Rose Bay Secondary College School Council
Minutes 14 September 2010

Present: Jim Linton, Denise Lofts, David Abulafia, Steven Hayes, Evelyn Mike, Gaby Munro, Irene Ulman, Louise Hawkins, Phil Horrel, Chris Hughes

Apologies: Judy Koerber

Meeting commenced: 7.40pm

Last meeting's Minutes: adopted

Business arising:

- No response from the solar application (see last Minutes)
- Staff voted on the RBSC CCTV policy; 14 in favour, 5 against

1. Languages position paper

Discussion on how to promote the paper and the proposals in it, as well as about the status of the policy paper. Ideally the College can show leadership in developing a new LOTE direction but be community-minded as well, in explaining its position to the feeder primary schools and to the community.

The issue is that while the RBSC position paper on languages demonstrates the benefits of teaching Japanese and Spanish, there may well be negative reaction, or at least questions, from parents whose children studied other languages in the local primary schools, and who wish that their child continue with the same language. The School Council agreed that there may be misgivings in the community about discontinuing the languages that were offered in the past, but felt that a strong policy direction should give people confidence that the school is making informed choices and is committed to them.

The plan is to:

- Email the LOTE Position Paper to parents
- Place the Position Paper on the school website; invite comment for feedback
- Have discussion with the relevant primary schools, seeking consultation and support
2. Maths - Discussion about resourcing of Mathematics at RBSC

In response to parents’ concerns communicated through the president of the School Council, Jim talked about staffing issues and the need, due to timetabling issues, for split allocations. Two teachers per class is not desirable, but not unusual either. The situation with Maths this year was exacerbated by a number of factors. There were timetable changes resulting from last year’s decision to reorganise the teaching of Music and LOTE. These changes resulted from last year’s consultation and were in themselves a positive development, but this was not widely communicated and the flow-on effects were not well understood by parents. In addition, the Maths teachers who have left in the last two years have been hard to replace because the pool of Maths teachers is shallow. The Department provides teachers with a Maths qualification and every school has to find its own casual teachers.

Jim talked about ways to strengthen the Maths department, such as developing new mathematics pedagogies. Brighter students have been shown to benefit from teaching methods that move away from the traditional textbook-dependent approach. He hopes to have a dynamic, innovative approach to teaching Mathematics to be developed through the RBSC Gifted and Talented Committee.

3. NAPLAN and School Certificate

NAPLAN results out today show that RBSC has done well in basic numeracy and there is growth in the maths results.

School Certificate: Jim quoted the last result statistics with a focus on the percentage of RBSC students reaching the top bands. 22% to 41% are in the top two bands; a smaller number of students reach band 6.

4. Discipline and welfare

Further discussion on bad behaviour and its relationship to staffing issues. Question – is staffing something the School Council and the P&C should be lobbying for?

Jim believes changes in pedagogy will improve the situation.

5. Other

Jim talked about a pattern of complaints from some students and parents about the accents of some teachers for whom English is a second language. The students claim they cannot understand the teachers. He believes that in many cases the issue was not the accent but the students’ impatience or even prejudice. The school urges parents and students to make their criticisms as specific as possible, so that if there is a problem in the classroom, the issues can be addressed in a concrete and productive way.

Meeting ended at 9.05 pm