Notes from the Class Delegates' Meeting: Secondary
Thursday 7 December 2017, 18:30 - 20:15

The school was represented by:

Mr. Per FRITHIOFSON - Director

Ms. Lene SOEKOV - Deputy Director

The APEEEL2 was represented by:

Ms. Delphine BALLAGUY - President

Mr. Anne O'Sullivan – VP Secondary

Mr. André Schmutz – VP Admin & Finance

Questions and Answers session

Questions about pedagogy

- **L2 Differentiation: Why does the school not offer a better support for bilingual pupils/with a high level in L2, or even in L3, within more stimulating groups?**

L2 teachers have met and put in place the following support for pupils in S1 and S2, there are different solutions for French, German and English L2 pupils:

- German L2 teachers can deal with the differentiation within the L2 classes,
- One of the L2 French teachers organises a special lesson, once a week, for high achieving L2 students, this group can change from week to week. This arrangement is not taking place at the moment, but will resume in January or February.
- In L2 EN there are several support teachers who give a quick intensive boost to students with a lower level of L2 English. Their progress is good and students catch-up quickly.

- **Used language in the lesson: What are the rules about the language which should be used in subjects like Art, ICT or Music in S1 and S2**

In S2 the music, art and ICT teachers do their best to combine the languages to match the students in the class, next year the plan is to provide these subjects in L1 for students in S1. For S2, it needs to be discussed.

- **Teachers Absences: We would like to remark the frequent absence of teachers.**

There are many teacher absences because Brussels have introduced a policy of professional development training, that has been decentralised. That means that all the subject teachers have to be on a training course the same day – e.g. here in Luxembourg and we could have more than 10 teachers absent due to the courses in extreme cases.

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The centralised training means that a subject co-ordinator or another teacher will go to Brussels to receive new training and will then train the other subject teachers locally. That means that we do not have so many absences.

- **What is the policy in case of absent teachers? This year, we notice a higher number of teachers on long-term sickness, trips or training.**

Recently 20 teachers were required to attend a training session for the new curriculum in Kirchberg, the policy is to replace teachers for the younger years and give assignments to the older students. A parent highlighted that a French language teacher of L2, L3 and L4 has been absent for a month and was never replaced. Mrs Soekov answered that this teacher, who was absent for 2 weeks is now replaced. During her absence, lessons were partly covered but not all of them. For long absences, it could take time to find a replacement

- **We know already that some teachers of the DE section will leave. Has the recruitment process already started?**

Yes as this is a long process to get seconded teachers. The school has already notified the Board of Governors last September about all seconded teachers who will finish their 9 years contract this year, the Board of Governors notify the countries in January or February. The countries then begin recruitment processes for the following school year. However, there is a negative trend recently in some countries to replace seconded teachers and then the School has to recruit locally.

- **School excursions: Could visits to the eurospace center in Belgium be organised for classes (www.eurospacecenter.be). Since Science lessons are important in secondary, this could be an interesting visit.**

Mrs Soekov thanked the parent for this suggestion, it is a good idea.

- **School calendar: At the parents-teachers evening, I was surprised to learn that:**
  - the deadline for returning the form on option choices in S6 is Friday 2nd February
  - 1st semester reports will be distributed on Monday 5th February

  As if both dates were not related to each other, although it seems that choice of options are made on the basis of the report, at least to make a well reflected choice.

Mrs Soekov stated that it was not possible to change the date to return the option forms until after 5 February because Mr Belpaume must begin to start working on the timetable for the next school year at the beginning of February, the 2nd February was already late. The students will receive their compos/ exam results at the start of January, in the middle of January there will be an information meeting for S5 students and their parents where they meet the careers co-ordinators and also subject teachers. On the same evening, the option choices will be explained which will give the students the information to make their choices.
One parent highlighted that the school advises students not to take 4 period Physics with 4period Biology and 4 period Chemistry as it is too heavy a schedule but some universities require the 3 subjects to study Science. The European Bac rules say a student can have a 35 periods timeschedule (or 36 periods on derogation) but not more.
It was suggested that 2 period Philosophy should not be a required subject, this is not possible as it is part of the rules from Brussels for all European schools.

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- **Education Support: Some pupils have problems in some subjects. Does the teacher take this into consideration or does he move forward in the syllabus in order to cover it? Who can we contact when the teacher has no time to give some support?**

There is usually differentiation within a class and the teacher helps all the students, if a child is having difficulties the teacher could recommend support and support will be given. If a child needs support for just one topic of the subject then parent can talk to the teacher and the topic can be revised in the class. The request for support needs to come from the teacher but parents can always contact their teacher if they think there is a need for support for their child.

Questions about Internal Rules

- **Use of GSM:**

  Pupils should not be asked to have a smartphone so they can take a picture of the homework assignments or of part of the lesson. All pupils do not have a smartphone.

The teacher is free to decide about the use of GSM in his class. Of course, the school doesn't demand any smartphones for pupils. It's up to each teacher to authorize it in the class. The student can take notes in other ways or ask the teacher to put the homework on SMS.

The use of smartphones (for younger pupils) should be better monitored and ruled. For example, my son regrets that nobody plays on the school yard anymore (morning football in P5 was great).

There are a lot of good things about smart phones but of course acts on the misuse of mobile phones such as taking unauthorised pictures of pupils or teachers are forbidden.

There is no general policy yet at the school regarding GSM use in the buildings, if parents think there is a need, they can still contact APEEEL2 who could raise this point at the next School Advisory Council.

- **Authorisation de sortie: Why can't parents prevent that their child leaves school when they have a free period at the end of the day ?**

If the exit authorisation is signed by parents beginning of the year (authorisation A or B), pupils can leave the school.

- **Rules about Compos:**

Why is it forbidden for pupils to go out to the toilet in the first two periods. This rule should be formulated in a more complex way, allowing for exceptions. Otherwise it could be a serious extra source of stress for girls who are already stressed by having their periods during the compos, with all the pain and discomfort it entails.

Exam and compos for S4 and S5 are happening in class rooms. A pupil cannot go to the toilet during the first two periods of an exam, because there is no invigilation and the pupil could cheat. If a pupil has a medical cert. the pupil will be allowed go during the first two periods. In S6 and S7, when exams are in the Salle de Fetes, there is an invigilator and pupils can go to the toilet after the first period.

Is there any planned training for the children to learn how to work / revise for exams? In the past Brainwise and The Super Generation provided the necessary training. Could the teachers talk to the children about the compos. Could teachers be trained on the compo procedure? It has come to our attention that did not know that the compos in S4 and S5 should be returned to and kept by the children and not the school advisers.

Mrs Debout gave Brainwise training in S4 last year, we planned her intervention this year with the current S4 but Mrs Debout is currently replacing an absent teacher. But in principle she has agreed to have the trainings this school year as well after the replacement finishes.

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Every teacher has the responsibility to prepare the students for the examinations.

What about the use of a dictionary for SWALS students during Bac exams?

SWALS students who only arrived in the school during S6, are permitted to have two examination papers one in his Language 1, the other in the language in which the course has been followed.
A candidate who has followed the course in a foreign language a course normally taught in his Language 1 but not organised in this language in the school may use, upon a request a bilingual dictionary which is provided by the school. During Science exams, etc except language exams.

Would it be possible to postpone the start of the compos due to the later bus arrival?

This is important that students are in time when they have exams but this is impossible for the school to start the exams later. Students should organise themselves to be on time.

- **Respect of the calendar of tests - Sometimes when teachers change the date of a test planned in the calendar, it can happen that several tests take place in the same week, causing extra workload for the pupils. What solutions do teachers propose?**

Sometimes if a teacher has been sick and has not covered the topic properly they postpone the exam until later. In that case, teachers should consult with the pupils.

- **Why aren't there any supervisors in the school yard? Pupils are too much on their own.**

Mr Frithiofson said that 30 teachers patrol corridors in the building during the week on a voluntary basis, sometimes there is a shortage due to absences, they circle around and prioritize the surveillance. It is also important that the students have the opportunity to be on their own, to be independent and are trusted for their own wellbeing. Mr Frithiofson would wish to have more resources to do surveillance outside of the buildings.

- **Violence between pupils and towards teachers - some teachers notice that some pupils are aggressive towards their classmates or their teachers. What are the disciplinary/preventive measures taken by the school to reduce violence? What support can be given to pupils and teachers who are victims of violence? Who should be contacted?**

As the school has 1,300 pupils in secondary, conflicts are inevitable and the school gives this a high priority. The school advisors will identify the person and talk to their parents, they also work with the class and the teachers. If a child experiences a conflict, he can talk to Mrs Soekov or any other teacher or advisor at the school. Parents should encourage children to report problems. As soon as the school knows or sees something, the school acts. Students can be suspended if they behave in an undisciplined way. Problems of violence are also reported by teachers.

Communication

- **General information: Will a meeting on the new marking scale be organised?**

An information meeting will be held later in the year to inform parents about the new marking scale, the meeting for the teachers about the new scale on 22 November was successful.

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- **Use of SMS:**

We would like to ask the school to insist that teachers update SMS, or even make it compulsory, so that parents can follow what topic has been covered in class, what are the assignments and the test results.

There are some items on SMS that are compulsory for teachers to complete and others that are optional. The teachers must complete such as absences, lates, important assignments, tests must have a status of 'discussed in class' when test is marked and discussed in class, so that parents can ask their children about it. Mrs Soekov would like to see more optional items become compulsory next year, these include the course diary, test marks and homework.

Could we have a clear explanation on the use of SMS by teachers? (is it obligatory for parents/ pupils to consult it? It seems that pupils are not always informed of the assigments indicated in SMS)

There should also be guidelines for parents and for pupils as some teachers require the use of SMS, which they use to upload homework and powerpoint presentations**.**

Health and Safety

- **There are rumours of drug consumption/trafficking at school. Is the school aware of this? What are the measures already taken or envisaged?**

The school is aware of the problem, the councillors work on this issue and the school cooperates with the police to solve with the problem, but the laws are very strict in Luxembourg about bringing the police into the school. The school rules state that drugs are forbidden in school and any one dealing drugs will be expelled. According to the police, what is done in our school regarding drug prevention is more than what 90% of all schools do. In S4 the school organises a presentation about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse, a German company have been giving the talk for many years.

- **There are students who every morning smoke on the cycle path used by younger pupils. Could the guards ask the pupils to gather further from the school? It is unavoidable to find smokers around a school, but less visibility would help younger pupils.**

The area where the pupils are smoking is not school property therefore the school cannot forbid the pupils from smoking there even though they are blocking this path for other pupils getting to school. Attempts have been made to ask them not to smoke. It was suggested by Mr Frithiofson that parents could also try to persuade the pupils to stop smoking there.

School Equipment

- **How many teachers do not have their own classroom? What are the consequences for teachers and pupils? Some classes seem not to have (have had) enough chairs and tables and pupils had to borrow furniture in the neighbouring classroom.**

Mrs Soekov is not aware that furniture needs to be moved from one class to another. It may have happened at the beginning of the year but this is solved now. Most teachers have their own classrooms, it is only for Chemistry or Physics labs that a teacher must move to a lab to teach the class.

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Miscellaneous

- **When and where will the bac ceremony take place? Will the seating problem be solved?**

The Salle de Fete is no longer big enough to hold the Bac ceremony in, it has a capacity of 750 max. This year the expected number of people who will attend the ceremony will be 850 at minimum, which maintains the current rule of restricting each student to inviting 3 guests. One possible long-term plan could be to convert the school sport hall to allow for ceremonies, this is expensive. The Philharmonie will not give a hall for the bac ceremony. A short-term solution needs to be found for this year either in the school premises either outside.

- **Bus: Some buses are always late even if pupils take it at 7.30am.**

The school is working with APEEEL2 and with the MDDI on temporary solutions to deal with the problem of traffic jam at the school in the mornings. Parents complained that the kiss and go spaces are used as parking spots and suggested a fine for parking in the wrong place – this would be hard to enforce. It was also suggested that the buses use all the platforms – the children can only be seen by the guards at the first platform, its not safe to use the other ones. A road from Bertrange into the school is not being considered. We can remind here that Luxembourg policy prefers to promote the use of buses than to make it more convenient to use cars.

- **Canteen: The queue at the cafeteria is too long**

The school is considering introducing a third lunch break to ease the queues in the canteen, this idea is being discussed with the catering company and will also help with timetabling restrictions.

There was also a suggestion to have microwaves in the canteen – these are forbidden for security and health reasons. Pupils with allergies can ask Eurest to heat up their food brought from home. The price of coffee on the machine is different to the price charged to the student bill. A survey carried out by the canteen committee was positive, and they organised, last year, surprise visits to the canteen by class reps.

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