

Parent Forum Key Notes

Wednesday, 2nd May 2018

- **Rye Academy Trust Developments**

- Mr Blakelock confirmed that CEO Tim Hulme had left the trust. Whilst Mr Hulme had initially been contracted until August, a personal opportunity had arisen and given the stability of Trust brought about by his work over the last two years the Board had agreed to a slightly earlier date of departure. Whilst challenging, his work has left the trust in a much better place.
- Whilst much good news regarding Rye College had been mentioned in some local press reports, Mr. Blakelock said the real headline was 'Vulnerable Rural Trust Finds Strong School Improvement Partner' - which is the really good news for Rye. A really good school improvement partnership has emerged with Aquinas, brokered by the Department of Education and the Regional Schools Commissioner. Mr Hulme has left, his work essentially finished, when he completed an agreement for Aquinas to deliver educational services overseen by Rye Academy Trustees. This agreement may lead to a deeper involvement with Aquinas; the Rye schools could potentially join Aquinas in the future which both trust find agreeable. This decision has not yet been taken, and at the current time it remains a relationship based on school improvement.
- Mr Blakelock noted that the Aquinas Multi-Academy Trust has the ability to manage both community schools and church schools in its trust which would ensure Rye keeps its distinctive identity as a community school. Aquinas is inclusive - they want to be a Multi-Academy Trust of both community and Church of England schools.
- A parent asked about the debt situation in the Trust. Mr Blakelock said that the Trust has some debt, however the level of debt has been established and there is now a debt recovery plan agreed and in place, part of which is the financial notice to improve issued last year. Addressing the debt is part of the plan going forward, however the Trust is now working to run the College and schools within the annual budget. Mr Blakelock said that parents shouldn't worry about the debt, as the Trust is now working within the annual grant the pressure being faced financially is the same as other schools are facing which is why we are participating in the 'Flat Cash' fairer funding campaign. East Sussex County Council schools are not the most favourably funded, and Rye is supporting other ESCC schools as families might have seen in the news.
- Mr Blakelock stressed that he did not want families to worry, instead he asked that children and families talk about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the priorities identified by the College as well as the actions taken to deliver this. What is really important are the decisions being taken with the new curriculum and the focus placed on teaching and learning and securing the marking in the children's books. Some of the parents present at the meeting recognised the impact of the drive in focus on these areas. Mr Blakelock encouraged a discussion focusing on these areas and becoming the first choice local school.

- **Toilets**

- In response to parental feedback about the bathroom provision within the College, Mr Blakelock agreed that the college does suffer from problems and the college acknowledges this issue. The toilets are checked on a daily basis by the cleaners and during the college day by a member of the senior leadership. Toilet paper is restocked daily. There are issues with the way a small minority of students treat the toilets. Mr Blakelock recognised that the antiquated condition of the infrastructure doesn't encourage good treatment but students regrettably do vandalise the facilities. An example was given of how new toilet roll and soap holders had been knocked off within the first day of being installed. Whilst the College regularly reviews how to monitor the situation it recognises that a significant investment is needed and this area has been prioritised for investment bids.

- **Swimming**

- Mr Blakelock took a parental question asking if swimming would be back on the curriculum and if there was an arrangement in place with the leisure centre to facilitate this? Mr Blakelock was unable to answer at the time and said that he would get back to parents.
- Post meeting note: Mr Blakelock is able to confirm that the Trust does have preferential access to the swimming pool but despite this, swimming still remains an expensive endeavour for any school to deliver. The Trust is committed to delivering the statutory requirement for 20m in primary. The College is unable to provide swimming at the moment but will seriously consider the addition as the curriculum matures.

