

St Ninian's Parent Council



Minutes of the Parent Council Meeting held on Monday, 3rd October 2016

Parent Members Present	M Ward J Mackie P Burns G Boyle A McGowan	P McGrotty D Manini J McLachlan C Merrick
School Staff Present	J Docherty (HT) J Cumming	J Fuchs M McKean L Howard
Other	R Convery (Church Rep) C Forshaw (prospective Parent Member)	
Apologies	Cllr Montague K Reilly (Parent Member)	

Welcome & Prayer

M Ward welcomed all to the meeting for 2016/17 of the St Ninian's High School Parent Council ("the PC") and started the meeting with a prayer.

M Ward welcomed Mrs Caroline Forshaw to be meeting and reminded all present that the role of the PC was to consider general matters and not focus on or consider individual cases or circumstances.

Previous Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were proposed as accurate by P McGrotty, seconded by D Manini, and approved.

East Renfrewshire Council Consultation Paper “PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR ADMISSIONS AND THE TRANSFER OF PUPILS FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY IN RESPECT OF ALL EAST RENFREWSHIRE ROMAN CATHOLIC AND NON-DENOMINATIONAL PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS EFFECTIVE FROM JANUARY 2017”

Further and subsequent to the previous meeting M Ward reported that a meeting of the Parent Forum had been held on Thursday 22nd September. At that meeting there had been unanimous support for the proposals however concern was raised in relation to the capacity issues which would result from implementation of them. These concerns reflected those already identified by the PC and were expanded upon by Mr Docherty at the PC’s request. He agreed that there was already significant pressure on school resources and that these proposals would undoubtedly add to these. The PC agreed that it would note this within its response to the consultation and follow it up at a future meeting. The PC requested that it be given a full analysis of the current position in relation to room usage etc. and Mr Docherty offered to have a presentation made at the next meeting, which was agreed to.

Members of the PC had attended both the public meetings held by ERC (one in Barrhead and the other in Eastwood Theatre) and listened to comments made by all sections of the community and in particular to those identifying themselves as parents of St Ninian’s HS. The comments made by this group closely reflected those already noted.

There was also a body of opinion in relation to the removal from the placing request list of children residing in the catchment of St Vincent’s and St Angela’s schools with pre-existing rights under the current arrangements. Mr Ward noted that he had received three written responses making a similar point to this

Members of the PC had also attended the meeting of “east” Parent Councils held in Clarkston Halls and again similar arguments were made.

D Manini noted that there had now been four consultations regarding admission to St Ninian’s and that should there be any future requirement for a consultation it should be based on the expansion of Roman Catholic denominational education which obviously was highly valued by all sections of the community.

At all meetings the concerns of other parts of the local community were heard that these proposals could become divisive. The PC agreed that such division was not acceptable and that all pupils of St Ninian’s would continue to have their full support.

Mr Convery advised that both the Archdiocese of Glasgow and the Diocese of Paisley would be making responses supporting the proposals as would SCES (Scottish Catholic Education Service).

Considering all these views it was agreed that the PC would support the proposals subject to the above caveats and a discussion ensued regarding a

first draft of the response. It was agreed that M Ward and D Manini be mandated to finalise the response and submit it to ERC.

M Ward agreed to finalise the response with D Manini, and thanked all for the efforts and attention to this matter and for taking the time to consider and make responses.

Review of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006

Governance Review of Early Years and Schools Education

J McLachlan (JM) reported that there was a major consultation exercise being undertaken by the Scottish Government in relation to both the above. This review was being led by the Deputy First Minister and Education Secretary, Mr John Swinney, and encompassed all aspects of school governance. The objective was to help “close the attainment gap”

JM advised that in his role as East Renfrewshire’s representative of the National Parent Forum for Scotland (NPFS) he was aware that the NPFS was also involved in this review and was making a response.

JM circulated a note which included 17 questions which the government invited comments upon but advised that the questions themselves were very broad in scope and left a wide range of responses. It was noted that there was no mention of the existing local authorities within the questions and indeed that mention was made of alternative governance structures, e.g. “clusters of schools” (Q9) and “regional level” (Q10).

It was noted that from April 2017 the Council tax payable by all residents in Bands E to G would increase significantly with a resultant decrease in the block grant allocated to local authorities. The reduction in block grant would be used by central government to spend on its identified priorities for closing the attainment gap and may not necessarily be within the local authority areas from which the grant reduction was made. It was noted that whilst the full effect of this policy has not been confirmed it could significantly impact on areas with high density of Band E to G houses such as East Renfrewshire which would not directly benefit from the increase in council tax revenue.

Mr Docherty also made a presentation on this subject giving the background to the consultation including the documents “Delivering Excellence & Equity in Scottish Education,” published in June 2016 and “Empowering Teachers, Parents and Communities to Achieve Excellence and Equity in Education” published in September 2016, both by the Scottish Government. He raised concerns that given that the process could become a “race to the bottom” and that instead of raising attainment for all there could be a negative impact of high performing schools such as St Ninian’s. Mr Docherty reminded all that parents had an unrivalled insight on what was the best education for their children free from vested interests and that they should use this to contribute.

It was noted that SCES had issued a note giving initial guidance on the consultation from the Catholic Church perspective and had set up a working

group but it was not known how this would develop. R Convery agreed to confirm and report to the next meeting.

The closing date for any responses is 7th January 2017 and there is a pro-forma response format available if preferred although parties are free to use their own style if preferred.

In summary it was agreed that there was a significant amount of work required in such a short period of time but that it was important that a response was made. J McLachlan & M Ward will consider how to approach and report back to the next meeting.

Head Teacher's Report

Carried forward to the next meeting

Chair's Report

Mr Ward, reported that he had attended the Equalities Forum on 15th Sept. 2016 at Mearns Castle High School and that it had been reported that there was a very low level of racial, sectarian or other hate crime reported with East Renfrewshire but a system exists for monitoring of such incidents.

The Parent Council chairs meeting had been postponed until 13th October 2016 and it was noted that Budget Savings had been included as an agenda item.

The Education Committee was due to meet on 6th October, the agenda items being early childcare and SQA results.

Mrs Birkmyre has stepped down as minute secretary and if anyone knows of someone who may be interested please let M Ward know. There is a small payment made for this role, details of which are available on request.

Mr Ward had accepted Mr Docherty's invitation to address the S1 information evening and had appealed for new members of the PC and asked members to consider if they knew anyone who would be interested.

Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is Monday 7th November 2016.