



**KING EDWARD VI
LORDSWOOD
SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

Headteacher's Question Time - Tuesday 4th July 2023

In Attendance: Mrs Cooney: Headteacher

Mrs Allport: PA to Headteacher & SLT (note taker)

Apologies: Mrs Finucane: Assistant Headteacher - provided information to Mrs Cooney

Mrs Cooney welcomed the students to the Headteacher's Question Time and the students asked the following questions:-

1. Do you think climate change is starting to become a real problem and what has the school done to help prevent it?

Mrs Cooney: There are quite a few things that have been put in place. Caretakers used to turn lights off at 9.00 p.m. in all rooms as lettings sometimes used rooms in the school. Unless there is a lettings booking in a specific part of the building, all lights are now turned off at the end of the school day. The cleaners also do not put lights on now in the morning and we wait until the teachers come into school to turn on the lights.

We had a roof replacement last year which has been fitted on top of the old roof and this has provided an additional 6 inches of insulation to the building. This will make the school warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer. There are also solar panels on the sixth form building so there is hardly any electricity used in the sixth form block during the summer months.

Strip lights are expensive to run so many of our lights will be replaced in the summer with LED lights as we have received money from a bid that the Trust submitted. The LED lights emit more light using less electricity.

Uniforms are being donated to the school by parents over the summer so that these can be recycled to students whose parents cannot afford new uniforms and we can then recycle any of the donated uniforms if they are not needed or suitable to hand on.

We also have water chillers located around the school.

Mrs Finucane: Climate change is something that is becoming a problem. Year 7 school council reps have set up an eco-group to help raise awareness of the impact of wasting water and electricity by encouraging people to turn off taps in the toilets and to turn lights off.

Staff are also encouraged to turn off lights and projectors in the classroom when not in use. School encourages students to walk to school to help reduce their carbon footprint. Next year, we hope to launch an eco-sustainability student leadership group to lead initiatives in school that look at how the school community can save energy and reduce waste

2. I've been hearing about a culture day but can't find any information about it. Is it true we can expect one in the near future?

Mrs Cooney: If families do not share a traditional heritage, it may be uncomfortable for some students if we have a culture day. If you want to wear cultural heritage dress on non-uniform day, please do so. We are having a diversity day and students can wear a cultural outfit or wear something to show diversity.

Mrs Finucane: Sixth form students belonging to the 'Beyond Borders' group have organised a Diversity Day in order to raise funds for the 'Wings of Hope' Charity on the 14th July. The theme of the day is to wear something that reflects you, your identity and/or your beliefs..... so wear something that makes you, you! This day is to celebrate and recognize how diverse and inclusive we are as a school community. There will be more information in the assemblies this week and in the student bulletin.

3. Every 2 weeks, year 7's get library lessons where we are expected to read, but since we have DEAR on a daily basis, can we use those lessons to catch up on homework or revision for upcoming lessons?

Mrs Cooney: The whole point of library lessons is about reading. Homework is meant to be done at home, including revision which should become a habit and also be done at home. Reading at school needs to be a focus and reading age tests don't progress when students get to secondary school as they don't do enough reading so we need to increase this.

4. In the summer months, why can't year 11s, 10s and 9s use the flat grassy area near the astro pitch?

Mrs Cooney: This is because of student supervision as we need enough people to be able to do this. When students are on the playground, staff on duty can't see anyone on the grassy areas because of the hill. We have a limited number of staff to supervise as these times are the staff's break time and lunchtimes too, so we can't extend the area as if it is too big, there is not enough people to supervise and keep students safe.

5. Why can't year 10 go to any residential trips?

Mrs Cooney: Teachers are paid to teach and are not paid to go on trips and they have to volunteer to go on a residential trip. Also, we don't want to take you out of a GCSE lesson when exams are taking place. History are arranging a residential trip and there is also a Drayton Manor trip taking place. Unfortunately you missed your residential trip due to COVID but you will get better exam results by not missing lesson time.

We have to remember that trips need to have an academic focus as the school has to focus on the students' education. When they organise a trip they do this in addition to their normal day's work and consent forms, insurance, collecting money, letters to parents and transport all have to be arranged. When teachers are out of school on trips we have to cover classes with supply teachers which are expensive and students also miss their lessons. The most important thing for all teachers is teaching high quality lessons. We also have to consider the cost to families - residential trips are expensive. So school needs to consider all these aspects very carefully and ultimately has to make difficult decisions about the purpose and benefits of trips, ensuring that high quality education of the students is at the forefront of any decisions that are made.

6. Why did year 9's start their GCSEs early?

Mrs Cooney: Teachers are re-writing GCSE courses as we are phasing out year 9 students starting GCSE subjects early. This was started as a trial, but it didn't really work out and year 8 students won't start their GCSEs until year 10. GCSEs are meant to be taught up until the end of year 9 and this isn't what we were doing and that is the reason for this change.

7. How many students stay on for 6th form and what grades would you need to attain to stay on for sixth form?

Mrs Cooney: 60% of our students stay on for sixth form. Some students leave as they want to have a college experience, some do apprenticeships and others don't get the exam grades that we require. Grades 6 or grades 7 are needed to do an 'A' level here. If you go onto the school website and go to the heading of 'sixth form', there is information there which details the grades that are required for every subject. You do have to make sure that the sixth form is the best choice for you. In the sixth form you will have a review tutor, pastoral support and free study periods to provide you with support and guidance. Some people go to college and don't work hard enough as they do not have the pastoral care system available to ensure that you are attending college and working hard. If you choose this option you do need to be very self-disciplined.

8. What is the school's strongest area of academic performance?

Mrs Cooney: The subject areas performance are fairly consistent across the board. Progress 8 schools get awarded via the progress 8 results for each subject. We have a positive 0.7 award which is higher than in other schools. The other areas are fairly consistent with between 0.65 and 0.8 grades. The teachers at Lordswood work hard and so do the students and I am really proud of our outcomes.

9. Can you bring back the samosas and cubes to the canteen?

Mrs Cooney: Since the introduction of Natasha's Law, 12 – 18 months ago, we used to have labels on all sandwiches but now the label has to list every single ingredient used. This is a law introduced after a young lady who had a sesame seed allergy bought a sandwich which had this in but she did not realise this and she died. If we buy samosas or someone makes them in school, then we don't know what ingredients are included. If any of our students have food allergies, these are registered on the canteen till and if students try to buy anything that they are allergic to, then the person serving you will tell you that you cannot eat this food. This is why you are not allowed to buy food for other people. Potato wedges served in the canteen are cut and made by hand as this is cheaper and healthier than buying curly fries.

10. During the summer, or when the weather is good in general, is it possible for students with packed lunches to eat outside in the playground?

Mrs Cooney: We do not allow eating outside because of the rubbish which would be left on the floor which will create a problem with attracting rats and birds if there is food dropped on the floor and that is why you all have to eat in the canteen. I am hoping that we can have a canopy and outside dining area eventually but we cannot afford this at the moment.

11. Could we have more non-uniform days, but have a theme for each one like 2000's or cartoon characters?

Mrs Cooney: It would be lovely to have themes but we have to think about the cost of these. Most fancy dress costumes are not sustainable and are never worn again. Some parents are struggling to feed their children so can't afford to pay for costumes. Also, attendance goes down by 15% on a Christmas jumper day as parents can't afford to buy a jumper just for one day and that is why we do not have these days anymore.

There are more negative behaviour alerts issued on non-uniform days and teachers also say that the teaching is also affected. We currently have 4 non-uniform days each year where we donate to Charity and there may be an additional non-uniform day in the autumn term as this is a long term. The non-uniform day dates will be included in the end of term letter.

12. How did you become a Head teacher?

Mrs Cooney: I attended an interview at the school that took place over three days. There were several tasks that I had to complete:-

- Finance: how we could save money as we didn't have any money at that time

- Data: how could we make outcomes better?
- Teaching of a lesson
 - Presentation to staff
 - HR interview: scenarios were presented around teachers not coming into school, not following school rules and I was asked for suggestions on how to make certain things better
 - Student Panel
 - Presentation to the interview panel on how I could make the school better

Before coming to Lordswood I had 20 years' experience working in different roles. I was once Head of Science where the roof caved in and water flooded the classroom. I worked in inadequate schools where I would try and get an improvement in the schools. I was a Deputy Head in an inadequate school and a Deputy Head in a good school.

13. Why has year 10 become the forgotten year?

Mrs Cooney: You were not in school for year 7 and year 8 as you experienced the COVID closedown but you are certainly not the forgotten year group. We do have an action plan for year 10 students as you did miss lessons due to COVID and we are making sure we fill the gaps for you. We really do care about year 10 students and this is why the Drayton Manor trip has been arranged to try and make this up to you.

14. Why is there no road crossing directly from the school gate as this would be easy for students to cross the road without running?

Mrs Cooney: I have been emailing Birmingham City Council since joining the school. The official address and entrance is Knightlow Road but we don't use this entrance as the road is quite narrow. Lordswood Boys' School entrance is on the Hagley Road. Both of these entrances are unsafe. I am trying to get the Council to provide barriers, zigzags and signs to keep you safe as the Council won't allow another crossing as there is already one nearby. We encourage students to walk to the crossing. You and your parents could write to Birmingham City Council asking for these things to be put in place. In Primary Schools a crossing lady is in place as the school pays for this via PTA funding.

15. Is there any way students can be more involved in decision making processes within the school other than student council?

Mrs Cooney: We are in the process of putting something together regarding this. In SLT we looked at leadership and discussed small group committees such as a Prom Committee, EDI Committee, Student Leaders, Peer Mentors and additional Prefects. 30 year 9 students will become Peer Mentors to students and year 10 students going into year 11 can apply to become a prefect by completing an application form.

16. Can year 10 students show the new year 6 students around the school?

Mrs Cooney: The year 7 students who are going into year 8 will look after the new year 7 students. Year 11 students are the student guides for Open Evenings and they direct the parents around the school as they have the experience to answer difficult questions from parents.

Mrs Cooney thanked the students for attending the Headteacher's Question Time session and for taking the time to submit such interesting questions which she will share and discuss with the Senior Leadership Team.