

Castle Douglas Parent Council Meeting Minutes

Monday 17th May 2021

Welcome – Mary welcomes everyone to the meeting

Tara Rooney-Bell (Parent/Clerk), Mary Devereux (Parent/Chair Person), Kay McFarlane (Parent/Treasurer), Anne Bell (Teacher Representative), Mrs Carlyle (Head Teacher), Mrs Graham (Teacher Representative), Katie savage (Parent),

Apologies – Amy Graham, Iain Stewart, Melanie Henry,

Minutes of previous meeting held on Monday 8th March 2021 – Mary asked if anyone has any issues with the previous minutes. No issues raised.

Matters Arising:

DGPCF – Mary let everyone know that the Dumfries and Galloway Parent Forum has now made the information they collated available via Dropbox.

School Laptops – Mary unfortunately does not have any updates on this front. Mrs Carlyle states that she has not heard anything further regarding a refresh for the laptops. They are very old and not very fast meaning that it takes a long time for children to log in. They are currently 10 years old. Mary states there is going to be a big investment to update all the school ICT suites in the area to bring things up to date. Kay mentions that in the past meetings it was mentioned that other schools also have had the same issue. Mary wonders whether they will be updated within the next year. Mrs Carlyle states there is no WIFI within the school and that it is a struggle to get everyone in the school connected to the internet. Miss Bell states that the iPads cannot connect to WIFI meaning that teachers have to take the devices home to update them which is not ideal. Katie mentions that it is quite concerning that we do not appear to have a direct person within the council whom we can contact to deal with ICT issues. Mrs Carlyle will try and find out whether there is someone in particular we can contact, Katie is more than happy to help with this issue.

Car Park/ Walking Bus – This is a recurrent issue which is brought up regularly. Despite regularly being told otherwise parents continue not to adhere to the rules of the car park. Mrs Carlyle states that when we came back after lockdown things were better however it is starting to become an issue again some days, especially with parents parking in the drop off zone. The staggered ending of the day has helped with the flow of children moving through the carpark. The police have stated that they do not have any jurisdiction to help with it being in a school setting. It is mentioned that parents are not always very kind when approached regarding moving on. Mary mentions that she has had the idea of perhaps starting a walking bus with some parent volunteers. Children would be dropped off at perhaps the Market Hill car park and be walked down to the school by the parent volunteers. She wonders whether this is something that would be worth looking into. Kay wonders if the problem of the car park seems to be more in the afternoon rather than in the morning and also wonders whether there is a way we could stop parents coming in to the car park, however closing the gates is not an option due to access needed for the disabled bays and cause congestion on Jenny's Loaning. This would be a difficult thing to organise but it is an idea that can be looked into. If we were to go ahead and explore the subject the first step would be sending out a survey to see whether parents would be happy with their children joining a walking bus and who would volunteer to be a parent helper. Mary would be happy to organise this. Katie voices that she thinks the drop

off zone is fantastic for what it was created for, the issue comes with parents parking within this zone and queries whether it would be a good idea to place bollards to prevent this from happening. Mrs Carlyle states that they have tried cones before but it has not worked and that there was a walking bus done in the past, however there wasn't much of an uptake. It would be worth trying again to see whether that would be higher now.

New Head Teacher Start Date – Mary has heard That Susan Davies will be starting on the 18th August (the first day of term). She will be visiting the school on the 25th of May and again on the 1st of June when Mary and Tara will be meeting with her.

Head Teachers Report – Covid Update – education route map – things may open up a little in schools. Now that we've moved into level two there is a little bit more leeway for things like assemblies and having external agencies back in. They are not allowed to think about trips, however as a school they will not be rushing into this until there is more information and advice in this regard. Also from the 7th June they are allowed to consider a leavers assembly for the primary 7 children. There will be an in-house games day instead of the usual sports day. Teachers are still wearing masks and children are following increased hygiene routines. Mrs Graham says that we just need to be cautious within the school as things relax.

Classes for next session and staffing – We will have 13 classes next session with a slightly different formation. They will make sure there are spaces left at every stage so that there are open spaces for any new families.

Staffing – Two new teachers will be appointed for the next year along with a probationary teacher who will be there for two days per week. Two members of staff are retiring which leaves the school with some staffing requirements. The full time vacancy will be filled by someone who is already working within the region.

There is also a 0-4-4 RIC teacher along with needing to appoint someone to cover Mr Whan for two days whilst he is Acting Principle Teacher in the Learning Centre on a Thursday and Friday. Hopefully by the end of the week they have more of an idea of teachers and will be able to allocate classes.

School improvement plan – this will not have changed much from this time last year. The focus is still on covid recovery. Literacy and Mathematics.

Budget – PEF budget for coming Session remains around the same. There will be additional PEF funding from government however the amount is unknown. Per Capita funding this year will be roughly £12,00 up from £7,000 last year. £3000 for basic resources such as jotters and pens so the budget is quite tight.

Kay asks now we are moving into tier 2 are they allowed Parent Volunteers back within the school. Mrs Carlyle states they have not heard anything about that yet, as it stands it is only necessary people who are allowed in the building. Kay asks about going down the slope to the lower playground – Mrs Carlyle states that at the moment it is just a minimum amount of parents allowed into the playground to help with social distancing. Kay asks for clarification on trips – Mrs Carlyle states that they are reintroducing local trips for example to the local park however anything further afield is not being contemplated at the moment.

Miss Bell states that it has been really hard not getting to meet the parents of her class children this year. It is a big loss that the teachers are also feeling.

Treasurer's Report – The account balance remains £290.15. The end of year financial statement is now due which Kay will be doing within the next few weeks and then sending it to the council. We should then receive eligible funding at the end of the year.

AOCB

Bullying – The issue of bullying is brought forward after a small number of parents have approached one of the members regarding their concerns. This is something that we would like to find out more regarding the children's experience of bullying within the school and how they feel it is being dealt with. It is a good thing that this is something we can openly discuss along with looking more at the policies and teachers opinions. Tara mentions that some parents have mentioned they feel as though bullying is not being dealt with in a visible manner leaving some feeling as though they have no way forward to help their child. It may be possible to do a survey to find out the extent of this. Mrs Carlyle mentions that the school have a 'Positive Relationship Policy'. For a school of its size they do not have a great deal of bullying however there are some incidents. She states that if we are informing the parents of the strategies they are using to deal with these, we have to be very clear on the definition of bullying so that children are aware of the triggers. They feel it would be useful to know what type of information parents would like to receive. It is mentioned that perhaps simply sharing what is done in general and making the bullying policies more visible would go a long way in helping parents whilst also taking into consideration the privacy of the pupils involved. This would perhaps give parents more confidence that something is being done even if they cannot see it themselves.

Mary wonders what role the school has on tackling issues of bullying that happen outside of the school day, for example walking to or from school/ phone bullying. If a parent does find their child is a victim of this can they approach the school for help. Mrs Carlyle states that anything that anything that happens within the school grounds falls under the schools responsibility. In theory once they are outside the school gate it is the parents responsibility, however they can come and talk to the school and they will try and support them the best that they can. The school will always do their best to help a child or parent to the best of their abilities.

After this conversation concludes it is abundantly clear just how much the staff care about all of the children within the school and want to make sure that their school days are as enjoyable as possible.

Mary has received a message from Vanessa Morris – Dumfries and Galloway Council are going to be offering online payments for parents to pay for their school meals as well as cash still being an option.

Outdoor learning survey from DGPCF to share with parents which Mary has sent to Mrs Carlyle. This will be sent out.

Mary got a card from David thanking everyone for the gift that was given by the Parent Council.

Received a letter today regarding bikability Scotland – your school signing up to the bikability programme which offers free cycling training. It is completely free and something the school has done in the past. The letter mentions parent volunteer support. Katie says that there is a big commitment from parent volunteers to get this running. Mrs Graham says that there is a bank of volunteers which were used the last time the school took part two years ago. Mary will pass the letter and information booklet in to the office.

Mary lets everyone know that she will have to step down and leave the Parent Council due to her new job. This means that the Parent Council will need a new Chair Person. Mary was hoping that a couple of new people would have come along and hopefully someone would have liked to take her place.

Everyone wishes Mary well in her new position.

The next meeting is the AGM which is due to be held on the 6th September at 6:30.

