



NETHERLEE PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Netherlee Parent Council

Meeting – 31st of March 2021

Present	Harriet Boyle	HB	Jennifer Bryant	JB
	Adam Capek	JB	Carol Chalmers	CC
	Handri Cronje	HC	Kaneez Fizza	FK
	Emma Gibson	EG	Trisha Hamilton	TH
	Joanna Haw	JH	Justin Haccius	JH
	Fiona Khan	FK	Mike Law	ML
	Richard Owen	RO	Victoria Pearson	VP
	Felicity Rose	FR	Tennant Stevenson	TS
	Jane Thomson	JT	Dorothy Buchanan (PTA)	DB
	Yvonne Donaldson (NPS)	YD	Jen Bannerman	JB
	Julie Robertson (NPS)	JR	Alistair Haw	AH
	Angela Kerr (NPS)	AK	Sidra Khan	SK

Minutes by HB 01/04/21

Welcome

TS opened the meeting and welcomed three observers (SK, JB and AH) some for the first time.

TS advised of an email received from Brian Cook resigning from the PC. TS read the email from BC advising of his resignation.

Apologies

Apologies from Fiona McMillan, AI and Lynn Sweeney

Approval of minutes meeting held 24th February

TS had one comment on the minutes of the previous meeting re spelling of Stevenson.

Minutes approved by FK. Seconded by TS

Internal PC matters

a> Constitution

TS opened by advising the work of the constitution sub committee had not yet been completed but felt it was nearly there. Documents were not yet ready for circulation to the full PC with a few points requiring clarification to get "it over the line" but a draft was about 90% complete. TS advised in order to progress and complete the review for the next PC meeting that the sub committee should increase in size from three people to five/six, assuming the three existing members remain in place this required two or three additional volunteers. HB, JH confirmed they would remain, FR stated she had used all her energy and a significant amount of time in getting the constitution to this point and would step down given other commitments. HB confirmed all documents to date were with the two subgroup members and FR didn't have sole copies of any documents. TS volunteered himself to be a member and opened the floor to the PC. EB volunteered to join the group and VP volunteered, first seeking clarification that the remaining PC members had no objections given she was already on another sub group. AC & ML confirmed via chat they were happy with this.

Constitution sub group confirmed as JH, HB, TS, EB, VP. Group to have a proposed constitution document to circulate at the May PC meeting.

b> Communication

JT reviewed the headlines from the communication group:

- Good feedback on the PC newsletter distributed via the Friday Bundle
- The survey conducted showed positivity for communication via email and newsletter so this will continue, with a one page summary of this meeting being circulated via the Friday Bundle.
- FM was thanked for her graphics skills in completing the newsletter.
- The circulation and absorption of the full survey results will take time.
- Class WhatsApp cascade reps have been set up and most classes have coverage.
- A reminder regarding the survey was sent via the cascade groups and the response rate doubled the same day.
- It has been agreed within the communications subgroup that useful messages via the WhatsApp group are a useful way of communicating with the parent forum. The next message could be regarding the next meeting date and information on how to register as an observer.

AC reviewed the survey results circulated:

- 188 responses, covering 288 children – approx. 30% of the school represented fairly evenly with a spread across the school and nursery.
- The results showed the understanding of what the PC and PTA do and the roles of the two groups were confused and that the current strategy of outlining and reinforcing the two was relevant.
- Results showed:

- only 50% of respondents knew how to contact the PC, with the preferred method of contact being via email. The other top three ways to express opinions were shown as survey and WhatsApp. (AC advised these were not only the three most clicked but also showed as the most popular in the points system allocated to the first, second and third choices chosen by respondents).
- 60% of parents didn't know how to access PC minutes.
- Over 50% of respondents had never engaged with the PC.
- 30% of respondents had read previous minutes.
- Respondents also showed positivity (25%) to a smartphone app for PC communications.
- AC highlighted the importance of communicating meetings to parents and advertising details and the importance of sharing news with parents.

TS thanked the Communications team for time well spent and improving the presence of the PC.

AC reviewed the survey results in relation to the SNIP:

- As expected the survey respondents prioritised two main issues that they would like to see in the SNIP for the academic year 2021/2022, children's mental health and the academic recovery following school closures.
- Outside these two areas other interest to include were:
 - Outdoor learning provision
 - Playground development
 - PE & Sport
 - After school activities
 - Music (please note there was no differentiation in this category between class, group or individual musical learning)
- AC highlighted that the school had no direct influence on some of the above topics but asked that the school consider what the PC could do to support the development and influence decision making on these specific areas.
- AC advised for transparency and the ongoing focus of the PC that the use of the playing field specifically was clicked by just 12% of parents as a top five priority for the SNIP.
- Other comments regarding focus for the SNIP included the ongoing and developing reading programme, STEM projects.

AC confirmed the survey results have been shared with YD and the survey had been a very useful exercise.

TS thanked the communications group again saying it was "a tremendous result" with a third of the pupils being covered by respondents. That the result highlighted how effective the PC could be in informing the parent forum regarding school matters and getting feedback for the school.

YD thanked the group for the information and advised it was a fantastic input tool for planning and the timing excellent, YD thanked AC & JT for acting quickly to get information back in time for inclusion within the school and nursery planning schedule.

YD advised the three areas highlighted (listed below) were key focus points already and that a lot of outdoor development was underway. The outdoor links to health and wellbeing have been much highlighted and will continue to form a key part in planning for the next year.

- Academic recovery
- Mental health
- School grounds

YD requested that if possible more information on the areas of:

- music
- after school club focus
- the partnership between school and parents

YD thought it would be useful to consider these areas but felt further clarification would be helpful. YD asked if the PC had any insight into why / how parents wanted development in these areas.

YD highlighted her initial thoughts around the possibility of the Expressive Arts curriculum, one of which is music, the others being art and drama), potentially being considered for inclusion in the SNIP next session. Due to the nature of these areas, this will also contribute to the continuous focus on health and wellbeing.

FR suggested reintroducing the school show would be a great addition for pupils who were missing out but accepted this may be difficult given current restrictions.

MUGA – Pitch review (Sub committee report)

TS opened by advising the sub committee had met on several occasions and submitted a remit for the PC to review.

FK updated on sub committee work to date, advising the circulation of the proposed remit

TS requested confirmation the PC members had read the circulated remit, he noted the ambitious timeline of the subcommittee looking to report in June and questioned if this deadline was realistic given the work to be undertaken? TS invited additional questions from the PC.

FK advised the sub committee had already a meeting date agreed for next week and would divide up the tasks of the remit. The overriding question must be “What is best for the school and nursery of Netherlee?”. Further outcomes must include understanding the council position regarding the land, funding and ongoing responsibilities.

FK indicated much of the time would be involved in collating information from various sources and that the aim was for investigations to produce the potential route forward. FK acknowledged this may be several routes. FK also indicated questions asked now may generate further questions and that may impact the timeline, but that the timeline would be reviewed in early May.

TS stated his confidence in the subcommittee.

Head Teacher’s Report

Equalities Forum meeting

JR reported on the recent meeting attended by three PC members. JR thanked the council members for their attendance and representation of Netherlee Primary School and Nursery at this forum. The key areas of discussion at the forum focused on the increase of child poverty during the pandemic and the cost of the school day. JR requested that to push forward ideas within Netherlee if the three

PC members would meet with her to review the current position for the school, parent forum and PC? The initial meeting would be a scope meeting and plans would help form part of the SNIP.

YD advised the school was already taking action on this and had for example, set up a school uniform recycling programme, advising the amount of school uniform unclaimed within school was incredible. YD advised the agreement with the charitable organisation previously in place for recycling school uniform was not currently continuing due to the pandemic.

TS highlighted the school uniform rental video circulated. YD advised the steps at present were to set up a very simple system to help families quickly.

Parent Teacher meetings

YD advised Parent Teacher meetings would go ahead towards the end of the next session (late May/June), later than in previous years. This later date will allow teachers to collate information following the return to in school learning and for teachers to write progress reports for parents/carers to review in advance of the meetings. The progress reports should focus meeting discussions and highlight areas of success &/or concern for parents/carers prior to meetings allowing for productive, focused outcomes.

Planning is underway based on current guidelines and meetings will take place virtually. YD appreciates that her staff have agreed to this. Whilst guidelines may change prior to May, YD highlighted that the school needs to start putting plans in place now.

YD highlighted again that the telephone system of parent / teacher meeting operated last year had increased parent engagement with parent/ teacher meetings and whilst “seeing “ a face virtually may be “nice” it will be important to review the impact of this process for meetings going forwards.

Health & Safety Drop In by ERC

YD updated the PC on the recent “drop in” by the Health & Safety review team from ERC, the inspection was to review Covid protocols in place throughout the school. YD advised the two hour drop in was very successful with a review of all protocols including inside classrooms, staff and pupil communal areas, social distancing of staff, mask wearing, hand cleaning etc. the report produced no required actions. YD noted that this should reassure parents/carers that the school/ nursery is doing its utmost to ensure a covid secure environment for pupils and the staff team.

Recovery & renewal

YD noted the school and nursery is looking forward to a more stable time, with a support and recovery plan in place. YD advised the majority of pupils had returned well and were happy, settled and working hard. There is a real buzz of excited children and it is “lovely to see smiling faces”. Those children identified as requiring additional support to ensure positive health and wellbeing have plans in place. YD highlighted the school and nursery have been working with parents very closely to try ensure all children are settled and supported. YD wants to ensure any parent who has concerns about their child communicates directly with the school so plans can be put in place.

JR advised of the procedures undertaken on the return to school, initially for the P1-P3 children additional support was given for targeted learning with direct support for those children who needed it. This support has now been realigned to the returning P4-P7 pupils. All pupils have undergone a range of simple, holistic assessments and these have been used to implement additional support as required. Dyslexia assessments have also restarted and where appropriate parent meetings have taken place. JR outlined the variety of different support methods put in place

to support both academic learning and mental health. The teachers have a suite of activities and teaching tools at their disposal to support the whole child where needed. Following the upcoming holidays, targeted pupil support will once again be provided to children across all stages of the school and nursery where required.

YD highlighted that we now enter a period which is crucial in identifying those children who fall into a new category of “everyone else is now ok, but I’m still not”. These children will continue to be identified and receive support in conjunction with parents. YD identified parents as a key resource especially during this unique time and the level of communication and partnership working between parents and the school has increased which has been a positive development. YD made a plea that this improved communication continue and that any parent who was concerned got in touch with the school/ nursery. YD advised that the school/ nursery is keen to continue to develop this level of trust and partnership.

Music tuition

YD advised that following an email from ERC that instrumental music tuition will resume shortly. String instruments first, followed by woodwind and brass. YD advised ERC will implement a recruitment plan after Easter for P3/P4 pupils for tuition and roll out across the levels. YD again highlighted that the development of music and PE have seen a dramatic reduction during the pandemic due to Covid restrictions.

Digital

AK – Nursery children (with parents/carers) have been using Google Classroom and this roll out has been welcomed by the school. Teething problems such as passwords and log ins have all been addressed. The platform has been used for sharing videos for children and for sharing session planning. Additionally this platform will also assist with the transition from nursery to school.

JR – The digital skills gained by pupils and staff during the period of home learning has been tremendous and the school is keen to ensure these aren’t lost. The programmes and apps used during home learning will be translated into some classroom learning where appropriate, and also for homework going forwards. Homework will be posted on google classroom following its resumption after Easter to ensure pupils remain familiar with the platform. Mr Bryce has created digital sways for staff use to ensure new learning on platforms is shared across the whole team and new learning isn’t lost.

Academic recovery

YD reviewed the current position and suggested that initial data indicates that children should be back on track and where they need to be, within the next few weeks/ months, for academic recovery in Literacy and Numeracy. Once this has occurred the reintroduction of skills teaching of other curricular areas will be implemented.

YD advised that she is grateful that parents have contacted the school offering assistance in the recovery planning, offering skills of mindfulness, art techniques, reading help and staff will now consider how this can be incorporated in the recovery planning. YD thanked parents and said that relationships / engagement created with the school over this period must be capitalised on positively.

Website

YD – the school and nursery website refresh was a priority for the period 20/21, obviously this has not happened due to the pandemic however it remains a focus. YD requested input from the PC,

especially given recent skills exhibited by the communications group. Key elements for review include: Is the site user friendly? What information is missing? What is useful on the site? YD advised this is an ongoing development but stated it is not an immediate priority.

Questions from the PC re Head Teacher;s Report

Standardised Testing

TS: Will standardised testing take place next term?

YD: Yes, ERC have confirmed that testing will take place for P3, P5 & P7 pupils following the Easter Holidays and will be spread over a three week period. The testing forms a useful assessment, although rarely highlights anything teachers are not already aware of. The testing does however provide very useful information on the class, stage and overall school position / diagnostics of school attainment.

TS: Will the results of the testing form part of the progress report to parents?

YD: That is the intention if at all possible (if scores are returned to Netherlee prior to reports being issued to parents). However it must be born in mind that the assessment is only part of the progress report to parents.

Website Update

JT: The communications subcommittee was planning to look at the website and would be happy to collate information on it for submission to YD if this was felt helpful.

YD: Yes please. There are limitations in that the school has to utilise the ERC platform template, feedback should focus on content, layout, ease of finding information, menus order, as there is not an opportunity to rebuild the site.

JT: Encouraged PC members to submit any thoughts to the subcommittee.

Thank you for support from school in return

FR: made a note of thanks to the school for the support of pupils in the recent return, highlighting the improved communication.

Music lessons

FR: With a plan to restart music lessons what is the schedule for those who missed out this year? What is the music centre recovery plan for a potential deluge of P3 / P4 students wishing to start an instrument at the same time?

YD: As the planning is in its infancy the school is currently unaware of the details, as Scottish Government has just advised the possible reintroduction it's still very early days. More information should be available soon.

Google Classroom usage / digital practices longer term

FR: If the plans for homework are to utilise google classroom are their plans in place to support those children without devices as there was during lockdown? Have discussions been had with after school providers to allow pupils screen access? Longer term is there a planned review of what has worked and what hasn't, what may be adopted going forwards given the digital skills learnt?

YD: Support / devices would be available as previously for those who needed them, parents should, and have already, contact the school for support.

Homework policy

TS advised this topic had been a PC item for some time and was now significantly more relevant given the planned reintroduction of homework after the Easter Holidays.

YD advised the homework policy was to be reviewed in this academic year but this had been delayed due to the pandemic and concentration on home learning. This review fell in line with the standard rolling regular review of all school policies. Homework policy will be reviewed early in September/October 2021 with a view to modifications being applied thereafter. It was confirmed by YD that as homework had an impact “at home” and school that the involvement of both parents and teachers was crucial in any review.

TS summarised, that in the forthcoming term homework would continue as has been previously, with the change of moving to the google classroom and that the PC could be represented as part of the parental involvement in the homework review Sept/Oct.

YD confirmed this was the case, saying the review was an intensive piece of work but not lengthy.

TS set a target that the PC have a position in place for the review process.

VP – can the PC do anything now? Can parents share views? Could a survey be used to contact the parent forum on opinions as there is no doubt parent’s will have an opinion on the topic. Can The PC help gather information? VP stated that her feelings came from a health and wellbeing perspective and the need for children to socialise with each other and play after the isolation of the last year.

AC advised that it was important not to survey on too many topics as we would risk survey fatigue but that they were easy to set up and the information could be very useful.

FR – Was consideration given to homework being extended beyond the Mon-Thurs currently in practice?

YD confirmed the homework policy would remain Mon-Thurs at the present time until a complete review could be undertaken as previously outlined. However the spread of homework over the entire week or Mon-Thurs was an important consideration to be looked at/ along with if homework across the year groups was progressive. YD also stated that homework is not mandatory or compulsory and that prior to lockdown the largest amount of communication from parents to the school was regarding “how to support children in homework”. YD also expressed that the school would be flexible, adaptable and understanding of the ongoing pressure on homes and families.

YD highlighted that the PC survey didn’t show homework as a priority issue, so whilst on the school agenda for review it didn’t rank highly when parents responded.

YD concluded the school view by asking that the PC perhaps collate names ready for a parent staff group to take forward in the next session. Observer JB is keen to volunteer to this group

TS advised the PC would be prepared for work to start in September.

FR requested clarification on homework that parents, teachers and pupils understood the same message rather than feeling pressure regarding homework, that it wasn’t mandatory.

VP followed up by stating the link between additional pressure felt by some children and parents regarding homework could have a negative impact on mental health especially during this recovery period. VP also asked the review include the objectives of what homework should achieve, when balanced against outdoor play and other health & wellbeing activities.

Speed restrictions on Clarkston Road

TS asked for PC opinion on the circulated documents from a parent on the issue of the current speed limit outside Netherlee Primary School main entrance and the suggestion of a flashing 20 speed limit. A show of hands made clear the PC felt this was a serious matter and an issue they should be supporting for improvement.

JH spoke in support of the matter saying he felt it was a definite priority given the serious risk of an accident occurring. AC also spoke in support of action to be taken, that after a corum vote that this should be a matter we take forward on behalf of parents.

TS confirmed as a PC we would write in support of Mr Scott (parent) and Cllr Annette Ireland. VP & RO offered to draft the letter for submission. TS requested any additional PC points be fed in to VP & RO.

AOCB

Equalities Forum

HC reported on the recent Equalities Forum meeting, the first one she has attended. HC suggested all PC review the meeting slides if they hadn't already. In summary HC advised the pandemic had amplified child poverty within ERC, with more children now in poverty and more families with at least one working parent financially insecure. The Equalities meeting highlighted the cost of the school day and allowing children an equal opportunity to flourish regardless of their financial position. HC reported the number of resources and pathways to seeking assistance for those in financial difficulty were extensive within Netherlee and there is an assumption that many families are reluctant to seek help and are not aware of the support available. HC felt the PC should be open in communications and responsive in initiating discussions / practical suggestions in raising awareness of the paths available for help. HC confirmed the three equalities champions would meet with JR as suggested to brainstorm and report action points back to the PC. HC suggested that a wider parent spectrum should also be involved in discussions to deepen the quality of discussion. HC stated her enthusiasm for this within Netherlee.

Any ideas / comments regarding the Equalities forum should be forwarded to JR at the school email address.

HC concluded that covid was an opportunity to reassess inequality and that this was an opportunity to reset the balance.

TS proposed the Equalities representatives report after each meeting to the PC to ensure it remains central to the PC principles.

FR supported TS but additionally felt that Equality doesn't happen in a forum but has to be felt and lived with in every decision made by the PC, whether that be regarding school uniform, pitch use, digital devices or how meetings are held.

TS confirmed he felt it important to keep equality relevant within the PC although some decisions may be made without reflecting directly on equality.

JH proposed the PC write to current campaigning elective candidates to gain their support for the school.

AK – spoke very quickly to advise the PC that during the election period of purdah that contacting political individuals was not appropriate.

YD – requested in her advisory capacity to the PC as Head of Netherlee that the PC undertook no political activity and that there was no political agenda especially during an election campaign. Additionally during the period of purdah there were very strict rules to follow regarding the issue around political gain. Furthermore whilst it was up to the PC in what action was taken, YD advised that it was perhaps best not to put a political slant on the PC body.

VP – via chat advised that any political direction by the PC made her feel very uncomfortable.

FR – spoke to affirm her view, that she felt the PC should have no political agenda and should be a neutral body. FR stated that as a civil servant and like teachers during this period of purdah she could not and would not engage in any political discussion.

TS – questioned if during this period of purdah that action could be taken regarding the speed limit on Clarkston Road.

DB – via chat and VP - advised we would be writing to the council directly to people whose role within the council was to deal with issues of this nature, not to elected representatives regarding this issue.

JT – advised on her position that she felt the PC should be a politically neutral body.

TS – confirmed the PC would make no contact with any campaigning representatives during this period.

Meeting closed by TS who thanked everyone for their attendance and input. Next meeting date early May to be confirmed.