

## Parent/Carer Voice Meeting

Wednesday 26 March 2025

Mr Li-Rocchi welcomed new parents/carers to the meeting and informed them about the structure of the meeting, and that it used to discuss / get feedback on various themes, not to focus on individual issues linked to children etc. The bullet points in the minutes below represent views and feedback from parents / carers.

### 1. Newsletter Feedback – Content, Frequency

Mr Li-Rocchi asked questions to parents/carers regarding the weekly head's newsletter:

- a. Do you like what is in the newsletter? What should/should not be there?
  - I like to read the newsletter. I have little involvement with the school, and it is nice to see what is happening. It is great that some weeks are lengthy with lots of news. Without the newsletter, I would have to make a conscious effort to go on to the website.
- b. Is there anything that is too repetitive?
  - It does seem to be DT and PE heavy but that is OK.
  - It does keep parents/carers up to date and informed.
  - Parents do not always know what happens in school hours – I like it.

Mr Li-Rocchi – It is also a celebration of success. Some features on DT are good for recognition of students. It is nice to speak to students when in school about their achievements.

- I completely agree. It is a part of the community feel, and it is good that the school is small, so you know the children. It is nice for the children to see themselves in the newsletter.
- c. Frequency – termly would make the newsletter lengthy - is weekly a good time scale?
    - Weekly is good as parents/carers get weekly contact and information.
    - It is nice to see pictures and writeups about trips. I like weekly.
    - Weekly – it is good to see students performing well. It would be too long if it was half termly.

Mr Li-Rocchi – reminders can be put in e.g. holiday activities that Norfolk CC run which can be put in for a 2-3 week run to remind parents/carers.

- Half termly would be too infrequent.
- d. Is there anything you would like to see in the Newsletter?
    - It might be good to have a "quip of the week" - funny things that students say would make it more light-hearted.

Mr Li-Rocchi mentioned that he is looking to bring in careers and guidance. It may not be added every week but would include local apprenticeships, careers articles etc.

## **2. Mobile Phones in School – Feedback on Sanctions, Confiscation Approach**

Mr Li-Rocchi has been consulting with the senior leadership team and governors regarding the school approach to mobile phones. In other schools pouches are being used which cost £15.00-£30.00 each and are 'locked' during the day. Hobart cannot afford these, and they may get lost by the students, need replacing etc. Signal blockers were looked at but these are illegal. Sim cards in phone that limit use are available but would take a long time to swap in the morning and afternoons so are not practical.

Current school rules:

- Phones should not be seen or heard.
- If they are seen or heard they are confiscated.
- We have a spreadsheet where we work in half term blocks. The first time the child can collect at the end of the day and the second time the family is asked to collect the phone.

There has been an increase in use and inappropriate use.

Should the school increase the level of severity for sanctions? This is something we might look to change.

- I have noticed that when my son started the school was tougher on school usage and now it is more relaxed. Students are on their phones more where they used to hand them in. I am split as Hobart is a rural school and children may need their phones for the journey home, but I am anti phones being in school.

Mr Li-Rocchi – Pre covid - students handing phones in was an expectation, but every child was not checked. It was part of the school culture. This changed during the pandemic, for health and safety reasons, and we never saw a return to this routine. Phones can still be handed in but there are low numbers that do this. Mr Li-Rocchi is reluctant to have a blanket ban on phones being in school.

- All schools have the same problems. Pouches do not work, and students may bring in two phones. Whatever is in place students will mitigate. The sanction has to be strong and restorative. It is really tough to manage. Manpower cannot be everywhere. I am always seeing pictures/videos taken in school toilets. Sanctions need to be stronger.
- Consistency is needed. Spot checks.
- Generally, I feel strongly regarding mobile phones. At times I have to remove my child's phone. Behaviour can dip at times due to phone use. I have removed the phone for two weeks and behaviour did improve, but it is only a matter of time before the bad behaviour returns.
- A lot of videos are made in school. They merge together to make images. Parents/carers are battling phone use. Parents/Carers need to carry out sanctions.

- Looking at educating parents/carers to tell their children not to look at phones during school time. "Kids Lock" is an app and means that you do not have to take the phone away, just lock use during school times.

Mr Li-Rocchi stated that phones are not used very much in classrooms. Social times are much more of an issue particularly in toilets.

- When phones are taken away and children go to school, children cannot check anything, e.g. Go4Schools and we need to ensure that they are still doing their homework.
- Certain apps can be accessed when the lock app is used. The app does have to be paid for.
- Educating children about inappropriate use of phones is needed as it is a surprise for them if they get contacted by the police e.g. recording.
- Would like to see tough sanctions. Hobart is stricter on uniform and compared to other schools is better. Would like to see a move away from phone use in lessons. There is no need to have a phone on them all the time.

Mr Li-Rocchi – At the moment students are allowed to have their mobile phones on them eg in blazers. Something we are considering is to insist they are in their bags and to issue a sanction if they are not in the right place. If phones are in pockets, then if they go to the toilet, they can take them with them and if they are in bags they are more of an effort to get out / it will be more visible. Not all lessons have bags allowed in classes and for some they are left outside, so theft may be a concern. However, students have a choice to hand their phones in at reception and students do have lockers. There could be an issue if the phone is in a locker, and it goes off (not on silent) - it could become difficult in lessons. In general, we need to make it more difficult for students to use their phones.

- If students are allowed to have phones on their person, it then gives leverage to use as they are addicted. The problem is that the phone can go off / alert them. If the phone goes off a tough sanction is needed.
- It would concern me (phones in bags outside the classroom).
- Does every student have a locker?

Mr Li-Rocchi – Two thirds of students but this is a guess.

- Could form tutors collect phones at the start of the day?

Mr Li-Rocchi – Some form tutors do not have their own room and rush off to teach. It would create an issue where it causes a delay to get to lessons and there is an issue of where they would be stored.

- A parent/child discussion is needed to say either to put in their locker or to hand the phone in.
- Could a secure cabinet be put outside classrooms?

Mr Li-Rocchi – this would not be practical and again would be more work that takes away from teaching.

Should we move the first confiscation to parent/carer collecting?

- Consensus is yes, as it is too easy for parents/carers not to know if their child uses their phone in school.

Mr Li-Rocchi – the onus needs to be on the child to tell their parent/carer to collect the phone from the school.

- What time does the school close?

Mr Li-Rocchi – The office closes at 4.30pm on Monday to Thursday and 4.00pm on a Friday. The site team could be briefed on how to get phones from the safe as they are on site until late and SLT are usually around between 5.00pm - 7.00pm.

- There will be a lot of confiscation. I can imagine there will be a kickback from some parents.

Mr Li-Rocchi – There will likely be a kickback from some parents. The Department of Education guidance makes it clear we can confiscate things if within policy etc. If a student has the phone confiscated in September and then again in October - should it be confiscated for 3 days for the second offence? In my view, lots of parents/carers will support, some will sit on the fence and others will demand to have phones back.

The expectation for some students who have not used phones well is that phones should be handed in. The office would then let key staff know if it is not, a search would take place.

- Split families could be an issue as if the phone is confiscated children cannot contact the parent they are not staying with.

Mr Li-Rocchi – We could adapt our approach with split families if needed. If there are local families collecting phones, then this could be easier for them and less of a deterrent. Another school locally uses pouches, and there was a drop in online bullying and less distractions in lessons. The school is in a more challenging area and has more funds for pouches.

- Can see obvious differences e.g. better focus and concentration if phones were not accessible. There is an effect when using phones.

Mr Li-Rocchi - The programme 'Adolescence' is a hard watch with mention of the influence of Andrew Tate, etc. During the episode based in a school – lots of students had phones out. Is this how schools are perceived by families? It was very different to the use of phones at Hobart.

- Yes I have seen it some schools I have been into where phones are out at break and lunchtimes.

Mr Li-Rocchi – At the moment the first time the phones are collected by the students and the second time is collected by parents/carers. This is what we are reviewing.

- Can they be taken for a period of time?

Mr Li-Rocchi – Yes as long as the rules are made clear and are in policy

- There will be problems with safety.
- This will peak and then plateau.

Mr Li-Rocchi – We may use a trial period for approximately four weeks in the summer and then start properly in September. Where there are serious concerns, staff will confiscate and if necessary, give phones to the police. We do not go down this route unless there is a safeguarding risk, etc.

- I would want to know as a parent that it would be a joined approach. I would not want to get a call that had been upped to police level without warning.

Mr Li-Rocchi – If it is a one-time serious situation then the police could be involved straight away without warning.

- How many students have apple watches? These are another distraction as they will still get messages.

Mr Li-Rocchi – There could also be a ban on apple/smart watches.

### 3. Website Feedback

What do you like/do not like about the website, e.g. accessibility and content?

- There was an issue with the calendar a few weeks ago but is ok now.

**Action** – MBI to check the calendar regularly.

- When I go on to the website, I can always find what I need.
- I struggle to find the calendar.

**Action** – MBI to check the location of calendar on an iPad and follow up if possible / required.

- As a current parent I don't use it, but I do like it.
- I don't use it, but if I do need to navigate it is very straight forward.
- You can only see part of the calendar.

**Action** – MBI to speak to the website host regarding these points.

- Everything looks good.
- I really like the parent/carers evening software to book and hold appointments.

Mr Li-Rocchi – Parents/Carers and staff preferred online appointments when last surveyed. With face-to-face appointments there is a lack of privacy and problems with timekeeping and parking.

- Logically the software is easy.
- It also keeps families together.

