

HSPA Pastoral Evening – Summer 2010

On Monday 14th June over 50 parents of children in years 7, 8, and 9 attended an informal Parents' Discussion evening hosted by Y10 parents in Highgate's Dining Hall.

Introduced by Todd Lindsay, Principal Deputy Head, the event was a new initiative by the HSPA and the School. The evening was very much parent led and designed to invite all parents to share their experiences from the early years of their children in Senior School on issues such as the teenage party scene, personal safety, alcohol and drugs.

Year 10 parents gave short presentations: first on the value of good communications and the role of PA Reps in the year groups; and then on the issues and some of their practical experience in dealing with the teenage social scene. Parents then broke into smaller discussion groups, based on their child's year group, to exchange experience and feed back suggestions on strategies that could be used to better equip themselves to deal with some of the challenges many parents face when bringing up teenagers.

Some of the suggestions from the groups included:

1. Each year group to have parent representative to facilitate better communication between parents. Two parents volunteered to do this for Year 8 and one for Year 7. The HSPA and School would seek to investigate how an e-mail list contact list for each year group could be established - with parents given an opportunity to opt out of being included if they wish. Year 10 parent Reps will share their experience of how they run their e-mail list and the Parents' Association will also assist in helping forge useful links between parents.
2. Parents in attendance were keen to know first names of their fellow parents. The HSPA and School will review the format of the contact lists that are issued to parents at the Information Evenings for parents with this in mind.
3. Parents were keen to know about new children joining their Year groups so that they and their parents can be welcomed more effectively into the Highgate community. The HSPA and School will review the content of the start of term communications to facilitate this. The School will also consider the format of induction and information evenings to ensure that new pupils and parents can rapidly feel even more settled and secure.
4. The HSPA and Parent Reps will seek to encourage more Year Group and House get-togethers throughout the year.
5. The HSPA and School will work to inform and regularly remind parents of key policies, guidance and rules designed to promote the safety and well-being of their children. For instance, the rules in the School Calendar related to bounds and Highgate children's use of local parks and Highgate village.

SUMMER PARTY SEASON

Outdoor gatherings.

Alcohol (Drugs)

Difficult to monitor so communication with child is key.

Variety of openings: school talks, the news, TV, magazines, books

2 highly recommended books:

‘Blame My Brain’ by Nicola Morgan

‘The Great Brain Robbery’ by Tom Scott & Trevor Grice

SAFETY TALKS

Units and strengths of alcohol

Importance of eating

Importance of spacing out drinks and drinking water

Impairment of judgement

Danger of drugs

What to do if...

Home example

BOUNDARIES

Discuss with child so they know up front. Compromise not veto.

Try to know where they are. (When ‘off radar’ that problems occur.)

Beware of ‘free houses’

THROWING A PARTY

Make a guest list and stick to it!

Decide on amount of alcohol if any. (No spirits below 16yrs)

Always have parental supervision, preferably extra adult helpers

Part of house out of bounds

Make sure all children can get home safely

ATTENDING A PARTY

Check parental supervision

Make sure your child can remain in ‘text contact’

Agree a method of getting home. Work out lift rotas.

Avoid too many sleepovers.

Dialogue not interrogation

DRUGS

Part of scene. Dealers available to provide school.

School Drug Policy & school counsellor

Need to help children to understand risks and to say no.

Problems magnify when strong links set up with dealers.

Limit money or at least know where money is going.

There was a very positive response from the parents attending the evening and enthusiasm for more communication within, and between, year groups.

Parents were very pleased to have been given the opportunity to hear about the experiences of older year groups and were interested in other events being held by the HSPA and School.

For further information, and support, parents were invited to contact the HSPA (via the website).

Simon Malster, Co-Vice Chair of the HSPA reminded parents and those interested in becoming Reps of the HSPA AGM on Tuesday 22nd June, 8.00pm, to be held in Undercroft at the Senior School. Parents were encouraged to attend.

Simon also reminded parents of the bar-b-que being held for parents and children from Y6, 7 and 8 at the School, by the Dining Hall, on Thursday 24th June from 6.00pm. Tickets available from:

Lucy Sanders
lucysanders@mac.com

Judy Knox
jandjknox@gmail.com

Elizabeth Knowles
elizabethknowles@btinternet.com

If you would like to volunteer as a Rep, or know more about being one, please contact the Y10 Reps, Caroline Woollard - caroline@woollard.eu or Ruth Hillary – ruth@corporatesustainability.com