



## Thomas Tallis Parents' Forum 7.10.14

### *Education to understand the world and change it for the better*

1. CR welcomed parents to this first meeting of the new year. About 20 parents attended.
2. Our theme was our Stretch and Challenge initiative, and what we hope to achieve to make all our children make faster progress and take control of themselves as learners. Advanced Skills Teacher Sarah Phillips leads this work. We hope it will be a more useful and longer-lasting way of approaching what used to be called Gifted and Talented. However, it does not replace that work entirely. Sarah was keen to know from parents if they would be interested in attending a workshop or series of workshops in which she shared strategies already used in school to encourage young people to extend their learning. There'll be more about that in the Friday newsletter. Sarah's slides are attached to this document.
3. As part of this we talked about homework or home learning, and the new Show My Homework software which seems to meet with general approval all round – parents, children, teachers. While there are still glitches to sort out, we are confident that this is an excellent development.
4. As part of the discussion of homework the following questions were raised:
  - a. There seems to be more homework than previously.
  - b. Year 7 seem to get much more homework than Year 10, for example.
  - c. Are Year 7 in fact getting too much homework? A parent had called a halt to homework which seemed overwhelming and was taking up a whole weekend. Another described a Year 7 homework 'meltdown'. What guidance do we give about time?
  - d. Do we have a policy on whether homework should ever be set one day for the next day? (CR said that a short memorising homework might well be tested the next day if that were possible timetable-wise).
  - e. How much homework are Year 10 getting?
  - f. Planners are still valuable, but there is often no response to parents' notes. However, responses are usually very good by email.
  - g. There is a grammatical error on the SMHW company website which should be pointed out to them.
5. At the end of the meeting, Sarah asked for parents to offer questions and feedback on post its, to guide us about the next steps. These points were raised:
  - a. How to develop enthusiasm to explore and not just approach HL as a tick box exercise, so that they see the value of it.
  - b. Stop culture of good enough with HL.

- c. How do you encourage a bright girl to work at her full potential? All she wants to do is feel safe and work at the level she is good at without effort.
  - d. Fun tasks to do at home that are challenging – different subjects.
  - e. Useful websites that are helpful in different subjects.
  - f. Connect Tallis Habits with jobs to illustrate how these can be used in life.
  - g. What should we do if children are stuck with HL? How to approach it?
  - h. Understanding the level expected.
  - i. What is planned for most able children, will there be extra curricular activities?
  - j. Support workshops on positive feedback to support learning?
  - k. How do we support them to take risks in learning?
  - l. How do I support stretch & challenge at home?
  - m. How is my child doing with HL?
  - n. What does she get merits for?
  - o. Who to go to for what?
  - p. How to handle pressure of HL?
  - q. Work life balance.
  - r. Class ratios.
  - s. Ideas that encourage and challenge?
  - t. School newspaper.
  - u. More clubs at school to challenge and extend fun activities.
  - v. Information and support online.
  - w. What will be replacing the G&T programme? (The current subject-based provision and opportunities will continue).
6. In other discussions parents asked the following questions:
- a. How do parents know if they are getting enough information or doing the right thing when the change between primary and secondary is so marked? We discussed the size of the school, the nature of adolescence and the opportunities we offer.
  - b. How do children find out about clubs? There's nothing on the website. CR will sort that out. There is a lot going on!
  - c. What is happening about lockers? CR explained that nature of the problem. She will report further in the Friday Newsletter
  - d. How is a child identified for a mentor? We discussed mentoring and the project starting up between Year 8 and 12.
  - e. How can children be expected to keep worksheets tidy in their bags? How can they take a pride in their work this way? CR will put this to staff.
  - f. Why can't there be more broad-based non-team sports clubs, especially football? CR and a governor talked about the pressures of time. She will ask PE if it is possible or practical for parents to volunteer to look after a club or team.
7. We also discussed the boy-girl ratio in school: boys are about 60% of our community because there are more girls' than boys' schools in the borough. CR will investigate the balance in a particular form group. (We have more girls than boys in the sixth form).
8. **Next meeting:** Tuesday 25 November at 6.00pm in the hall.