



MEARNS CASTLE HIGH SCHOOL MINUTES OF PARENT COUNCIL MEETING

Meeting: Monday 26th October 2020

Present: S Clark (Head Teacher), K Vallance (Chair/Secretary), A Blair (PTA Chair), Cllr Bamforth, P Donnelly, S Hussain, S Sadiq, E Morrison, J Scott, J Wong, L Jones, G Gass, J Murphy, R Kari, J Thomson, U Siritharanathan, K Maung, N Siddiqui, C Dodd, J Brindley, C Adams, L Fraser, L Hutchinson, Z Robertson, L Phillips

Apologies: L Donaldson (PTA Vice-Chair), S Sheikh

1. Welcome and Apologies

K Vallance welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed apologies had been received from L Donaldson and S Sheikh. K Vallance extended a welcome to the new attendees at the Parent Council meeting.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting (31st August 2020)

Accepted on the proposal of J Wong and seconded by C Dodd.

3. Matters Arising

MCHS Sports Facility – K Vallance asked Cllr Bamforth for a further update on progress. Cllr Bamforth re-confirmed that little progress had been made but that the project was still very much intended to be progressed noting that it was included in the capital expenditure plan and, with ERC's historic record of under borrowing, there was an opportunity to provide the funding as required within the capital plan. K Vallance asked whether the specific funding for the scheme was "ring fenced". Cllr Bamforth confirmed that it was not.

November Careers Evening – S Clark confirmed that the school were looking to merge two careers events into one in a suitable format given the current restrictions. Further details of the event would be issued in early November. Refer to section 8. for potential tie-in opportunities for vocational benefits.

Big Raffle – see section 5.

Recruitment and Selection Training – K Vallance confirmed that J Murphy had undertaken the appropriate training on 9th September 2020 bringing the total number of trained persons on the Parent Council to five.

Enterprise Project Loan Conversion to Grant – K Vallance summarised the circumstances of the historic loan of £950 provided by the Parent Council to seed fund the Enterprise Project within the school. To resolve the accounting situation K Vallance proposed by way of a vote that the loan be re-classified by the Parent Council as a grant to the school given that the funding was destined for school use irrespective of the designation of the transfer of funds. The proposal received unanimous support at the meeting and was accordingly accepted.

4. Head Teacher's Report

S Clark introduced Paul Donnelly, Deputy Head Teacher, Year 4 Head and ICT Lead to discuss Online Learning and Digital Platforms. P Donnelly outlined the upskilling strategy for all teaching staff at MCHS using the Bronze, Silver, Gold and Expert milestones in staff ICT development. All members of staff had bronze proficiency with all progressing through the milestones under the current training regime with the ultimate target of having all members of staff at Gold standard or above at the earliest opportunity to assist with online learning in various formats.

J Murphy queried the use of E-learning products and whether there was a plan in place to introduce consistency across the curriculum for all subjects. J Murphy also questioned the potential to return to a blended learning approach and what advances had been made since the first lockdown. P Donnelly noted that the Scholar System was proving to be very useful along with the video vault of teaching lessons that had been amassed by ERC over the past few months. S Clark noted that Education Scotland was leading the charge through the West Partnership of Local Government organisations.

J Brindley queried when each teacher's proficiency level would become critical for pupil learning. S Clark noted that the school was still in the phase of carrying out specific learning reviews for teachers and this process was also assisting the learning offered to individuals who were self isolating. This is essentially phase one with blended learning and full lockdown being phases two and three respectively. Each one requires a very different digital learning solution.



4. Head Teacher's Report (Cont'd)

P Donnelly noted the work being undertaken on the E-Sgoil platform and Google Meet as part of the "Online School" being furthered by the West Partnership. Cllr Bamforth undertook to issue further information that has been issued at a recent Education Committee meeting. *Refer to subsequent email dated 27th October 2020 issued to all meeting attendees.*

J Wong highlighted the apparent inconsistencies of learning with self-isolating pupils from personal experience and questioned what monitoring was being undertaken to resolve this. S Clark confirmed that a dedicated Support for Learning Teacher had been appointed to ensure the delivery of effective online teaching and as liaison for all pupils. S Clark conceded it was an ongoing challenge and that as a result the SQA are offering increased assessment options to reduce the impact of self-isolation, which results in pupil absence.

Based on the money raised by the Big Raffle and the current funding balance, in response to what would benefit the school most, P Donnelly confirmed that the key ICT equipment requirements for the school were as follows:

- Chrome Books – approximately £300 per unit
- Visualisers – Camera on a stand attached to a working desk for use during technical tutorial exercises
- Wireless Headsets & Microphones

S Sadiq queried how an overall assessment would be made. Refer to section 5. for further details.

S Clark noted that there had been positive feedback from the virtual S4 parents evening held on 7th October 2020. Whilst it was a first trial, on a small scale, it has proven that the principles were sound. A couple of recurring negatives from parents were the rigid 5 minute time limit (although many at the meeting agreed that this was actually quite helpful!) and the resilience of IT on the night. This latter point will no doubt be a continual issue for several months/years. G Gass noted that there were some instances where times had been double booked. S Clark noted that they were currently building up to a further small scale test for S2 and then up scaling for S1. K Vallance thanked the school for the very detailed pupil reports that had been issued in the absence of face-to-face teacher meetings. N Siddiqui and J Murphy agreed that the reports were excellent.

S Clark provided an update on the current Covid-19 situation. With now well-embedded protocols and excellent parental support, MCHS is doing well on a day-to-day basis. S Clark conceded that the restrictions were having significant effects on practical subjects with everything taking longer and being more difficult. S Clark noted that the first virtual assembly screening had taken place on the day of this meeting. S Clark confirmed that the optional study periods in lieu of non-core PE lessons would be pressing ahead with pupils able to chose a flexible three period solution to best fit their requirements. G Gass queried when these changes would run to with S Clark confirming they would be in place until the end of the current term.

S Clark confirmed that the current attendance rate stands at 94% demonstrating high parental confidence in the school and that there continued to be no evidence of any intra-school transmission. That said where small numbers of pupils were not following the rules regarding the use of face-masks, notices would be issued.

J Wong questioned the change to alphabetical seating arrangements and whether this would actually lead to more exposure as the "cohort bubble" would change from subject to subject. S Clark agreed that there was no perfect system, with subject by subject arrangements being very complicated to implement but highlighted that the alphabetical changes would assist in any tracing exercise should pupils have to self-isolate.

S Clark confirmed that the Higher and Advance Higher exams would take place slightly later in the year commencing on 13th May 2021 and that the National 5 exams has been cancelled for this academic year. The current S4 would therefore have SQA examined coursework and awards would be based on between 2 and 4 pieces of assessment evidence that would vary depending on the course subject.

S Clark noted that at present the Prelims diet of exams was under review. Stephen Hale (DHT) was part of a working group meeting from 27th October onwards to review the prelims and mock exams process. S Clark however expects to have prelims as part of the course assessment process which may take place in December or be moved into Q1 2021 to assist with catching up on subject matter taught during lockdown. J Brindley and L Fraser noted that mock exams would be beneficial to the pupils. The meeting agreed as did S Clark as the requirement for having milestones to demonstrate pupils' learning improvement is key to the assessment process. S Clark noted however that a decision on how to progress the 'mock exams' diet would be affected by the arrangements for other schools and the current Covid-19 restrictions forcing schools to limit numbers to no more than 50 in any one location. S Clark is also awaiting feedback from other principal teachers.



5. Finance Report

A Blair confirmed that the Big Raffle had generated a total of £1,060.22 for school funds and thanked everyone involved in the organisation of the raffle. S Clark thanked the Parent Council and in particular A Blair for all the hard work and for both A Blair and K Vallance braving the elements to carry out the prize draw outside the school (in a suitably distanced manner!).

A Blair confirmed that the current balance in the bank is £3,662.21, an increase of £368.10 in the period.

Following on from the earlier discussion noted in section 4., K Vallance proposed that some funds should be retained to cover the cost of the S1 French dictionaries with the balance being transferred to the school in order to purchase much needed ICT equipment. A Blair suggested retaining £1,162.21 in the bank account leaving a total of £2,500.00 for ICT expenditure. K Vallance asked P Donnelly to provide a proposed schedule of purchases based on this sum.

K Vallance to then issue this expenditure breakdown to the Parent Council via email for ratification at the earliest opportunity to allow the much needed equipment to be purchased and brought into use.

6. Parent Teacher Association Report

A Blair underlined the difficulty for fund raising events that the current restrictions have produced. A Blair requested that an extra two dress-down days in the academic year would allow some much needed fundraising and also lift the spirits of the pupils. S Clark confirmed that under the specific circumstances of this year the principal was acceptable subject to agreeing dates. A Blair to issue two suggested dates for review.

A Blair noted that with the change in office bearers and the retirement of the previous Head Teacher there were no longer the appropriate number of signatories to the PTA bank account. K Vallance confirmed that the previously issued governance procedures required that the Treasurer kept the accounts and cheque book but was not a signatory to the cheque books. As such K Vallance proposed that going forward the three signatories to the account should be:

*MCHS Head Teacher – Stuart Clark
Parent Teacher Association Chair – Aileen Blair
Parent Council Chair – Keith Vallance*

The proposal received unanimous support at the meeting and was accordingly accepted.

7. Correspondence

K Vallance intimated that the Parent Council Chairs Forum met on 2nd September 2020 noting that the key issues discussed related to the parental feedback received on the handling of the education process during lockdown by ERC and the ongoing and ever changing Covid-19 measures and their impact on education provision. K Vallance confirmed that the next meetings would be held on 25th November 2020, 3rd February and 26th May 2021.

K Vallance highlighted the recent issue of the National Parent Forum Scotland (NPFS) Autumn Newsletter. *Attached to the minutes for reference.*

K Vallance noted that Connect were running sessions from 3rd to 19th November covering a variety of topics. *Refer to subsequent email dated 27th October 2020 issued to all meeting attendees.*

K Vallance referred to the SQA consultation survey that had been issued on 22nd October 2020 to the entire Parent Forum and urged all present to take the 10 minutes to complete the survey and inform the process with views on the Covid-19 measures.

K Vallance expressed gratitude to the Parent Council for positively responding to the initial feedback review on use of non-core PE periods for additional study time. This process had now been put into action with pupils being able to choose a flexible approach going forward. Several meeting attendees noted their appreciation of the school for this initiative. S Clark confirmed the choices made by each pupil would at least run until the Christmas break.



7. Correspondence (Cont'd)

K Vallance thanked the Parent Council for the quick responses received to the NPFS questionnaire on the 2021 exam diet. These were fed back to NPFS the day before the decision was made to cancel the National 5 exams for 2021. The results were summarised and are noted below.

- *Our Parent Council wish to see a full exam diet for all pupils in 2021 irrespective of the public health situation at that time - NO - 100%*
- *Our Parent Council seeks to have Higher and Advanced Higher exams prioritised for the 2021 exam diet - YES - 66%*
- *Our Parent Council believe that all exams for all senior phase pupils should be cancelled NOW for 2021 and that teacher assessment of predicted grades should be used to measure academic attainment for this school year - NO - 78%*
- *Our Parent Council are content for pupils to work towards all exams taking place in 2021 and will accept that should the public health situation worsen, included the reintroduction of blended learning, exams may be cancelled LATER in this academic year - YES - 66%*

Lastly K Vallance congratulated the school for ensuring that Charities Week went ahead this year in spite of the many obstacles that the current measures have created. In response to a query from S Sadiq, S Clark confirmed that the monies raised would again be distributed to the chosen good causes for this academic year.

8. Any Other Business:

L Fraser highlighted the Year 4 project in National 5 Computer Science that was being undertaken by Morgan Stanley. It currently involved working with other Greater Glasgow secondary schools and could be of benefit to Mearns Castle High School. The project is based on "Generation Tech" tackling subjects such as HTML coding, Wire Framing and website construction. S Clark agreed that it would be of great benefit and would pass on the details to M McGarry for further review and action.

Post Meeting Note: K Vallance suggested to S Clark that it would be helpful if a representative of S6 could canvass the Head Pupils of each year group in the month of November on any issues that they wish to bring to the attention of the school and the Parent Council. The appointed representative could then either produce a brief report for the next Parent Council meeting for review or would be welcome to attend the meeting to provide the review in person. S Clark to review further.

9. Date for Next Meetings

The next Parent Council meeting will take place on **Monday 7th December 2020**. Arrangements regarding the nature of the meeting will be advised nearer the time.

Further meetings for the academic year are as follows:

1st February 2021
8th March 2021
24th May 2021 (AGM)