cooney: We are currently looking at lunchtime arrangements. We would love to allow students to eat outside but before we can do so we have to make sure that spaces are clean and hygienic and that we have the staff capacity to supervise it. We currently don't have enough staff to cover both inside and outside the school building at lunchtimes. My dream would be to have outdoor seating areas with canopies but at present we can't afford this.

Can we have a cultural day where everyone can dress in their cultural clothing?

Mrs Cooney: This issue has also come up before so there is information about this in the minutes of other Question Time sessions on the school website. We do have non-uniform days and everyone is more than welcome to wear cultural dress on these days. We do need to remember that cultural days can sometimes cause division and alienation as not everyone identifies with one particular culture and so it may cause segregation.