

Dear parents,

please find attached the third newsletter of this school year from the parents' association.

Georg Weber
(first Chairman of the PA of the ESM)

Number of pupils per class and the size of class rooms

The implementation of Chapter XIX and the accompanied reduction of class sizes to a maximum of 28 pupils per class had been postponed for several years by decision of the Board of Governors.

This time the various representatives of our Governments made a "more clear" decision.

Despite the presentation from our representatives in Interparents (note: the parents of the ESM are not directly represented in the Board of Governors) that national regulations in several host countries require even smaller class sizes the earlier decision was not further postponed but simply abolished.

The reasons given (also for not following the normal procedure of first having a joint teaching committee to address the issue) was based on purely financial considerations. In other words it was argued that the teaching committee does not need to be asked because it is clear that the decision cannot be supported by pedagogical arguments.

Nevertheless, in the debate it was reported from the representatives of the EPO that the German authorities, whilst being in favour of keeping the limit for a class by 30 pupils, are of the strong opinion that the national law of having at least 2 sqm per pupil has to be followed for a school being located in Germany.

It is the responsibility of the headmaster to properly allocate the rooms. In case of a lack of large rooms this might be a reason to deviate from the rules and already split a class below the maximum size.

We will certainly remind the school in good time prior to making the plans for the next school year.

Fees and Money issues

At the meeting of the Board of Governors (and not only there) an idea was presented of a new strange fee for having the application forms of students for particular Universities corrected and certified by teachers.

After a long and heated debate the suggestion did not get the required majority, thanks also due to an intervention of the EPO who was of the opinion that the "costs" of this additional work of some teachers should be covered by the general school fee.

Not giving up in finding new ideas to "make some money" the ESM presented out of the blue the idea of having a social fund for the primary school for covering Landschulheim costs - or other "small projects".

There is already such a fund for the high school. The idea was not thought through and in view of existing (and hardly used social funds) not well justified.

Whilst the parents' association has great understanding for supporting socially weaker families we see at present no need to create on the one hand another social fund and on the other hand creating extra fees, ignoring our request for re-use of books or better planning of rather expensive Landschulheim weeks per se.

Landschulheim as such is an issue on its own. The parents' association was made aware of an analysis made about the cost of schools made by the EPO.

It is reported there that Landschulheim and similar activities which are "mandatory for the curriculum" are included in the general school fees or at least in the costs to be reimbursed by some employers; e.g. the EPO.

Singularly this does not seem to be valid for the Landschulheim, study trips and the mandatory pocket calculator at the ESM.

We will follow this up and continue to report!

The Ferienkalender as an ongoing issue of school autonomy?

Everybody is aware of the unfortunate planning of the school vacations (eg. only 3 days' of holiday at summer half term 2012). It is also clear that "optimal vacations" for everybody cannot be found.

Thus, the parents' association had accepted the calendar proposal for 2012 in view of the argument that "it is exceptional in view of the leap year that the week in May cannot be granted". To our surprise this "exception" should now be a rule also for the year 2013.

There is here a conflict between the rather tight constraints provided by the rules, and the high number of obligatory holidays in Bavaria. We protested (thanks a lot to Tessa Donovan-Beermann, our representative in the working group) and convinced the school to present an alternative plan to the administrative board of the school, giving the week in May but having instead a (one day) shorter summer break and one less bridging day.

We will report about the position taken by the other members of the administrative board and whether or not the Board of Governors finally will overrule the position of the ESM, or accept that here autonomy could play a greater role.

Schulweghelfer urgently needed!

Some time ago the school and the parents requested safety measures to be taken on the way to and from the school. This resulted in the setting up of particularly designed Schulwege.

The local regulations are clear. The community (here the city of Munich) provides the technical construction whilst the schools and the parents are responsible for finding volunteers to guide the pupils over the crossings.

Despite several attempts neither the ESM nor the Rennertschule was able to find such volunteers. Now it appears that the city of Munich will

remove the Schulweg crossing since apparently there is no interest from the side of the parents.

We make a (last) call to all parents to volunteer for such a task.

Kindergarten at the ESM:

Service, opening hours, language lessons and the amount of qualified teachers in the KIGA have been discussed in recent years. After the summer break - we reported - the situation escalated after the non-extension of the contract of one Erzieherin and the subsequent significant lowering of the Betreuungsschlüssel.

After heavy protests from many parents and the parents' association at various levels and long discussions, we can finally report that ad interim a satisfactory solution has been found by re-establishing the status quo of the past years.

At the end we were very pleased with the cooperation of the school management and the EPO to get an exception to Rules changed in Brussels.

Whilst it appears that the Board of Governors cares less and less about the welfare of children and the quality of education, the directors of the school and the EPO maintain that the ESM should provide an adequate standard; i.e. at least not lower than foreseen by a local school at the place of employment.

Together with the school management it was decided to set up a working group in order to analyse the present situation of the KIGA and to find ways to improve its service; i.e. to make it more attractive for parents.

This initiative is supported by a statistical analysis showing that over the past years fewer children attending the Kindergarten than in the past, even though the number of children attending the primary school is constantly increasing. This led to the conclusion that more and more parents of category I opt for a private or even state Kindergarten for their children. Factors include the opening hours and levels of service.

It is clear to all that such an evolution is not desirable and measures have to be taken. From the side of the parents' association Ms Bianca Löhr (member of the educational committee) and Mr Manolis Papastefanou (member of the board of the parents' association) will represent the interests of the parents in this working group.

School transport

We also reported in the last news letter that an official complaint letter was written to the city of Munich about a change in the routing of school buses. Shortly after that we received a rather formalistic reply denying our request for a better routing. Despite our failure in that matter, the parents particularly concerned did not give up and addressed Mr Ude (mayor of the city of Munich), pointing out their disappointment about the (non) solution offered by the administration of the city.

This time apparently the letter was read and understood and the bus line has been changed as requested!

Working for the parents association!

The parents' association recently published a fact sheet about their role and duties (see our webpage).

Members of the board of the parents' association as well as the parents' representatives of the educational committees are all volunteers receiving no compensation nor any time allowances.

Nevertheless, we are represented in all bodies and working groups and in addition to that participate in regular meetings with the school management and (since the beginning of this year) also with representatives of the EPO (which takes the main financial burden of the school).

Beside all other work done it is evident that these tasks are very time consuming and only possible due to a great cooperation and support from many of our members.