

Our Ref: JMPH/yc

17<sup>th</sup> November 2015

To: Members of the Liaison Committee  
Of the School Parents' Association

Dear Parents

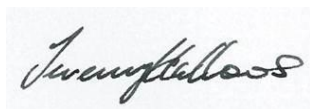
**BROMSGROVE SCHOOL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION**

**MEETING OF THE LIAISON COMMITTEE OF THE  
SCHOOL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION**

**THURSDAY 19<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2015**

I have pleasure in enclosing the Agenda for the Meeting of the Liaison Committee of the School Parents' Association, to be held on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November in Cookes Room 7.30 pm/7.45 pm.

Yours sincerely



Mr JMP Hallows  
**Head of Senior School**

Enc

## **AGENDA**

<b>1.</b>	Apologies	<b>Head of Senior School</b>
<b>2.</b>	Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 <sup>st</sup> May 2015 incl. Action Plan	<b>Chairman</b>
<b>3.</b>	Weather Station Bid/Candles Bid	<b>Geography Dept/Chaplain</b>
<b>4.</b>	Publication of Liaison Minutes	<b>School House</b>
<b>5/17/22/29.</b>	White Diaries	<b>School/Lupton/Walters House</b>
<b>6.</b>	Pupil Catering Survey	<b>School House</b>
<b>7/20.</b>	Catering	<b>School/Lupton House</b>
<b>8.</b>	Whole School Photographs	<b>School House</b>
<b>9/11/18/27/31</b>	Commemoration Day/Gazebos	<b>School/Lyttelton/Lupton/Hazeldene/Walters House</b>
<b>10.</b>	Private Rooms	<b>Lyttelton House</b>
<b>12.</b>	Rain Shelter	<b>Lyttelton House</b>
<b>13.</b>	Sixth Form Centre	<b>Lyttelton House</b>
<b>14.</b>	Sixth Form Exams	<b>Lyttelton House</b>
<b>15.</b>	Lost Property	<b>Lyttelton House</b>
<b>16.</b>	Uniform	<b>Ex-Changing Room</b>
<b>19.</b>	Text Books	<b>Lupton House</b>
<b>21.</b>	Umbrellas	<b>Lupton House</b>
<b>23.</b>	School Finishing Time	<b>Lupton House</b>
<b>24.</b>	Student Teachers	<b>Lupton House</b>
<b>25.</b>	Term Dates	<b>Hazeldene House</b>
<b>26.</b>	Curriculum	<b>Hazeldene House</b>
<b>28.</b>	Car Park	<b>Thomas Cookes House</b>
<b>30.</b>	Parents Directory	<b>Walters House</b>
<b>31.</b>	Proposed Date of Next Meeting	<b>Head of Senior School</b>
<b>32.</b>	General School Parents' Association Matters	<b>Chairman</b>
<b>33.</b>	AOB	<b>Chairman</b>

## **BROMSGROVE SCHOOL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION**

### **Items raised by School House**

**4. Publication of PA Liaison Meeting Minutes** - Are the minutes of the PA Liaison Meeting currently available for parents to view? If so, are they online and where can we find them?

**5. White Diaries** - Quite a number of parents would like to see the return of the White Diaries. The feeling is that they are far more user friendly than the online version. The question was asked as to whether the maroon book was still published. If removal of the White Diary was down to cost, it was suggested that it would be better to lose the maroon book and keep the diary.

**6. Pupil Catering Survey** - At the end of last term the pupils completed a survey about the food at school. Was there any feedback published?

**7. Catering** - A number of pupils are not happy with the food quality. Feedback suggests the food is rather hit and miss and the portion sizes are smaller. On a positive note, the afternoon snack has been a success.

**8. Whole School Photographs** - It seems that the availability of the whole school photograph taken last term passed a number of parents by. How do we get hold of copies?

**9. Commemoration Day** - School House are keen to have a marquee at next year's Commem. Would it be possible for the School to provide two marquees per house rather than parents having to pay? PAs could pay extra should they require more than the two provided.

### **Items raised by Lyttelton House**

#### **10. Private Room**

The need to identify a meeting room to conduct private and/or sensitive meetings with parents/ pupils e.g. following unsatisfactory exam results, rather than conducting them in the "goldfish bowl" next to the main school reception.

#### **11. The issue of cost of 'House Gazebos' at Commemoration Day**

Those of us who have been at Senior School for a long time will understand the history behind the move from informal 'put out your own blanket or gazebo' to the corporate-like move to school gazebos and the associated £100 cost per gazebo. Parents have had to adapt to these changes but it HAS created an elitism not far removed from Ascot or Henley. To start with, if you weren't in someone's tent as an invited guest, you either had confidence to breeze round anyway, or wandered round trying to look like you belonged, or put down your rug behind the tight circle of white gazebos or gave up and didn't attend at all!

Some House P.A.s recognised this issue, particularly the boarding houses where pupils had to be on the school premises anyway but had nowhere else to go. Some rallied round to get up to 3 gazebos to support their pupils and parents and create some sort of identity. Others didn't get their orders in on time or decided they weren't going to run another P.A. managed event because they had just done an end of term House specific event that same week. Understandable, lots of work being done by a hard working minority team.

Consequently some 2 or 3 Houses had no gazebos at all last year, whilst others were running either simple to lavish catering, complete with banners, tables, chairs and outside catering. As all the allocation of gazebos went to Old Boys, 6th form leavers and Houses as the priority orders, that left no allocation for any other families or groups, and of course nothing for people who had no House gazebo to hang round.

I feel that it is wrong to charge the houses for gazebos. I know that they needed to be paid for when the investment was first made and there is the cost of putting them up and down again. But I would like to request that school waives the bill for at least ONE gazebo per House. School should put that gazebo up regardless of whether the PA want to run it or not, so that families have a shelter, a meeting point and somewhere to eat their lunch, even if not catering on a big scale. The house gazebos should be scattered evenly round the circle and have a house sign so that parents can be encouraged to use it casually without cost to themselves or their pupils, who may well be without their parents that day.

A more basic hot takeaway food service for those lone pupils would also be appreciated. Just hot dogs or burgers, nothing too fancy and close to the gazebos not sited in the hospitality suite out of the way. That would cut down on pupils roaming round town with no focal point at school.

It's all about seeing the smaller picture not the glittering display of corporate white gazebos and people happily quaffing drinks and enjoying the goodwill of a small group of parents. For many, Commemoration day is an isolating experience if you are not part of that gang!

## **12. The Rain shelter (Bus)**

I was unsuccessful in getting this re-sited to where it should have been put in the first place, despite persistent Liaison meeting requests. It is now covered with dense foliage and serving a very useful purpose as a 'smoking shelter' as I predicted. I spoke to the security gate staff last week who said it is a constant problem. There was some sort of outside sporting or athletics meet recently and there were a gang of people puffing away in our thoughtful 'smoking shelter' on a non-smoking site that educates children!

If I can't win on the re-siting requests, it either needs pulling down as no child shelters under there (no parent cars allowed to come that way and you can barely see cars turn into the parents car park), OR a strongly worded sign saying NOT A SMOKING SHELTER!

## **13. Sixth Form Centre**

Please could you discuss the removal of the 6th form centre at the school liaison committee as I know it has caused upset amongst the 6th formers who now feel that there is no differentiation between themselves and the rest of the school. In addition for the Lyttelton 6th formers who don't want to use the library they have the long walk back to the police station. Most other independent schools have a 6th form centre and I feel for new children joining the 6th form there is now no social area for them to meet other 6th formers and that they are restricted to their houses, which is not ideal for a newcomer. As a parent who is considering Bromsgrove 6th form for my other child, the lack of a 6th form centre is definitely a negative, as I am sure it would be for other prospective parents. I would be interested to hear their reasonings behind removal of this facility and would be grateful if you could raise the subject.

## **14. Sixth Form Exams**

Please could we have an update on how examination mocks and 'actuals' will work for the L6 this year? They are the Transitional Year where some subjects are still AS and A2 whilst others have abolished AS and it's back to the old system of a 2 year course with exams that count only in U6.

When will they have their mocks for AS exams and will the 'Actuals' still be in May/June?

What about the subjects that have no AS exam? Will they do exams in the summer for practice or mocks in the U6 Autumn term? Or both?

What happens to predicted grades for UCAS and putting down AS marks? My daughter is doing Geography, Art and Biology and only the Geography will have an AS result.

I know that the tariff system is also changing and the numbers are much lower. A lot of the universities don't seem to have taken this on board yet. When I visited with my daughter on Open days recently they seemed pretty clueless, referring to the old tariff of points without any knowledge of the new system for 2017 entry.

Incidentally, I note that the EPQ that all L6 are taking (as a top up to only 3 A levels now), has a reasonable weighting in the new tariff tables, looking like the value of half an A level. That is very reassuring and thank you for this initiative as it nicely represents the AS that used to be taken as 4th subject and then dropped.

I think all L6 parents would appreciate an early 'heads up' on how you are going to conduct mocks, actuals and the timings for all these so that we can plan study time and holidays round them.

## **15. Lost Property**

Earlier this term my son Tom inadvertently left his school kit bag in the Arena sports hall after badminton training on a Thursday. In it was his entire games kit and all his school uniform, shoes, blazer, the lot, everything except the 1st team kit he was wearing. The next day he enquired at the Sports Centre reception but was told it hadn't been found. I sent my apologies to Mr Giles who took up the search also and emailed around the school. In the meantime Tom asked again at the sports centre and emailed both Mrs Maund - head of lost property, and the head of Elmshurst house, as it was the house nearest to the sports centre, hoping someone could shed light on the whereabouts of his bag, but to no avail.

By Monday the following week I was becoming frantic at not being able to locate Tom's bag. Meanwhile Tom missed all his PE and games sessions as he had no kit to wear, and spent almost a week wearing black trainers, his old school tie and a blazer that he'd previously grown out of. I was on the verge of having to replace everything at huge cost.

Finally on the Wednesday I called the school myself and was put through to the Sports Centre. I explained the situation and left it with them to investigate. Barely five minutes later they called me back with the good news that they had located his bag.

At first I was hugely relieved and grateful as you'd imagine, however then I began to wonder why on earth I'd spent hours labelling every single item of Tom's school attire including his kit bag, which had his name and house clearly written on the side, when nobody bothered to use the information to reunite the bag with the boy.

Clearly someone had found Tom's bag in the hall and had put it to one side but without considering that there would be a stressed child desperately trying to find it again. Would it have been so difficult to have read the name on the side and just taken it to Lyttelton house?

The level of anguish created by this was totally unnecessary and I would urge the school to implement a simple policy whereby clearly named items which have been identified as mislaid are either promptly returned to their named owner or, as a matter of course, taken to a central point that children are aware of to be reclaimed quickly.

I'd be surprised if such a policy doesn't already exist, but if it does I'm afraid it failed dismally in our case.

Please can this 'Lost Property' procedure be reviewed and resolved?

### **Items raised by Exchanging Room**

#### **16. Location of Shop**

I would like to raise the location of the shop as an issue. We are currently based in the music block & due to the success of it & the fact that we have incorporated the pre prep into it, we have totally outgrown the space we have.

We also understand that building work is scheduled for the music block & would like to understand the timescales involved & wherever could possibly be located so we can prepare for the move.

### **Items raised by Lupton House**

#### **17. White Book**

Please could you ask about the white book or should I say lack of one. With such busy schedules it has been a nightmare without having this at our fingertips. I for one do not always have access to a computer so it makes planning very difficult. Whilst I appreciate that the app has been developed, only today we have been informed of this, it would be much better to have had an overlap to ensure it works. I also do of always get coverage to access an app. As a busy working parent the white book worked so why fix it.

Please note this point has been raised by many sets of parents .

#### **18. Gazebo/Commem Lunch**

At Commemoration we were unable to have a school gazebo, it was not an option as our House didn't have one and we didn't have a school leaver student.

The only available option for families was the PA Luncheon priced at £27.00 for children (even pre-prep) and parents, with no drink included. The buffet was self-service and poor quality. The high price was accounted for as the school caterers charged £22.00 per head and the PA added a small amount for raising funds. The school offer Ladies Foundation Lunches for £15.00 including drinks on arrival and it is very good food, much appreciated by all who attend. As many parents taking the PA Commemoration Lunch are boarding parents who are unable to attend the Ladies Lunches or any House PA events it seems very poor value for money, after all these parents already contribute to PA funds through their school fees.

Could the school please consider offering the same food and price for the Commemoration Lunch as they do to the Ladies Foundation Lunches.

#### **19. Text Books**

Please could a system to ensure pupil respect for text books be considered? I have been particularly shocked by the state of my child's English Literature Shakespeare text. It is covered with doodles and scribbles. Large sections were covered with boxes scribbled in pencil (most of these we have been able to erase – around 15 pages or more) and other pages scribbled on, doodled on and initialled all around the text in pen which cannot be removed. Can the books not be signed out to the named pupil at the start of the year and checked on return at the end? If they have defaced the book they should be charged for a new one and the defaced copy removed from circulation. All children but particularly those in the Upper School should understand the importance of respect for these learning materials and if they don't systems need to be introduced such that there are consequences if they don't.

## **20. Lunches**

- a. Portion sizes for the lunches. My son struggles and is often hungry as he is often training at lunchtimes and cannot queue for seconds( if there are any). The boys ( and maybe the girls too) are expected to train and play hard which is difficult when not fed properly .
- b. Packed lunches on the way to matches are too small
- c. My son has asked if they are allowed the sandwiches (not just the teachers) when the dining room has run out of a balanced lunch ie no potatoes or veg
- d. Wholemeal bread for toast in houses. Far healthier and if there was no choice then I am sure they would all eat it . There is so very little nutritional value in cheap white bread.
- e. Since Holroyd Howe have taken over the contract to provide food for Bromsgrove, I have had nothing but complaints about the school lunches from both my children.
- f. The food is aimed at an adults palette and not simple, healthy food that appeals to children. For the first time in a very long time there was actually a roast dinner on the menu this week and another favourite with the pupils, meatballs which has never been on the menu since Holroyd Howe have taken over. My son hasn't been up to lunch this term and has toast in House instead and my daughter usually has a jacket potato most days.

I understand the need for healthy food but the food that is on offer is of poor quality and not appealing. They should go back to doing a roast once or twice a week like they used to and cook some of the popular dishes as well. I know that there are many parents that are unhappy with the food.

## **21. Umbrellas**

Can the other years apart from VIth form have a decent sized umbrella rather than small fold down one

## **22. White Book**

Please can we have the white book back , the websites aren't even saying the same things . Also they aren't telling you what isn't on.

## **23. School finishing time**

Adding an extra 15 minutes to the end of the day has meant that everyone is getting home even later and the excuse that it is so clubs can take place at lunchtime does not ring true. It is to accommodate the Year 7 & 8 pupils as they now finish for lunch at the same time as the Senior School. I propose that Years 3 - 6 have 3 lessons in the morning and then have lunch which would then allow Years 7 & 8 to have their lunch at the Prep School at 12.50pm freeing up the dining room for the Senior School and reducing lunchtime back to an hour allowing pupils to finish at 5 pm like they used to. The extra 15 minutes at the end of the day has a huge knock on affect as in just those 15 minutes the traffic has increased considerably.

## **24. Student Teachers**

Student teachers should not be allowed to teach pupils that are going through their GCSE or A Level courses. My son had a student teacher for almost the entire Lent Term during the first year of his GCSE Maths course. The teacher was not very good and consequently my son has lost a term's worth of important Maths teaching. When we, as parents are paying for our children's education, student teachers should not be used for important year groups that are working towards major examinations.

## **Items raised by Hazeldene House**

## **25. Term Dates**

I have been requested by a Hazeldene parent to raise an issue regarding term dates. This parent wonders why some terms are starting mid week?.

## **26. Curriculum**

Another parent has raised a question that I am not sure is covered by our meetings. This parent wants to know why computer studies are not part of the main curriculum?

## **27. Commemoration Day/Gazebos**

We are concerned that House funds are needed to pay for marquees for Commemoration Day, which is a school event. We feel that the school should allocate 4 marquees for each house without charge.

Over the last few years Commemoration Day has changed considerably and is now virtually an exclusive 6th Form event. We feel that steps need to be taken to widen the availability of this event so that parents of younger pupils can also experience and enjoy this part of school life.

## **Item raised by Thomas Cookes House**

### **28. Car Park**

I wish to express concerns regarding the chaotic nature of the senior school car park in the evenings.

My daughter is in lower sixth and is in Thomas Cookes House. This has meant that until the start of this term, I had been picking her up from the old police station car park.

Now that TC is back up and running, I am picking up from the main school car park and, although the car park has always been busy, I am surprised at the significant increase in traffic using the car park since the commencement of this term.

On average it takes a good 20 minutes to get out of the car park most evenings.

There would appear to be a large number of cars parked on the car park who are not collecting pupils from school at the end of a long day, but rather delivering young children or themselves for whatever activities they or their children are attending (swimming lessons and gym I assume).

Although I appreciate that the swimming lessons and gym generate an income for the school it seems somewhat poor judgement to allow cars other than those collecting Bromsgrove pupils to use the car park and facilities during the busiest time of the day.

There are young children running around and between the cars in the dark not to mention adults and Bromsgrove school pupils milling around.

To make matters worse, a number of people using the car park do not appear to be aware of the one way system, which of course causes even more chaos.

Last week someone had parked in a position that almost blocked the main entrance and then left the car unattended causing all sorts of problems not only on the car park but also on the main road outside school.

Last Friday I was unable to park in a designated space and therefore parked the best I could whilst waiting for my daughter to arrive. I was asked by an impatient Bromsgrove mother to move out of the way because her Learner daughter would not be able to get her car out of the parking space she was



lucky enough to be able to park in, whilst I was more than prepared to move out of their way, the fact that a parent did not understand the importance of a 'please' and 'thank you' was somewhat disappointing in itself.

Can I suggest that to avoid an accident waiting to happen and to avoid tempers rising, serious consideration is given to who should be using the facilities at the senior school between 5pm and 6pm.

## **Items raised by Walters House**

### **29. White book**

Number of parents would like the return of the White book - all aware we should be 'paperless' but it is difficult to find things in new format (parents evening dates being one example - email now sent for these) and other reasons. New online system doesn't appear to be updated with changes any more than old white book was either.

### **30. Parents directory**

To enable parents that wish to give details of their own business - networking. Amazing diversity within parent group that all could give benefit from. Also could be utilised for potential work experience (for pupils to coordinate themselves).

### **31. Gazebos**

Work's well for Walters but felt that system wasn't very 'fair' especially where some house PAs were not willing to book gazebos on behalf of house.