



Minutes of Annual General Meeting, 5 October 2011

Appendix 1

Talk by Richard Gilpin, Head teacher, Pittville School

Richard opened by saying he'd asked his five year old daughter what she'd like to hear at this talk and she said 'not to be boring'. He hoped not to be, in telling us about the journey that Pittville School has been on.

Richard has been at the school for fourteen years, coming from Swindon, and has been, at various times, history department head, head of year, assistant head and now, head teacher. He wants to bring stability to the school, as he is the sixth head teacher in fourteen years.

This has not helped the public perception of the school. He knows what people say about it and the students and it upsets him. It is completely false. These judgements and ideas have been out there for many years.

The school had an Open Evening last night (4 October) and it is important to judge the school on where it is now. 'Waterloo Road' it is not.

It is harder for an improving school to renew its reputation; slipping back is not so hard.

He outlined some of the myths about the school, which are not true – it has never failed an OFSTED inspection; it has never been served a notice. In 2009 it was judged a 'good school'; there will be another inspection later in 2011. One school in Cheltenham is 'satisfactory' - if there were a straw poll people would probably say it was Pittville School. It is not.

The school is different to others in Cheltenham, it is a true comprehensive. Its results reflect the very able through to those who need a lot of support. 76% of CCSE students got A* to C grade last year; this year it is 82%. The school is doing really well in maths and English literature.

Within the three academic groups of students, the broadly average have made progress, especially the boys. Among those needing support with learning, some have done better than predicted.

The school is improving pastoral care. A new house system was launched in September 2011; one of the three houses will be Aston House, named after PC Lynn Aston. Richard wants students to have more chances to be more involved with the community.

The form teacher is crucial, and the relationship between teachers and students is very important. Richard is an old-fashioned head. Students fail if they don't turn up; they fail if they don't have good teaching; they fail if they are on the wrong courses for them. The staff have a big part to play but so do the students: A=attendance; B=behaviour; C=classroom. Everyone has to have the right attitude.

The partnership with Balcarras School is important. The two schools have collaborated on mathematics for four years; both schools have improved maths results. If Pittville School students get the grades, they are guaranteed a sixth form place at Balcarras School.

He told us about an ex-pupil who was at the school fourteen years ago. She heard him talk about the school and was 'blown away' when she returned for the first time since then. When he can get people through the gates, he can show them what it's really like.

It is really important that he comes to talk to people like us; it helps spread the word. If you want to visit the school, you are very welcome. It means a lot that he can talk to us tonight.

Questions:

Q: What part does history play in the curriculum; it's on the decline at a national level.

A: RG replied that the 'Gove curriculum' will include history in geography and it is important to offer it.

Q: How many students are there?

A: RG said there were 700 and he doesn't want it to be any bigger at the moment.

Q: Why not go for academy status?

A: RG said he is hesitant; it wouldn't make a huge difference financially. Pittville is the only Cheltenham school which isn't.

Q: If the new housing developments in Prestbury area go ahead, won't this affect student numbers and they will have to go above 700?

A: RG said that there is a big intake at primary level even now. He wants Pittville School to be on an even financial footing by the time these students reach year 7. He might be able to expand the school in five or six year's time.