

Dear Parent,

Parental survey

Thank you for taking time to respond to the parental survey. The School received 227 responses.

I have tried to address as many comments as possible. Comments remain anonymous. As ever, I am happy to speak to parents when they have any concern about how the School is operating so that they can understand the rationale for some of the decisions that have been taken.

1. Sixth Form

From the start of next term, 6th Formers will be allowed to attend medical appointments, etc. during the school day without the need to be collected by parents. School will still need a medical absence form submitted by parents to the form tutor to grant permission to leave the site. I plan to make further changes to give students greater independence following consultations with teachers and students via the Student and Sixth Form councils. If approved, these will be effective from September 2018. We continue to be a School Sixth Form, nonetheless. Supervised study time has been doubled to ensure students receive support. The uniform code is being reviewed.

2. New assessment scheme

The new assessment scheme is designed to acknowledge students' individual progress. The old system did not recognise individual progress, nor did it differentiate sufficiently. The new system creates an additional top tier for effort and attainment, in the same way that the new GCSE system has expanded attainment. It encourages students to achieve their best through diligence and resilience. The new system has only one level to indicate underperformance. In the old system, the '4' was rarely employed. Over time, students will be acknowledged for their own progress based upon earlier assessments. The new assessment system, developed by the School's teachers, was shared with the Student Council last summer and they endorsed it with the understanding it would motivate students. In addition, staff are focusing more on the quality of formative feedback in assessments. Research shows that formative assessment is the most effective way to enable students to succeed.

3. Issues beyond School

The School recognises the pressures faced by many young people today, and three of our staff (Mrs Buck, Mr Hopkins and Mrs Wolseley) have received training in accordance with Lincolnshire's Five-Year Training Pathway and government guidelines. Students who have emotional needs, or who are experiencing challenging circumstances can speak to any member of staff. Our PSHE programme addresses issues such as use of drugs and alcohol, use of social media and its impact on mental

health. In December, at the request of Year 11 students, we had a presentation from the charity Positive Health on the way in which soft drug use can affect people and next term, thanks to the offer of one parent who works in hospitals, hope to have presentations about addiction. We try our best to educate students so that they can make informed choices but we do need to work in partnership and I do believe that parents have a role to play here too.

4. Break and lunch time cover

I have increased the number of lunchtime supervisors to two since September 2017. Mr Ewing and Mrs Ferguson are both first aid trained and work together, along with teaching staff who are on duty, to ensure students behave appropriately and are safe around site.

5. Mental health issues

The School responds within the limits of an educational establishment in this very important area. We use the services of Youthoria to extend our support of students with emotional needs. Where appropriate, students who are in need of extra support are supported unobtrusively by staff who need to be aware. The Senior Prefect Team have used their year to highlight mental health issues and plan to reinstate a School Positive Mental Health week in 2018. The School encourages students and parents to share concerns so that we can best support students. The school encourages students to talk through their problems.

6. Homework

The frequency and type of homework set will be reviewed at the end of this academic year to ensure that it is as effective as possible. If your child is in Year 11 or below and is regularly working through till late on homework, then please contact their form tutor so that we can investigate further. We expect Sixth Form students to complete a minimum of four hours of independent study per subject (including directed study tasks) outside of lessons.

7. Year 11 support post mock exams

Additional revision classes will start for Year 11 after the mock exams, although informal individual support is always available. Details of this additional support will be shared with parents on or before the Year 11 Parents' Evening on Tuesday 23 January 2018. The pastoral team will help students identify the areas of their learning where they need to concentrate based on their progress so far, including their mock

examination performance. Attending numerous revision classes without an overall plan can have potential implications for a students' ability to manage their expectations and I am conscious that all students need to have a break from studies at some point during their lunchtime. An appropriate programme for those that need additional assistance is constructed as soon as is practicable. I interview every Year 11 student in the first half of next term as part of this on-going support.

8. ParentMail.

ParentMail has proven to be a popular and effective addition to the way in which we communicate with home, according to parents that responded to the survey. We now have a new ParentMail email address parentmail@caistorgrammar.com where you can request changes about what you receive. For instance, if you have more than one child in the School you can request to receive one email for all your children. Students now receive copies of letters pertinent to their year in their email account on the same day that parents receive their letters. Letters go out on a Friday only so that parents know that routine communications come that day.

9. Cashless catering

Two front facing screens have been installed at the tills so students know what has been spent. Parents can ask for a daily limit to be placed on their child's account if they contact the ParentMail email address above. This will take a couple of days to put into effect. Low credit notifications for accounts that are below £2.50 are already sent out by email – please check your 'clutter' or 'junk' email boxes. If you haven't received these, please contact School on the ParentMail email address above. A 'cash feeder' in the dining hall means that students can still have control over money if parents so wish.

10. Assessments

Students in all years receive two assessments and one written report. An assessment precedes a parents' evening. In addition, all students take one set of exams and these are reported back to parents. At the end of each year, parents of students in Years 7 to 9 also receive their Standards assessment. Students are tracked: students should aspire to make at least one Standard's progress each year.

11. Trip availability

Now that letters go to parents and responses are immediate, this means that the 'first come, first served' principle is inappropriate. Instead, we open trips so that parents can express an interest before having their place confirmed and moving to payment. Parents can express an interest in 'Forms' and then move onto payment in 'Shop'. Expressing an interest is the only way to ensure that we offer fair access to all in this new system.

Please also ensure that you discuss any trip, opportunity, etc. with your son or daughter before signing them up! 'Expressing an interest' is a commitment to the trip.

12. Year 7 sleepover/ House plays

Year 7 sleepover ended at 9pm this year following a very enjoyable evening of activities, etc. An increased awareness of our safeguarding duty to our students means that events such as the sleepover itself can no longer occur. The format of House plays, due to take place in February 2018, has been changed for two reasons. Firstly, the seating capacity in the town hall limits us to an audience size. Secondly, new linear courses in Year 13 and more rigorous GCSE exams for Year 11 means that there is greater pressure on students. Year 13 no longer have AS modules or coursework to rely upon and coursework or non-examined assessments at GCSE has less prominence.

13. Governors

Governors can be contacted on the email address: governor@caistorgrammar.com. Emails will be forwarded to the relevant governor according to the content of the email. We try to have at least one governor attend parents' evenings.

I hope that addresses some of the comments that arose in the survey. I am happy to listen and respond to concerns that are aired appropriately.

I am planning to hold an end of year parents' forum where I and governors can answer any questions that you have. I shall let you know more next term.

With warmest regards,

Alistair Hopkins

HM