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### Introduction

This is the autumn term edition of the school bulletin. In it we will try to keep you up-to-date with all the policy matters and consultations that have been taking place this term. The bulletin will also be distributed at the same time as our new school magazine, The Canon, in which we want to celebrate student success and let you know about activities and trips that have taken place during the term. We believe that the distribution of both of these publications three times a year will help to enhance and improve our communication with you as parents and key stakeholders of the school.

#### 1. Curriculum Review

Having consulted with staff, parents and students alike we realised that there was an urgent need for a review of the curriculum. We have, therefore, set up a Curriculum Review Committee, consisting of members of the SMT and key Heads of Departments. We have also discussed the matter with the student council. Departments were given a number of meetings to answer key questions about the curriculum and to record their responses to these questions, in addition to the needs of the departments. We have also looked at the responses we have had by parents in the RAI survey and the questions or concerns that they raised at our two question and answer sessions this term. The following constitute our terms of reference in our discussions;

## **Terms of Reference**

The CRC must ensure that the curriculum review at The English School should promote the targets of;

- A broad and balanced curriculum, which maintains the academic rigour expected of the school by all stakeholders
- A curriculum which is relevant and meets the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century society
- A curriculum which develops personal learning and thinking skills, emotional intelligence and develops independent learners
- A curriculum which maximises choice for all learners
- A curriculum which is inclusive and integrated and prepares students to be global citizens
- A curriculum which allows and promotes progression and adds value to existing knowledge and skills

These discussions are ongoing, and we are systematically working through the three key stages (Years 1-3, Years 4-5 and Years 6-7) but our findings will be presented early in the New Year to all key stakeholders to allow for further consultation. The changes should take place over the next three years in order to bring the curriculum of The English School up to date and make it fit for purpose for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **2. Five (5) Year Strategic Plan**

As the head teacher has discussed with many parents, she has spent her first term at The English School gathering information and consulting with all the stakeholders of the school. This information is now being scrutinised by the senior managers of the school and drawn up into a five year strategic development plan for improvement. The key elements of the plan will be communicated to parents next term and should take into consideration a large number of the common issues and concerns that were raised with us this term. Progress towards meeting the targets in the plan will be reviewed every term by the Board of Management and all senior managers, including the head teacher, will be held accountable for leading the progress of a number of sections of the plan. We also intend to keep parents up to date with our progress in our regular communications with you.

## **3. RAI Survey**

As you are probably aware the Board of Management commissioned market research company RAI to conduct a thorough parental opinion survey over the summer and they interviewed over 600 parents. We are copying their executive summary of their findings in this bulletin for your information.

- Despite several comments and complaints that were expressed by parents during the survey practically everyone (95%) say that the English School has lived up to their expectations and that they would recommend it to others.

- There seems to be an obvious opportunity for improving communication in the English School – both between the school and parents as well as the teachers and parents.
  - Parents are asking for more regular communication and more time being devoted to them by teachers and the school. They also say that there needs to be more dialogue between the school and parents.
- There is also some concern coming from parents on the quality of teaching in the English School, mainly having to do with the perceived proficiency of a few of the teachers.
  - One of the main complaints is that teaching deficiencies in some departments require students to take private coaching lessons. The department mostly mentioned was Maths and to a lesser degree the 3 sciences and English.
- The only other area where we have quite a few concerns from parents is the Multi-cultural character of the school and issues of integration. However, it has to be said that this is a matter of low importance for most parents and it does not affect significantly their overall satisfaction with the school.
  - In general some parents feel that the issue of integration is still there and needs to be dealt with by the school. However, there is also some concern that there is excessive party political activity at the school.
- Discipline is important for parents but the general impression is that there are no serious issues at the school. Parents of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> formers as well as Turkish Cypriot parents are a little bit more apprehensive though.
- Other issues that were examined were the quality of guidance on choosing subjects as well as universities. Satisfaction with these was very high.
- Some other interesting findings were the following:
  - One in three students in the English School takes private lessons outside the school. Although most of them are looking to boost performance through these lessons, quite a few are taking subjects that are not being offered by the school as extra GCSEs.
  - Parents are voicing their concerns about the safety of the school premises and buildings.
  - Although there were high levels of satisfaction with the extra curricula activities and sport being offered at the school, swimming and tennis was mentioned by quite a few as something that they would like to see being offered.
  - Finally, there is a feeling that not enough has been achieved yet by the Pastoral Care System.

#### 4. Laurie Johnson report

Parents may be aware of Dr Johnson's involvement with the school in the past. She visited again last academic year and sent us a new report on our endeavours to be a successful multi-cultural school, which would celebrate the cultures and contributions of students from all different backgrounds. She has made a number of recommendations, some of which are to be incorporated in the school development plan. The following is a summary of her findings and recommendations for your information;

- The school should appoint a counsellor to help students who want to discuss sensitive or personal matters
- The school should produce a 5 year strategic plan in which all stakeholders have contributed
- The school needs to improve its lines of communication and engagement of all members of the school community
- The SMT should make itself more accessible to small groups across the school's community
- Student Voice should be increased and listened to
- All groups and voices should be heard across the school community
- There should be more activities in school e.g. through sports and recreation to allow children from different backgrounds to build interpersonal relationships
- There should be a curriculum review involving all staff and recommendations for change
- There should be a review of pedagogy and an acknowledgement of the fact that students have different learning styles and different needs. Discussion-based instruction, and the involvement of students in their own learning is EU recommended policy and should be encouraged amongst staff at The English School
- Staff should be trained in modern pedagogy
- A task force should be established to examine how the transition of the Turkish Cypriot students to the school can be achieved in the most effective way. The school should consider a minimal entry age for Turkish Cypriot students to better allow these students to develop their skills before entering the school.
- The school needs to formulate an ongoing, constructive public relations effort in order to inform the community of the mission and aims of the school.
- Citizenship education should be introduced to the curriculum
- Students should be invited to take part in a peer-mediation programme where they are confronted with managing and solving their own problems
- There should be a calendar and observations committee, to include students to decide on the calendar of events, including commemorations for the school year
- The role of Heads of Year should be reviewed and possibly rewritten
- The school should undertake a comprehensive review of the quality of its classrooms and other physical surroundings in order to enhance and improve the learning environment
- The school should formally recognise that some students at the school have special needs and should cater for them appropriately
- The school should attempt to build trust between members of the community by activities such as frequent meetings, retreats, team-building initiatives etc
- She concludes by applauding the work the school has already done in terms of addressing inter-cultural issues and encouraging dialogue on this subject in order to prepare The English School students to be global citizens who develop mutual respect for each other.

## **5. Teaching and Learning Community**

A group of about 25 teachers have volunteered to take part in this exciting new initiative. They are attending meetings, learning about new ideas of pedagogy, based on the process of assessment for learning and the research carried out at the University of London by Professor Dylan William and colleagues. The new methods involve more group work in class and students being made aware of their own attainment levels and the actions they need to take to improve these further. It also requires fewer teacher-led activities and more research and discussion, with students solving problems and being engaged in critical thinking. Students may have to assess their own or their peers' work in lessons in order to enhance their own understanding of what the assessment requirements are and to improve and deepen their own learning. Staff involved in this project are trying the new methods in class and then sharing their experiences with each other. They are also observing each other teach, or team-teaching in order to help each other improve the quality of their own teaching. We are trying to establish an ethos of life-long learning at The English School and all members of the school community should be willing to learn new ideas and examine research about the most effective methods of pedagogy. We applaud these teachers for being brave enough to open their own practice to peer scrutiny and we will encourage more teachers to take part in this programme over the next couple of years. If you want to know more about assessment for learning you can go to the following sites;

[www.dylanwilliam.net](http://www.dylanwilliam.net)

[www.ioe.ac.uk/staff/DIRE/DIRE\\_31.html](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/staff/DIRE/DIRE_31.html)

[www.ssatrust.org.uk/pedagogy/personalising\\_learning/pages/embeddingcd.aspx](http://www.ssatrust.org.uk/pedagogy/personalising_learning/pages/embeddingcd.aspx)

[www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/research/themes/assessment\\_for\\_learning](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/research/themes/assessment_for_learning)

## **6. School Nurse**

After a number of requests from parents and staff alike we have appointed a school nurse in a temporary capacity from January 2010. We hope to make this post permanent in the future but we are piloting her role and hours to see how successful this will be. The Board of Management and the school management recognise that with over 1000 students on site, it is important to have a medically trained professional on hand to give advice and diagnoses where necessary. The nurse will also be responsible for keeping attendance records and for checking up on students who are late to school. We look forward to your feedback on this new initiative.

## **7. Polite request**

Can we please ask parents not to come into school to see members of staff or the management team without an appointment? From January we will publish times when staff are available and then parents may contact teachers by e mail to let them know they intend to drop in at that allocated time. This should alleviate frustration on the part of parents, teachers and the office staff, who are currently overburdened with the large number of calls we receive into school from parents every day. This is a system that has been adopted in a number of public schools in Cyprus and we feel that it will allow for a more efficient system of communication between teachers and parents. We will welcome your feedback on this new

initiative. Unexpected arrivals at school by parents expecting an immediate meeting do not help us to deliver a professional service. From January, we are hoping to have a proper reception office in school so that visitors and callers may be dealt with politely and professionally and we would kindly request that all parents who are coming into school report to reception first. Thank you for your support in this matter.

#### **8. How to contact SMT**

(a) Ms Deborah Duncan	Head Teacher	22799302/22799310
(b) Dr Chris Mavrommatis	Deputy Head Teacher	22799306/22799311
(c) Mr George Panayiotou	Senior Teacher	22799305/22799315
(d) Ms Antigoni Kiliari	Senior Teacher	22799305/22799312
(e) Mr Antonis Antoniou	Senior Teacher	22799305/22799314
(f) Ms Maria Asvesta	Senior Teacher	22799300/22799316
(g) Mr Yiannis Georgiou	Senior Teacher	22799300/22799313

#### **9. Thank you**

I would like to thank all parents and members of the Nicosia community for the warm welcome you have given me and my family since my arrival in Cyprus. It has helped us to settle in more easily. I would also like to take this opportunity to wish you a pleasant Christmas holiday and to give my assurance that we will continue to work hard in The English School to improve the service we are giving even further in the new year.

Deborah Duncan

Head Teacher