

Kemnay Academy Parent Council (KAPC)

Meeting Date: Tuesday 26th March

Meeting Venue: Staff Room, Kemnay Academy

Present: Oliver Mowatt, Catriona Skinner, Michelle Meyer, Annemieke 't Mannetje, Fiona Allen (Principal Teacher - Guidance)

Also in attendance: Lizbeth Paul (Headteacher), Sue Wainman (Kemnay Community Council), Mrs Glendenning (Deputy Head Teacher), 3 Parent attendees.

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies received from Ava Rennie Carol Sim, Cllr Ford, Haseeba Jawad (Teacher representative - Maths), Fiona Cooper, Alan Smith, Stuart Campbell

2. Approval of Previous Minutes & Housekeeping

Minutes of meeting from the Parent Council meeting held 29th January were proposed by Michelle Meyer, seconded by Catriona Skinner.

Parent Council Chair Event: Informal gathering of local PC chairs at Kemnay Academy. Bob attended. 5 other chairs, unfortunately we were the only Academy present. Discussed aspects of running a parent council, fundraising, and recent items discussed at PC meetings. Some good ideas for PTA spends and websites for available grants.

Action: Bob to pass info on to Carol (PTA).

Growing Roll and Accommodation: Aberdeenshire funding has been set aside for improvements to the canteen, but the schedule for the works is not yet finalised. Hut upgrade planning is in progress. Bus arrangements for next term are also in hand - Aberdeenshire wide tender renewal is taking place over the summer. This will need to be completed before final time table is published. **Action:** All PC, continue to monitor and correspond with local Cllrs as necessary.

Letter on Teacher Shortages: Agreed letter should still be sent to NPFS and local MSP. New information on secondary teacher training courses planned annually at Aberdeen University, but lack of uptake renders them uneconomic to run. This was part of the query in the letter, but the remaining aspects are a reasonable reflection of parental views.

Action: Alan to make final checks or alterations to letter and send.

Accounts: Aberdeenshire grant of £507 received to help with running of the PC and or

training etc. Balance is £1174.53 at 26th March.

3. Parent Forum Communication

Staffing - Briefing from Mrs Paul

Unfortunately, the recent round of MFL interviews were not successful. One candidate could have been appointed, but took up a position in a school nearer to their home. The change in timetable in June will free up some additional teaching resource time. This will be focussed on allowing some input for S1. In some subject areas the school is looking to bring in probationer teachers for next session. With an teacher in place all classes can be covered by a specialist MfL teacher.

As a further part of the recruitment plan, 2 science teachers are being recruited, and an English teacher has returned from maternity leave.

Update to the School Day: feedback from parents mostly positive. Where there was feedback the most common theme was the canteen and lunch queues. The school has set up priority lunch tickets for those in lunch time clubs and activities, e.g. band practice. The queue is monitored daily by Mrs Paul. Queue times are typically around 7 minutes. The future changes to the canteen layout should improve this.

Chrome Books: the library now has several dedicated chrome books for senior pupils to help with their revision, study and assignments.

Ipad Trial: The school along with one other in Aberdeenshire has been selected to trial ipads within the school.

4. Parental and Community Engagement

A member of the parent council attended the recent finals on the Young Philanthropy Initiative, where pupils work with local small charities. The aim is to boost the pupil's confidence, presentation and public speaking skills, by enabling them to develop and then pitch a funding bid on behalf of their selected charity.

5. Attainment, Improvement, School Plan

As part of the overall cycle of continuous improvement a survey of the pupils views about school life has been undertaken. Led by Mrs Glendenning and a S6 Captain, it asked a number of questions about school life across all year groups. Feedback was received on the quality of school meals (not enough healthy choices, biscuits and cakes available everyday) and also flagged some concerns about negative or bullying behaviour - with some year groups giving this a higher concern than others.

A pupil conference, involving a selection of pupils from across the year group is planned in June. The conference will focus in more detail on the survey findings and aim to involve the pupils in developing ways to address them where possible (e.g. school lunch choices are not controlled by the school. School Catering is separate department within Aberdeenshire Council, so the ability to make changes may be limited).

6. Any Other Business

By agreement, a late addition to the agenda was a request for a discussion about the school's approach to bullying. A parent contacted the Parent Council, explaining their personal perception was that there was a growing feeling of concern in regards to how bullying is being approached and tackled by the school staff, and asked the Parent Council to raise these questions:

- How the school as an institution is combating the growing concern of bullying?
- What action is being taken?
- Do the school feel they are dealing with things appropriately and effectively?

It was recognised by all at the start of the discussion that bullying can be a very emotive subject for parents. There was a reminder of the rules for all Parent Council discussion:

- The discussion must stick to general points
- Specific incidents or examples which may lead to individuals being identified or spoken about are not allowed. A summary of the discussion is below.

Perception & Frequency of incidents

The School's view is that whilst incidents can and do vary across years groups and with different yearly intakes, overall incidents of 'bullying behaviour' originating within the school are not increasing. For example, the pupil voice - an all year survey of pupils - came out very strongly against prejudicial bullying - i.e. picking on protected characteristics such as race, religion, disability, sexuality etc. What has changed over the last few years is on-line bullying. The frequency of which has increased. Incidents can occur in the evening or over the weekend, outwith school, and then are brought into school the next day or on a Monday morning, and it becomes something the school then becomes involved with.

Irrespective of trends or frequency of incidents, there is a very clear understanding from Guidance Teachers and the Leadership Team of the impact bully behaviour can have on an individual, and how distressing it can be for a child/child's parents.

What action is being taken, is it appropriate, is it effective?

The school uses a number of measures to address bullying behaviour. It is currently in the process of revising its policies and introducing some new initiatives. The policy update uses information from '[RESPECT ME](#)', which is Scotland's anti-bullying service.

The discussion covered two key strands - prevention and response to incidents.

Prevention

The preventative aspect is focussed on improving the behavioural culture within the school. This is an ongoing process of continual improvement and reinforcement. There is no quick fix. As part of this process, the school will be using a new package of training and support for senior pupils to try to reduce the bystander effect. This is called MVP. The aim is to enable more pupils across all year groups to feel empowered to say 'This is not OK' when they see bullying behaviour taking place, and take action to stop it - either intervening if they feel OK to do so, or reporting it to Guidance if they do not want to intervene personally.

Incident Management

It was clear from the discussion that there is a real desire from the school leadership team, and guidance staff, that the school wants to feel trusted to deal with bullying behaviour. How we (parents and school) communicate with each other is a very important part of building and maintaining this trust.

Should your child be subjected to bullying behaviour the key thing to do is to contact the Guidance Teacher. School staff made it clear that the school can and will act if they have information.

A point was raised that Parents sometimes feel nothing is happening if they do contact Guidance. There can be a delay in receiving a response, and this can undermine a parents belief that the incident is being dealt with.

Mrs Allan said there can be a number of reasons why delays occur - for example teaching lessons means that the Guidance teacher isn't able to monitor emails all day, or in some instances there are other high priority cases that also need immediate attention, for example child protection.

The Guidance team are currently looking at how well they handle emails and phone calls, and this point about a response to parents was fully understood.

A more clearly defined response time is being worked on. It does however raise questions around parental expectations versus the reality of competing priorities within a guidance teacher's working day. How to explain and improve the understanding of this balance

more clearly, may be a further area for discussion.

In dealing with an incident, the investigation is led by the guidance teachers. It follows the 'RESPECT ME' guidelines. The guidelines, recognised as best practice, have a stronger emphasis on restorative practices than punitive, but the Police can be involved if a crime has been committed. The school has been working with pupils to review the current arrangements to address bullying. Miss Arthur has done significant work to update the procedures and this will be shared with parents.

The school will also take an objective view of an incident. The school's purpose is to enable all pupils to fulfil their potential. This includes those who may be in the wrong in this instance.

Incident resolution is a confidential process. What is said to one individual (or parents) will not be shared with another individual (or their parents). Confidentiality is a fundamental principle in every school. This approach, whilst necessary, can leave parents feeling frustrated that nothing has happened. Action will have been taken, it just can't be shared.

It was recognised that frustrated and or upset parents can be drawn towards discussing individual incidents on social media. This is particularly unhelpful. It only tends to escalate or prolong the situation when the opposite is required - literally everybody involved would like the incident to be resolved.

Posting comments on social media has a wider impact. It can make future incidents more difficult to resolve. Parents and the school can be then caught up in dealing with social media comments rather than the issue at hand. This can lead to further frustration and concern from parents.

If a parent is unhappy with the way an incident has been dealt with by the school, then there is a formal complaint procedure in place. The formal complaint will go to a senior officer within Aberdeenshire Council. One of the first questions that will be asked by the senior officers will be, "What records do Guidance have of this incident?" This is another reason for always going to Guidance staff.

There was agreement that Mrs Paul would develop the discussion points into a briefing note for parents, with further input from the Parent Council.

Post meeting note - Mrs Paul confirmed that parental input during the update stages of the schools anti-bullying policy is already planned for, along with presentation and Q&A sessions at the end.

The Respect Me website contains a lot of useful information, including short films about

bullying and what to do and what not to do - a useful resource for Parents.

6. PTA Update

Carol unable to attend, no update available.

7. Correspondence

None.

8. Next Meeting The next KAPC meeting will be held on **Tuesday 7th May starting at 7.00pm.**

Any exceptional agenda items to be sent to the PC email address in advance.