

# Minutes

Darvel Primary School Parent Council  
2021/2022

**Date of meeting:** 5 October 2021

**Time:** 7:00pm

**Location:** Via Zoom

**Attendees:** Joanna Wilks (JW), Louise Smith (LS), Claire Douglas (CD), Sarah Riley (SR), Laura Emery (LE), Heather Jones (HJ), Nicola Quigley (NQ), Moira Stephenson (MS), Kirsty Doncaster (KD), Kylie Cassells (KC)

**Apologies for absence:** Gillian Harman (GH), Lorraine Dougan (LD), Laura Hodge (LH), Kari Fulford (KF), Stephen O'Neill (SO), Jacqueline McInally (JM)

**Distribution:** All in attendance, those absent, the wider parent forum and school colleagues.

## Welcome

LS welcomed everyone to the meeting, and the group extended a warm welcome to Moira Stephenson who is new to the group.

## Previous Minutes and Matters Arising

### Photography Update

It was confirmed that the photographer, Scott Walker, has been booked in for pupil photographs on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> November. Parents will be reminded and notified of any particular arrangements nearer the time.

A discussion took place around class photographs, and whether it might be possible to factor this into the photography days. It was noted that having class photos for key milestones e.g. Primary 1 and Primary 7 would provide a nice memento.

**Action LE:** To clarify with Scott if it would be possible to incorporate class photos into the two days in November, at least for the P1 and P7 classes if possible.

### Road Safety

KD has contacted Roads Alliance to establish if it would be possible to have the zig zag lines in front of the school repainted due to fading.

**Action KD:** Reminder to be issued on the School App asking parents not to park on zig zag lines. KD / KC will also speak with any taxi drivers they observe parking on these lines.

## Head Teacher Update

### Hello Yellow Day

KD confirmed that there would be a non-uniform day on the last of school before the October holidays (Friday 8<sup>th</sup> Oct). Pupils are invited to wear something yellow as part of an initiative being led by Primary 6 Room 15 and Mrs McGregor to raise awareness of World Mental Health Day. No donations to be made. Children have made and displayed posters around the school to raise awareness of World Mental Health Day.

### Lunch Hall

Plans to have all children back eating in the lunch hall are still being finalised. Currently Primary 1 to 4 eat in the lunch halls, but Primary 5 to 7 are still required to eat in class under supervision. KD and Mr Orr are currently reviewing layout options which are covid compliant, and it is hoped that P5 to P7 will be able to move back to the lunch hall after the October break.

### Maths week

Mr Orr, who is part of the Scottish Maths Council, led some fantastic activities for all pupils during Maths Week. He is currently collating photos and videos of some of these activities which will be shared in due course via GLOW.

### School Improvement Plan

The School Improvement Plan is still in the process of being finalised. A key focus in the plan is active literacy, and teachers will be receiving further training on this topic to help them embed this into their classroom practice. Outdoor learning is another area of focus, as is the use of Learner Journal which it is hoped will strengthen links between home and school, providing an effective tool for sharing achievements and possibly homework. Once the School Improvement Plan has been finalised, a user-friendly version will be shared with parents and pupils.

### Covid Recovery

The school has identified a member of staff who will provide support to pupils as part of the Covid recovery plans. At present they are focusing efforts on providing additional health and wellbeing support to target pupils.

### Property Pledge Meeting

KD and Mr Orr will be taking part in a 'property pledge' meeting with a representative of East Ayrshire Council, which provides the opportunity to highlight parts of the school (indoors/outdoors) that need to be refurbished/fixed/developed. Particular areas of focus will be the unused play area at the back of the school and the grass slopes at the front. The ICT suite will also be highlighted as an area that could be targeted and given another designated use/purpose.

### School & Parent/Teacher Communications

KD explained that there were a couple of developments regarding school communications. It's been agreed that on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month each teacher will publish a short newsletter on GLOW, which will highlight subject areas that pupils have been working, the focus for the month ahead, and key class/pupil achievements etc. The first newsletter will be issued on return from the October holidays.

In addition, a wider school newsletter will be issued in the middle of each month. As well as more general updates, the newsletter will incorporate some information from Mr Orr's virtual news/assemblies and will also include successes and achievements (see Celebrating Success below).

The group agreed that these updates would be well received and would help parents feel more up-to-date and informed about pupil and school activities and learning.

### Homework

It was noted that the topic of homework and what this might look like across the various school year groups has still to be finalised, and is being discussed at the next In Service day. The intention is that the Learner Journal will be used to assist with the assigning of any homework however teachers have still to receive training on the use of this, so in the meantime GLOW blogs will be used as applicable.

The group acknowledged that one of the main benefits of receiving some homework was to help parents keep informed about what their child is learning and working on at school from week to week, allowing them to have

a constructive conversation about this with their child. Receiving information about, for examples, spelling words, deadlines, any test dates, or activities that can be tried at home, would be really helpful.

#### P7 Responsibilities & Monitoring

The topic of additional responsibilities for Primary 7s to mark their final year at primary school had been raised. KD explained that Mr Orr involves the P7 pupils in assisting the younger children with the virtual news and assemblies, where they answer questions, help further explain items and set quiz questions to engage the class. In addition, the P7 pupils help supervise younger children during wet weather days, at play time and lunch time. It was noted that the P7s have been working so well at interacting with and encouraging children whilst maintaining social distancing.

In terms of additional responsibilities, Mr Orr did speak with the P7s at the start of the session to explain their role and expectations. Given the covid restrictions, it has not been possible to implement a meaningful 'house' system in the school this year where P7s could take on house captain roles. However, this will be revisited to see if there are any other creative ways in which additional opportunities for the P7 can be assumed.

**Action KD/CO:** To consider other ways of giving P7s additional responsibilities, as well as considering how those who take on additional responsibilities can be recognised/rewarded.

KD clarified that due to possible health and safety implications there is always a staff member present when pupils are eating their lunch. Also, when P7s are supervising wet lunch/breaks or virtual assemblies/news a member of the senior management team or support staff will also go round the classrooms so P7s always have a staff member available to them during these times. Pupils are not left unattended.

#### Uniform/Gym Kit

A query had been raised about expectations around uniforms and gym kit. KD explained that unfortunately children were still unable to use changing rooms for gym. However, there is no reason that children cannot continue to wear their uniform for such activities, which the majority are doing with the addition of gym shoes/trainers. The most important thing is that children are able to embrace the excellent opportunities that the LOST and COACH teams provide. With colder/wetter weather upon us, KD wanted to remind parents to ensure that their child was dressed appropriately for the conditions.

#### Wet Mornings

A query had been raised around children having to stand outside in wet weather before the first school bell. KD explained that previously children would be allowed to come into the school building early where they would assemble in the gym hall. Unfortunately, however, due to Covid restrictions children are not able to congregate in this way, and as there are not enough staff members at this time to supervise children they cannot be sent to their individual class rooms. As such, children have to remain outside first thing until the bell. The important thing is to ensure children are dressed for the weather.

#### Celebrating Success

As mentioned under communications, KD explained that the school is very keen to ensure they are celebrating the success and achievement of pupils, and this will form part of the school and class newsletters. These successes and achievements can be both within and out with school - parents will be encouraged to send in photos of pupil achievements from out with school which can then be shared.

CD suggested 'Celebrating Success' time on a Friday, for example before Golden Time. The whole class could decide on something they could share on the Blog e.g. star writer, certificates, awards, key learning and photographs, meaning that the children have some ownership of this, and it could form part of the updates for parents. KD thought this was a good idea and would share it with the teachers.

### Class Bubbles

LS explained that the matter of class bubbles had been raised at the East Ayrshire Parent Council Steering Group, at which it was noted that whilst bubbles remain in place inside schools, there was now a more relaxed approach to class bubbles in the playground given transmission rates outside are much lower. The guidance being that if there was a rise in cases within any one particular class the bubble for that class should be reinstated until case numbers dropped. The question was asked as to whether this was an approach that the school could adopt.

KD explained that Health & Safety had commended the approach that the school had taken in order to minimise transmission rates, however she understood the need for a balanced approach and would certainly not want to maintain class bubbles for any longer than was needed. KD advised that the use of class bubbles outside would be reviewed again following the October holiday – if pupils were to be allowed to mix they would remain in the current rota schedule, and class bubbles may need to be reinstated at times when case numbers rise.

**Action KD:** To review use of class bubbles outside following October holidays.

### Finance

JW, Treasurer, provided the group with the monthly finance update. Since our last meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> September there have been no incoming funds and no spend. Current funds are as follows:

- Bank Balance: £1478.22
- Cash in hand: £68.61
- Total funds: £1546.83

JW explained that we had still to identify someone who could check over the Parent Council accounts. Another name has been suggested and they will be contacted in due course. The process of setting up new signatories and online banking for the Parent Council is in progress.

**Action JW:** To confirm auditor and, once identified, to share relevant accounts information.

### Parent Council Constitution

The group was provided with a copy of the revised/updated Parent Council Constitution. The motion was unanimously carried to accept all the suggested revisions. Specific reference was made to the fact that the maximum number of parent members on the Parent Council would increase from 10 to 12, allowing representation from all year groups. The number of teaching staff who could sit on the council would also increase from 1 to 2 helping to ensure, where possible, there was always a member of teaching staff present at Parent Council meetings (in addition to the Headteacher). As of yet, we do not have representation on the council for the P7 year group.

**Action LS:** To make the revised Constitution available to the wider parent forum, prior to approval.

**Action KD:** To ask if any other members of teaching staff would like to join the Parent Council.

### Parent Council Communications Update

LS provided an update on progress with Parent Council communications:

- It is the intention to launch the new Parent Council Facebook page by the end of the year – the current Facebook page will be used until then, and we will continue to ask for PC updates to also go out on the School App.
- A Parent Council section on Glow will be created in Oct/Nov which will provide relevant information and contact details for the Parent Council and will include a section where meeting minutes will be held.
- LS to try and tie in with local Parent Council chairs as a way of sharing ideas and best practice.

### Fundraising

The group discussed the different fundraising ideas that had been put forward following last month's meeting. In order to increase our funds, it was agreed that we should try to hold up to two fundraising events/activities prior to the end of the year.

It was provisionally agreed that we would hold some form of online Christmas raffle/hamper, with donations sought from local/surrounding businesses, and from contacts that members of the Parent Council may have. This will be progressed in the coming weeks.

The idea of holding a sponsored event was also discussed. While the type of event itself has still to be finalised it was agreed that it should be held in school time to ensure all children have the opportunity to take part. It was also felt that it would be best to run the activity over the course of one day to help create some excitement and momentum. A number of ideas have been put forward including arts and crafts, games, dancing, etc. A sub-group will be formed in order to progress this, and we'll work with the school to identify and agree a suitable challenge. The group was mindful of not creating additional burden for our teaching staff.

**Action All:** To identify businesses etc to be contacted to seek donations for a Christmas raffle/hamper

**Action All:** To finalise our ideas around a sponsored event and set up a sub-group to take forward.

### Charitable Status

The group had been asked to consider whether it would be worthwhile trying to obtain charitable status for the Parent Council. If so, we would need to modify our Constitution very slightly to allow for this. Whilst it was acknowledged that there are definite benefits of being registered as a charity e.g. greater access to more significant grants and matched funding etc, increased responsibilities and reporting measures would be placed on the council. The general consensus was that more information would be required before considering this, and to potentially revisit at a later date. In the meantime, efforts would be focused on trying to establish what grants, funds and initiatives we can access without being registered as a charity. It was also agreed that we should establish what the focus of our fundraising efforts should be - if we are applying for grants, Tesco's blue token initiative etc, we need to be clear about what the money we are seeking would be used for.

**Action LS/KD:** To discuss with the school and establish what our fundraising focus for this year should be, for example outdoor equipment, gardening resources, books, fun experiences/activities for the pupils etc.

**Action LS:** Once above established, to apply for the Tesco blue token initiative.

**Action NQ:** To approach the Co-op to establish if/how we can make Darvel PS an option for loyalty card members to donate to.

### Parent Council Priorities

The group acknowledged that it would be beneficial to identify key priorities for the year ahead which the Parent Council can then work towards. The main priorities which have been identified so far are:

- To work with the school to strengthen parent and teacher/school communications and engagement.
- To promote engagement and improve communications between the Parent Council and wider Parent Forum.
- To establish our focus/target for Parent Council fundraising initiatives and activities, and work towards this for the benefit of the pupils.

### **Date & Time of Next Meeting**

The next Parent Council Meeting will take place on 2<sup>nd</sup> November at 7pm via Zoom. A reminder and request for matters to be raised will be issued in advance.