

# FAQ from Ofsted Parents meeting – response from Mrs Scott-Herron

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## **Why is the school not allowed to employ NQTs (Newly qualified teachers)?**

This is because Ofsted do not want us to recruit NQTs until they are satisfied that we have the capacity to support them. After the first HMI visit we will be informed whether or not this will remain the case.

## **Can books be brought home when homework is marked to show feedback to parents?**

Yes and this has been addressed in a staff meeting with all on 10/11/14. Please contact the school if you are still experiencing issues.

## **How effective are mixed ability sets?**

Mixed ability sets need a high level of differentiation to ensure that the needs of all the learners are being met and that every student makes the best possible progress. Mixed ability sets occur in some of the option subjects at KS4 as the school is not big enough to stream. For example if there is only one Drama class then it has to be mixed ability class. We may look to stream if there is more than one group in an option subject.

## **How is school dealing with low level disruption?**

This is a massive culture shift for the school as the expectations, aspirations and standards have risen. Teachers are following the behaviour steps and the disruptive students are being removed from lessons. However this is a work in progress. We have to educate students to be respectful and behave well as the attitudes from some are not appropriate. This will no longer be tolerated and we are asking for the support of parents/carers to help us educate all the young people about how to behave appropriately. We are looking at alternative behaviour strategies as some students do not take the sanctions seriously. They are being dealt with and parent/carers will be brought in for specialist meetings, with School Governors if appropriate, to discuss future steps and provision.

## **How is security addressed?**

There were no security issues reported. Ofsted check this by inspecting our safeguarding policies and procedures, especially recruitment and selection of staff and health and safety.

Students who do not turn up to a class are reported as missing and the member of staff on call will try to find them. If a student is missing then we contact home. This also applies if a student walks off site.

It is not possible to physically chase students who play truant, but we will always contact parents/carers to keep them informed. However we are currently reviewing our systems in order to improve our communication strategies.

## **Will there be staffing changes / restructure?**

Yes there will be both. We are currently undertaking a full curriculum review, as we need to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all the learners. The results of this review will determine the staff we need and a staffing restructure will then take place. We plan to change the timetable for implementation after Christmas. This will address some of the setting issues and make sure that the students are in the correct sets and bands to meet their needs. I appreciate that this is a massive change, but it needs to happen. I need all students to achieve their full potential however I will keep parents/carers informed throughout.

## **How are teachers held accountable?**

I have just rewritten the appraisal, pay and managing absence policies in line with Warrington Borough Council guidelines, which will assist in addressing poor performance. The pay policy is now aligned with the teachers' pay and conditions document so poor performance will have an impact on teachers' pay.

Teachers are required to be appraised on an annual basis where they are set objectives linked to teacher's standards and career stage expectations. I have restructured the appraisal process and personally set the objectives this year for all staff to ensure that their objectives directly link to school priorities and are measurable.

## **Why is PSHE being taught when students are not achieving in core subjects?**

This is being addressed at the moment. After Christmas PSHE lessons in Year 7 and 8 are being replaced by Literacy lessons and we are also looking at replacing PSHE in KS4 with extra Maths, English and options subjects where appropriate. The topics in PSHE are very valuable however and this could be addressed in tutor groups or specialist PSHE days. This is still under discussion and I will keep parents/carers fully informed of progress.

## **Why are students being tested on topics they have not studied?**

This was an isolated incident. The students were supposed to have a test P5 on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> November in a certain subject. However I had to call assemblies P5 to inform the students of the outcomes of the Ofsted report so the exam was postponed. This was an exceptional circumstance.

## **Will Science be more stable this year?**

There were issues with Science last year due to a maternity leave and a long term absence of the Head of Department. This has been addressed by two new appointments recently, a new Head of Science and a new Second in Science. It is expected that the department will be more stable this year.

## **When will parents receive reports?**

A school handbook was produced this year for the first time for every parent and carer which was sent out at the end of the Summer Holidays. This was done so all parents/carers could be organised for the new academic year. All the dates for when reports and assessment data is to be sent out are clearly communicated in this document. This handbook is also available on the website. I will put the dates in an area of the website so that they can be extracted and an area which will be more visible and easier for parents/carers to find.

[www.boteler.org.uk/pages/school-handbook](http://www.boteler.org.uk/pages/school-handbook)

### **Can all tests be done in exam conditions?**

This is now school policy and I have fully briefed staff on ensuring that this happens.

### **Can all learning intentions be explained?**

Staff are aware that some students may not understand what has been asked of them. They will check and ensure that all their students know and understand what the learning intention is in each specific lesson.

### **Can teachers please respond to emails?**

Teachers are not able to respond to e-mails during the day because they are teaching. However, I will emphasize to them the importance of communicating with parents/carers and that if they are contacted by a parent/carer they need to respond as soon as possible.

### **How is lack of subject knowledge being dealt with?**

SLEs (Specialist Leaders of Education) have been brought in to work intensively with departments to ensure they have a good subject knowledge and understanding. Teachers are directed to training materials, research and professional development opportunities to help them further and deepen their subject knowledge. We are also facilitating teachers to experience outstanding practice in their subject areas in other schools.

### **Can Maths homework be set rather than just using Mymaths?**

We have appointed a new Head of Maths who will ensure that this is done. He will be proactive in following it up by checking the homework plans that teachers are required to submit.

## **Will there be additional provision/intervention in school to improve standards?**

We are receiving a lot of support from the LA because we are in a specific category. They are proactive in helping the school source the support needed for the school to improve:

- SLEs (Specialist Leaders in Education) are working with middle leaders and departments.
- Bespoke professional development packages are in place for individual teachers.
- An internationally acclaimed expert has been booked to deliver INSET (training) on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2014.
- NLE (National Leader of Education) support for the New Headteacher is in place.
- Secondment of a Deputy Headteacher to add capacity to the new leadership team is in place.
- School to school support and networks have been established to tap into outstanding practice, systems and procedures.

## **What can be done for pupils who can't attend after school revision sessions?**

We will produce revision guides and packs. Teachers will try and meet those students at a convenient time and engage with parents/carers to discuss how they can provide support and help them at home. Students will need to be proactive and see their teachers to pick up subject specific materials.

## **Will data be more accurate, particularly for Maths and English?**

Yes. All the tests and exams are being quality assured and teachers are ensuring their work is standardised and moderated. We have a newly appointed Assistant Headteacher responsible for data and a review of the data and the way it is used is currently underway.

### **Can there be clearer communication of assessment points?**

This is in the school handbook which every parent/carer received during the summer holiday and is available on the website. I will however communicate this information again as requested by parents/carers.

[www.boteler.org.uk/pages/school-handbook](http://www.boteler.org.uk/pages/school-handbook)

### **Why has teaching declined from the last Ofsted?**

There is more pressure on teachers to deliver than ever before and when faced with external pressures such as changes to exam boards, government changes in education and what is expected of them, sometimes teachers do not adjust quickly enough. There has been a much needed change in culture of what is expected and that is down to the leadership - leading and modelling high expectations, high aspirations and high standards consistently and constantly. There has been significant change in key middle leadership positions and they are responsible for modelling best practice to their staff.

### **Can parents have feedback from HMI visit?**

Yes of course. I will produce an update sheet for parents after every visit. I will also communicate when HMI will be in school. I will also give you a time frame of when I will have written the report.

### **Can school ensure the behaviour policy is applied consistently, especially regarding the escalation steps?**

We constantly strive to ensure all our behaviour steps are followed consistently. Staff are briefed regularly on this. However we are doing a full review of all our behaviour systems, policies and procedures. This is to ensure we have a highly effective system that eradicates low level disruption and educates those who don't engage with the rules. We also aim to include systems which assist pupils to be integrated back into the learning environments.

## **Why are teachers off sick?**

Attendance is important for both staff and pupils. Teachers need to be in front of the students for them to have the best learning experience possible. The attendance policy for staff has been updated and implemented from September. Staff will be issued with their % attendance so they can have ownership of this process and make them aware of the impact their absence has on learning outcomes. We also care about staff well-being and must ensure that all members of staff receive support, especially as being in a category can be a very difficult, stressful situation for everyone involved.

## **What is being done about year 11 English?**

Everything possible is being done to ensure that all the students achieve the best possible grades in English. I appreciate that the situation is far from ideal with the Head of Department being absent however these are the measures that are currently in place:

- The Headteacher line manages the English Department.
- The Deputy Headteacher is acting as Strategic Head of Department.
- The second in department is in charge of the operational English.
- The Year 11 timetable is being re-constructed to ensure no supply teachers teach Year 11 classes.
- The Headteacher will teach 11x4 English.
- Specialist leads at KS4 and KS3 have been identified.
- SLE (Specialist Leader in Education) will provide support with pedagogical (educational) practice.

## **Can parents be kept in the loop about extra lessons?**

We are looking at ways in which we can improve the whole parental communication system. A Governors Stakeholder group has been created where parental involvement is a key feature to its success. Engaging parents/carers could be really powerful and help us move things forward as they are the 'customers'. We will be creating a forum/page where each department/teacher can share what their classes are learning, homework etc. and what you can do to support this.

## **What is being done to address parents' evenings as they are too congested?**

We are considering:

- Longer appointment times.
- Staff to be briefed in time management.
- Appointment to be available over two nights instead of one so that teachers can see all parents-
- Closer venues to minimise travel time.

We would welcome any suggestions from parents/carers to help us with this as your views are important to us.

## **Is there a PTA and could we have one?**

I would love a PTA and definitely a parent group who would help and support me in turning the school around. Parent views are very powerful as you experience first-hand what is going on. Anyone who is interested or willing to help and support in any way please get in touch with the clerk to the governors [jmorris@boteler.org.uk](mailto:jmorris@boteler.org.uk) and she will put you in touch with the Stakeholder Group. The formation of a PTA is the next step after a parent group and volunteers again would be welcome.

## **VLE on line for parents - is this possible?**

I am currently looking into this however it is quite expensive and also presents some logistical issues. I will investigate further and keep parents/carers up to date on progress.

## **Will pupils ever catch up?**

Of course they will. The Staff, Governors and I firmly believe they will. This is exactly why I took the job to ensure the students make the best possible progress in every year group. This will take time and cannot be done and dusted in a year however we are working as quickly as possible to ensure this happens swiftly. There are things that can and will be done immediately such as the curriculum review but some others will take longer to embed. It is not just about quick wins but strategies which have firm foundations on which to build, so the improvement can be sustained.

### **Can things be explained clearer and better to pupils?**

I am working on this with all staff and ensuring they look carefully at their learners and their specific needs. Sometimes as teachers we think we are really clear and we may be but sometimes not to everyone and we have to recognise this.

### **Can homework back up learning?**

This is being addressed with staff when completing homework logs which are monitored by senior staff. Form tutors are also monitoring the homework being set during weekly planner checks. When parents/carers are signing the planners it is important to flag up any concerns they may have in the planner.

### **Can the books be sent home more regularly?**

Staff have been instructed to send books home. Please can you ensure you son/daughter is organised and that they bring their books back to their lessons.

### **Can we have a list of the teachers who teach our students?**

The whole staff list is in the school handbook. Timetables with the correct teachers' names on will be sent out to parents/carers.

### **Can there be more Science sessions in the holidays?**

I will speak to Mrs Fitzsimon Head of Science and ensure this happens.

### **Planners are not being used consistently how will this be addressed?**

We are working with staff on a daily basis to ensure they are addressing this issue. This is also part of the non-negotiables list I have shared with them.

## **What are you doing to ensure teachers are enthusiastic?**

Being in a category can be very demotivating and ensuring staff morale is kept as high as possible is difficult. It is about staff believing in the vision and subscribing to the values and most importantly, the commitment to knowing we can and will as a team improve. I believe in them and I need to make sure that they know that. They do have the skills to turn things around and I just need to make sure they find that skill set and that they use it to the very best of their ability. The training we are buying in for the INSET (training) day 9<sup>th</sup> December is a massive investment for us as a school and staff need to know that we have done that because we believe in them to succeed.

## **What are you doing about supply teachers?**

The students do not appreciate having a supply teacher as it disrupts the normal flow of their learning however sometimes this is completely unavoidable. Students need to be educated in how to behave with a supply teacher, not only by school but by parents/carers as their conduct at times is completely unacceptable. I will not have supply teachers who are not good enough and this is very closely monitored however students have to behave appropriately.

## **Is the Local Authority doing anything to help?**

The Local Authority is very helpful in terms of support and has brokered all the SLE and NLE support for us. They have invested a lot of time and money into the school and work with us very closely. The Local Authority provides support and challenge at all levels.

### **Why would OFSTED decide to come 6 days into the new headship?**

The school was due to be inspected before the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2014. It just so happened that there was a change in headship. Ofsted guidance says that they will be supportive of new heads and give them time to make appropriate changes. I have to look at this process positively. I took the job knowing there was a huge job to do and Ofsted confirmed my self-evaluation. The outcomes of the report therefore give me very clear objectives in which to move the school forward.

### **The homework has increased – but why not marked to the same standard?**

Members of staff have been briefed and this will happen and be closely monitored by senior staff.

### **Will the Head be willing to make further changes to staff and team if need be?**

I have made and will continue to make changes where necessary. The young people in my care are of paramount importance to me and I will do anything it takes to ensure they achieve at the highest level.