

Gelston Primary School Parent Council Minutes
Wednesday 2nd December 2020 (via Zoom app)

Present

Justine, Mary, Abbie, Pam

Apologies

Kay, Emma, Abby

Minutes from previous meeting reviewed and approved with no issues

Chair Report

Justine attended the Parent Council Forum via Zoom on 18th November 2020. She gave a summary of the points made. Minutes of the meeting are available if anyone would like to read them.

DGC Education Support Services Manager - Susan Martin gave an update on the investment agreed for schools' ICT Infrastructure.

- Aspiration for all D&G Schools to be digital schools
- Working to upgrade WiFi in primary schools as well as upgrade to Windows 10

DGC Education Support Officer - Vanessa Morris, Curriculum & Quality Improvement Team

- Encouraged all Parent Councils to ensure they are registered with Connect
- Two opportunities coming up to allow us to share our views
 - 1) issued by D&G Council with D&G Parent Council Forum
 - 2) National bi-annual survey issued by Scottish Government issued Feb 2021

She encouraged all parents to use these surveys to have their say.

Next meeting of the Forum will be held 23rd February 2020

Treasurers report

Having previously agreed that the PC will fund the cost of the online Panto for the children this year, Mary asked if PC would also pay for the ice cream/popcorn for the event. We agreed to pay for the prizes at the Christmas parties too. Mary to contact Kay directly with receipts etc. Kay also to look into why we haven't received our annual allocation of funds from DGC.

Head Teacher report

(Attached separately)

Procedures for rolling chair role

Justine is preparing a checklist for future Chair's as a guide when taking over the role, as for this year at least the PC has opted to have members each taking a term as the role of Chair. After discussing the criteria we agreed to speak to Mary 1st/2nd week of term in order to look at any topics for discussing before setting the meeting of PC for around week 3 of term. This way it gives Mary adequate notice to include date/time in the newsletter the week prior to the meeting date.

Justine to pass the checklist and any other information on to Pam for the beginning of the next term in January.

Outdoor classroom

Prior to lockdown we received £400 from Castle Maclellan to go towards improving the outdoor area for the younger children in the school. Mary thought that perhaps there was more opportunity for a larger grant from this source but asked that PC look into this further. Pam agreed to take this on. The aim is to raise £10,000 in order to build an outdoor classroom, similar to the new building at Crossmichael School. After the last PC meeting Pam had been in contact with a company in the North of England who offered grants focused on outdoor learning while also offering free training for staff. England's second national lockdown put any further developments on hold but Pam will chase again before the next meeting in January and update PC then. We also discussed approaching Galloway Glens to see if they are able to help.

Fundraising Opportunities

We agreed that any fundraising should be left until the new year as hopefully we will be in a better position in terms of COVID restrictions to judge what is possible. Next year (2021) is the year we would be having the Fete. Any decision as to whether this will be able to go ahead will be made further into next term at the earliest. Pam to look into 'smile Amazon' as a possibility to earn cash for every transaction by registering.

AOCB

Justine was asked by a parent to bring up the problem of dog fouling in the playground. It seems that the offender is perhaps not a dog but a cat although that's not certain. In the meantime, the situation will be monitored.

Pam to look into why we haven't received our annual membership to Connect together with our annual liability insurance documents.

Pam will be taking the Chair post from January until Easter. Next meeting date will be set in January but will aim for it to be in third week of term (W/c 18th January 2021).

Gelston Parent Council

Headteacher's Report

02.12.2020

New Enrolments

Several new enrolments means our school roll will be 42 pupils in January.

We welcome our new pupils to school.

We have had seven new enrolments at Crossmichael Primary School taking our roll there to 91 pupils.

Update of Events

Halloween – We had a successful afternoon of Halloween activities and Mrs Fenwick provided Halloween themed school dinners.

Bonfire Night – Each class learned about firework safety and a PowerPoint was provided by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Remembrance Day - Each class chose how they would like to commemorate Remembrance Day. We had a two minute silence and pupils participated in a virtual assembly. P4-7 pupils read poetry and Milly played her chanter. P1-3 children painted poppies on stones and learned more about the significance of this special day. Later, we laid the stones and a wreath at the War Memorial in the village.

Covid-19 Related Health and Safety

In the event of a pupil or member of staff testing positive for Covid-19, it is likely that a class may have to isolate. To minimise the need for more than one class to isolate at a time, we have minimised cross-over between pupils. We have zoned our playground into two sections with our P1-3 pupils playing at the right hand side of the school and our P4-7 pupils at the left hand side. In the dining hall, P1-3 have lunch at 12.15pm and sit at one side of the hall. They go out to play then P4-7 enter the hall. They sit at the other side to avoid cross-contamination.

We have already minimised the movement of staff between class 'bubbles' and any Learning Assistants (LAs) who are working with individuals or groups from each class, must do so in another room and disinfect surfaces and resources between groups. We hope this would mean that if the LA tested positive then only the groups and individual children she worked with would need to isolate.

Covid-19 Recovery Teacher Appointment

We welcome Emma McDonald who has been appointed Covid-19 Recovery Teacher for CDHS Cluster schools. Her remit means she will be working across our partnership schools for a block of a few weeks between now and the summer. Her remit at our school will be to support pupils with their Health and Wellbeing needs – nurture groups, emotion works, building resilience, agency and supporting pupils to regulate emotions by providing strategies. We hope that she can start her new post in January.

Managing Expectations

Although schools are open, things are not 'back to normal'. We try very hard to ensure that our pupils feel safe and happy in school so that they are settled and ready to learn. Everyone is used to new routines and is following protective measures.

Dumfries and Galloway Council is very supportive and has explained that we are following a 'Recovery Curriculum'. This means that the focus is very much on pupil and staff health and wellbeing. Although we have a School Improvement Plan and we have identified areas that need developed within our schools, this is not to be a key focus at this point in time. This means that some areas of school development will not be a priority at the moment and some of the pupil groups and other activities may not be happening in the way that they were prior to the school closures. Nevertheless, our teachers are very committed and continue to develop programmes in Literacy and Language.

We are focusing on supporting pupils with their mental and emotional health and wellbeing. It is only now that we have started to see the impact of the pandemic on many of our children. Children with additional support needs often experience barriers to learning. This has been exacerbated with anxiety caused by the pandemic. We have put many supportive measures in place to help individuals. Often, this has resulted in a larger volume of referrals to other agencies for support such as Social Work, Educational Psychologist, Community Paediatric Nursing Team, Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist and others. This has led to more pupils requiring Additional Support for Learning Plans, Individual Education Plans and Child's Plans.

We continue to focus on improving attainment in Literacy & Language and in Numeracy & Maths. Teachers are spending time identifying and plugging any gaps whilst also ensuring that our more able pupils are challenged appropriately.

Mrs Clifton is now working at Gelston Primary to deliver the 'Closing the Literacy Gap' intervention with five pupils. She has been working with Miss McNeill so that this can be continued when Mrs Clifton returns to Crossmichael in February.

ICT Equipment and Infrastructure

Dumfries and Galloway Council is updating its ICT infrastructure. This should mean better broadband speed, upgrades to Windows 10, better access to WiFi and the ability for devices to access the school internet. More information should follow soon.

I am waiting for families to return the 9 x laptops donated by Drax during lockdown. It is my hope that these can be configured to work in the new classroom at Crossmichael. It is my understanding that when the new ICT infrastructure is working, that we can connect newly bought devices to the Council Intranet.

Staffing

Unfortunately, our Principal Teacher (4 days) at Gelston Primary School continues to be absent. We hope that she is able to return soon.

Our Additional Support for Learning Teacher and I are very busy writing many pupil plans that are needed as a direct result of the level of need in the partnership schools just now. We are also ensuring that referrals are completed for those pupils who require extra support.

Reporting to Parents

We are unable to conduct parental consultations via telephone or in person this term. Instead teachers will be sending an email to all parents/ carers before the Christmas holidays with an update of how your child is getting on. Please contact your child's teacher via email if you wish to find out more information.

Christmas Magic

Christmas Parties – P1-3 on Monday 7th December and P4-7 on Thursday 10th December. (Pupils should come to school wearing their party wear/ casual clothes.)

Christmas Dinner – Monday 14th December

Online Pantomime day – 'Jack and the Beanstalk' on Thursday 17th December. (Pupils come wearing pyjamas or Christmas jumpers and have refreshments provided by Parent Council (ice cream and popcorn).

'VIP Baby' Video Clip – Pupils are creating an online video clip made up of several small performances. Parents will be asked to vote on their favourite performance culminating in OSCARS being awarded on the last day of term!

Rolling Chairperson

Thank you to Justine for being our Chairperson this term.

Best wishes,
Mary E Lidstone-Scott
Headteacher