

Maidenhill Primary School Parent Council Meeting Minutes

Tuesday 14th June 2022 6pm

Present: Mr McDonald (HT), Miss Shaw (DHT), Mrs Barr (PT), Miss Lawson (PT), Mr Edge, Councillor Andrew Anderson, Councillor Caroline Bamforth, Councillor Paul Edlin, Lee de Franca (Chair), Wendy Nixon (Vice-Chair), Susan Hamill (Treasurer), Diane Rutherford (Comms Co-ordinator), Clare Lamont (Secretary), Zhada Robertson, Lynne Hamilton, Fiona Howarth, Melanie Buff

1. Apologies: Mark Ratter (ERC Head of Education), Sabrina Chalmers (Secretary), Leigh O’Donnell (Treasurer), Jenny Boyd (Fundraising), Liz Maxwell, David Bickley, Lauren Kendrick, Gillian O’Neill, Manpreet Kaur, Priyanka Kumar.
2. Chairperson’s introduction.
3. Headteacher’s report: see report
4. Treasury Update: see report
5. School uniform – ERC’s “Dressing for Excellence”: Mr McDonald wanted to emphasize that there has been no significant change in the uniform policy since Maidenhill PS opened – only that black trainers are now allowed.

In the previous Parent Council meeting (26th April 2022), the PC asked for clarification on what “younger” children means in relation to the wearing of poloshirts on PE days. A discussion was had and it was agreed by the parties in attendance at that meeting that this should mean P1-P3; therefore, P4-P7 children are expected to wear shirt and tie and get changed into poloshirt for PE. Following the April meeting the school staff have been actively promoting the wearing of shirts and ties to the children, including handing out house tokens to those wearing their shirt and tie (Mr McDonald described this as “positive reinforcement”).

Lee de Franca agreed that the actual uniform policy in itself hasn’t changed greatly, but the promotion of it in school has and as a result of this increased level of encouragement/promotion of shirt and ties, more children and parents have become aware of the school’s uniform policy and have spoken up about their preference of poloshirts – hence, the PC discussing this topic again. It was discussed that shirt and tie is less practical for outdoor learning etc and also the time taken to change out of shirt and tie and into poloshirts for PE takes away from learning time. Claire Lamont asked if the uniform policy could be reviewed going forward and opened to a wider parental consultation given this is an ERC wide policy. Mr McDonald didn’t disagree with the possibility of revisiting the uniform policy in future, if required. Mr McDonald felt standards of dress had fallen since the pandemic, because of the official relaxations to uniforms during that time, and by comparison Maidenhill pupils looked less smart to other local PS children. It was raised that newer families may not have read the policy. It was also discussed that the policy needs to be inclusive and mindful of any children with additional support needs.

In regards to House tokens being given to those wearing full uniform, Lee de Franca suggested that in an effort for pupils not in full uniform not to feel left out or “hard done by”, perhaps the school could promote it’s checks of uniform, e.g. every Tuesday you’ll get a house point if you wear your uniform. Mr McDonald put forward that it should be a spot check so that children wear their uniforms as much as possible and not only on a specific day. Lee de Franca understood this reasoning and put forward that promotion of weekly spot checks could still be valuable, for example in the HT bulletin there could be information about there being a spot check done every week (not specifying a day) and at that time those children wearing full uniform would earn points for their house. This suggestion was made in an attempt to be more inclusive, as if the children know that rewards will be given it will encourage them to wear their uniform, as well as prepare them for not getting a reward if they don’t.

1. MACS: It was noted that some new P1 parents had been informed that MACS was full when they applied for places for this August. Lee De Franca has received an email (see attached) to say that MACS have applied to increase the maximum number of children they can care for and it was felt this was likely to be approved and when it is, the parents on the waiting list would be contacted. Mr McDonald reassured us that there was no reason it should not be approved from the school’s point of view, there is plenty of space.
2. Maidenhill’s Discipline and Behaviour Policies: Lee de Franca informed the PC that she has been approached by some parents regarding how behaviour issues are dealt with within the school. Mr McDonald informed the PC that there is a draft policy called “Promoting Positive Relationships” which the PC will be consulted about next term and once approved will be available on the school website. It will be a wide-reaching policy covering the use of the “House” system, rights respecting status, the school Parliament, play leaders. Mr McDonald noted that the strategies within this policy are already in place at Maidenhill, but in order to make the policy right for Maidenhill the document/policy had to grow organically with the school. Of note, there is already an ERC wide anti-bullying policy which has been in place since the school opened – this will be attached as an appendix to the Promoting Positive Relationships Policy.
3. School Bus to MCHS from Maidenhill: Fiona Howarth explained how children walking from the Maidenhill estate to their catchment school, Mearns Castle High School (MCHS), takes around 50 minutes depending on where on the estate the child lives. There are children living 2.9 miles from MCHS so are not eligible to a council bus service. There are currently approximately 50 children making this journey twice a day 5 days a week. In reality this means multiple parents are driving their children to school which causes high congestion and pollution around the MCHS site and the roads along the route. FH was advised that the safe walking route is meant to be undertaken whilst “a supervisory adult” is present. This is simply not practical for working parents. This walking route would take the best part of 2 hours out of the child’s day and 4 hours out of the parent’s day if they were to walk to/from the school with their child. With homework and extracurricular activities this is quite a demand on young people’s wellbeing and family life.

FH is hoping practical changes can be made both for the community and environment. The proposed walking route has been deemed “safe” so a council bus service is not provided. The paths have not been completed to the estate despite promises of this some years ago. The councillors present advised the PC that the path leading to Mearnskirk is now due to be opened in August 2022. Several people attending expressed doubt this would happen by August 2022. There had been issues with electricity supply but this is now resolved. The path will be lit but not tarmacked entirely, with some more gravel surfaces. Once this is complete councillors report that the existing Mearnskirk to Maidenhill PS bus will stop. Lynne Hamilton spoke to the PC about the issues with the current walking route which is not felt to be safe by parents. A small selection of existing photographs taken by parents was circulated at the meeting, demonstrating the dangerous walking route with heavy construction traffic eg stopping on/blocking pavements leading families with children on bikes and babies in prams having go onto the road to get round. There is also now a burger van which has no parking facilities meaning cars and workers’ vans are congesting the main road/pavements from Ayr Road to the estate. It was questioned whether anyone from the Council or those who deemed the walking route safe have walked the routes in their entirety and particularly at peak times at school drop off and pick up. In addition, has someone officially walked from the furthest most house with a measurer ensuring they cross at the safest crossing points? There are photos of the signs restricting construction traffic at these times having been knocked over. At times pavements have been present (at morning drop off) and then only hours later (at pick up) the pavement has been dug up, with no signage or warnings, again leading to families having to walk in the road. There were also concerns raised regarding the steep path leading down onto Ayr Road and how dangerous this will be when icy. It was advised that CALA are in control of this path and as such it is out of the council’s control. The councillors urged parents to email them directly every example of this to them.

The PC was informed that a bus is unlikely to be provided by ERC due to the cost. Councillor Bamforth advised that if a bus was provided for Maidenhil to MCHS, then other areas/schools would also have to get buses and overall the cost of this was estimated to be in the region of £600,000 (which would be taken out of the education budget). Another barrier was the lack of bus providers able to provide this service. PC members expressed their concern over the unsafe walking route and put forth that it is only a matter of time until a child gets hurt. PC members asked “do we have to risk a child’s life before something is done?”. It was queried whether the Mearnskirk school bus service could loop round and pick up the children for MCHS?

There is still no local bus service for the Maidenhill estate. The developers gave ERC £6000 per house for a “sustainable bus” service. The Councillors explained that the spine/loop road needed to be complete before this can go ahead (along with a minimum number of occupied houses – any bus service not being used enough would get pulled by the bus company), and SPT buses will not be able to get round the mini roundabout. Councillor Bamforth has asked SPT to investigate a route via Mearnskirk. Different possible routes were discussed but it was pointed out the importance of the times being targeted to allow arrival at MCHS for the start/end of the school day. Councillor Anderson asked whether changing the timing of the number 4 bus would help? The 395 bus (Uplawmoor to EK) was discussed and Councillor Edlin questioned whether Maidenhill could be added to this existing route. Councillor Bamforth advised this may not get re-instated because the bus company has doubled its price.

Fiona Howarth advised the PC that parents have looked into whether a privately funded bus service would be viable, as parents are willing to pay. There were 25 families interested and they were quoted £20/week/child which some families could not afford. Children would be eligible to the Young Scot Card but the local bus service, or lack thereof, means this is currently not a feasible option. However, there is no time scale to when the spine/loop road will be completed.

It was discussed that improving the transport situation will help not only the Maidenhill community but the wider community given the fact that excessive cars are going back and forth to MCHS. Now Paidmyre Road has been re-surfaced more people are using it and the speed cars travel down this route is making it a far less safe walking route. Councillor Bamforth advised that there will be a blanket 20mph speed limit returning into force. It was also pointed out that there are no calming measures in Maidenhill but Councillor Bamforth advised that if there were speed bumps then the buses would not run.

Lee de Franca asked if a broader overview was needed with an up to date assessment or if a focus group could be formed. Lee de Franca thanked the councillors as well as Fiona Howarth and Lynne Hamilton for attending and raising these issues. Mr McDonald told the PC that the school are planning to do the Active Travel Plan.

1. Safe Walking route to Maidenhill: covered under point 8
2. Ukraine Fundraiser Summary: The Ukraine Fundraiser event for the Disaster Emergency Committee was noted to have been a big success raising over £4000 whilst working collaboratively with 2 other PCs, sharing ideas. Claire Lamont, Susan Hamill, Lee de Franca, Diane Rutherford, Wendy Nixon, Jenny Boyd, Melanie Buff were thanked. All the local businesses and people who donated and helped were also thanked. The event had been written up in the Southsider and Community magazines.
3. Seesaw: The GDPR issues raised previously regarding the use of Seesaw have now been resolved. Mr McDonald told the PC that restrictions to its use have now been lifted. It is being considered as a possible platform and reviewed for whether it would provide value for money (it would have to be paid for out of the school’s budget – Miss Shaw explained it would not be funded by ERC like other local authorities have done). Mr McDonald explained that the class blogs and use of Twitter were the current focus and being utilised more and more as a means of communication. Miss Shaw also explained that because parents were being allowed back in the building now covid restrictions were being lifted then there would be less need for Seesaw going forwards.
4. AOB: Lee de Franca brought up the request for a hybrid model for PC meetings for the future in order to be more inclusive of those unable to attend, for example, for childcare reasons. It was asked whether the school technology could be used for this purpose. This would be possible in theory but those attending remotely would likely experience issues with hearing the speaker in the meeting. Mr Edge explained that a roving omni-directional microphone would be required. This would likely cost in the region of £200. He agreed to look into this further. It was also discussed that alternating between remote and in person PC meetings might be a more cost effective, but still inclusive, option.

Councillor Anderson mentioned that attending community council meetings may be another means to get the PC’s voice heard by a wider audience.

Lee de Franca reminded the attendees that any member of the wider parent forum is welcome to PC meetings at any point.

1. Date for next meeting – AGM Tuesday 11th October 2022 at 6.30pm. Recruitment night date TBC depending on when “Meet the Teacher” night is held.