**Aberdour Primary School Parent Council Meeting Minutes**

**Monday 20th March 2023 7.00pm at Aberdour Primary School**

Minutes by Linsay McDonald

1. **Present:** Gareth Williams (Chair and P7 Rep), Claire Stewart (P1 Rep), Linsay McDonald (Secretary and P2 Rep), Ariyanna Johnson (P3 Rep), Claire Matthews (P4 Rep), Wendy Hutchinson (P5 Rep), Louise Wood (Head Teacher), Gillian Cormack (Principal Teacher), Leanne Sweaton (Acting Principal Teacher), Councillor Dave Dempsey, Councillor David Barratt.

**Apologies:** Alison Johnson (Nursery Rep), Councillor Sarah Neal. Lottie Ritchie has stepped down as P6 rep and a replacement is being sought.

1. **Confirmation of minutes/actions arising from last meeting**

LW confirmed that the problems with access to the school for the bins to be emptied on a Friday have been resolved.

1. **Head teacher update including reports on school improvement priorities**

*School improvement plan- reading:* LW reported that working parties looking at the schools approaches to reading have taken place and focused on phonics, an update of the spelling policy to align with the teaching of phonics, and the use of literacy circles. A parental survey and follow up meeting had a good response with a range of classes from P1-P6 represented. There was discussion around how to improve reading homework and achieve better engagement by giving the children more choices around what and how much to read. New reading resources were also discussed.

*School improvement plan- learning through play:* LS reported that time for play/free learning is now included on all class timetables. A parental survey on play had 28 responses across all classes. Parents were asked about how they would prefer to receive further information and the option of an evening presentation, in particular on play in the upper school, was most popular. Therefore, this will go ahead in the near future and will cover the rationale, importance, practice, links with attainment, and benefits of learning through play. It will include pictures, videos and interviews with children and will be open to all parents. LS also reported that APS has been recognised as a ‘learning school’ for play pedagogy by the SEIC (South East Improvement Collaborative). This means that representatives from other schools can visit and learn from our approach to play; the next planned visit is on the 9th May. GW asked whether learning through play has been introduced at high school level and, if not, how this impacts on transition. LS said it has not been approached yet but may be in the future.

*School improvement plan- digital culture:* GC reported that having focussed on literacy, the school is now exploring the use of IT in maths and numeracy, particularly for learning (rather than teaching). The teachers have looked at good practice for the use of IT programmes and Mr Lee has also discussed a good practice policy with the pupil digital leaders. Subsequently, a ‘Using technology safely’ policy was launched at assemblies for P1-3 and P4-7. The school is now collating evidence to apply for a digital schools award next session. GC and Mr Lee will also visit a SEIC learning school for digital learning in the future. GW asked whether the posters used to present the technology policy to the pupils could also be shared with parents and GC replied that they could be uploaded to the school website. LW added that APS has been asked to feedback to the local authority on our digital culture and its links to attainment.

*Report on learning partnership meeting:* LW discussed the feedback from the recent learning partnership meeting with visiting headteachers from other schools. In summary, the report graded all learning and teaching as very good across all classes and the nursery. All children were engaged in writing and they could see the impact of IT on writing attainment; they thought that the presentation of writing jotters was excellent. They commented that the writing model used supported all learners and allowed expansion on prior learning. Feedback from pupils was very positive around how IT was impacting their learning and the children felt they were challenged in their learning. Staff group feedback was also very positive. The group included nursery staff, teachers and PSA staff. All staff were involved in setting priorities for the school and they all worked together to achieve this through working parties, PRD, inset days etc. Staff felt that they were seeing an improvement in closing the attainment gap between pupils and in learners moving ahead in attainment. Staff are being challenged to think about their own practice. PSAs are linking to specific professional learning to support learners in class. Staff are taking responsibility to lead their own learning. The leadership team is good, supportive and transparent. Feedback from the parent group indicated that they felt APS was a community school where children felt safe. Transition into the school is really positive and parents liked approaches such as kitbag. They felt that the teachers know the children well and that there are good relationships in the school. Learning and teaching cater for the individual well and the curriculum is pupil led. Some were concerned about the level of challenge set by the learning. Parents said the leadership team is responsive to any concerns and APS is a positive school with happy staff. There were some comments about the number of communications from the school.

Next steps included streamlining communication with parents by scheduling emails for 3pm and only sending to family groups, ensuring there aren’t multiple emails about the same thing. In classes, staff should ensure all children know the task they are required to do, e.g., use of assessment is for learning strategies.

*Attainment:* LW reported on attainment. She said that when looking at the trends in attainment over time we can see that Aberdour consistently performs well, with high percentages of children across the school where they are expected to be or ahead of track. Our P1, P4 and P7 attainment over the last 5 years has consistently outperformed both our comparator schools and the Fife average (except in this year’s P7s where there has been a dip). As well as most of our learners being on track across literacy and numeracy, we consistently have a good percentage of children ahead of where they are expected to be. We also have a good percentage of children ahead of track in other stages of the school, not just in P1, P4 or P7. We have been using IT strategies to support our learners who were behind track in writing. In Primary 4, all children are now on track in writing as of Feb 23 and 28% moved ahead of track as a result of introducing IT. In Primary 5, 88% are now on track in writing and 15% have moved ahead of track. In Primary 6 and 7, we have seen accelerated progress due to the support put in place for learners in writing; those who are still to reach ‘on track’ are nearer to achieving this level than if there had been no intervention.

CM reported comments from the P4 parent group asking whether more written feedback could be given after parents’ evenings and if more information on how individual children had performed during attainment testing could be provided. LW said that the school does not routinely give this out; if parents were keen to have individual feedback on testing results they would need to make a ‘subject access request’ to Fife Council, which she could assist with. She said it was not council policy to provide children’s progress reports after parents’ evenings. These are provided at the end of each session in a written report card. CM asked if jotters could be sent home before parents’ evenings and LW said she is happy to send jotters home every term.

CS raised concerns on behalf of the P6 parents that there is little written feedback on homework and said that some parents felt that it was difficult to persuade their children to do their homework if their classmates were not. This was a particular concern for reading circle homework, as if not everyone in the group had completed their task, the circle didn’t work. LW said she has already followed up with the kids to remind them the importance of completing homework and will look into the concerns around feedback. LS added that a lot of the feedback she gives on homework is verbal rather than written.

1. **Play based learning**

Covered in previous section

1. **Outdoor learning**

AJ asked if there is any potential for improvement to the school’s outdoor spaces. LW replied that outdoor learning has been identified as an area to add to the school improvement plan and agreed that enhancements are needed. In particular, the pond area needs significant investment. If parents were keen to get involved, a rota for gardening work would be helpful in improving the wooded and growing areas. She said she would speak to Mrs Templeman and follow this up with a survey for potential interest. There are also trees to be planted along the boundary with the football pitches so this is something parents could help with. LS added that the children get involved with maintaining the garden and polytunnel, but unfortunately it is often then subject to vandalism.

CS checked about outdoor learning provision for the P1 class and LW said that they are now outdoors every week in the school grounds. She added that the school will be involved in St Fillan’s church 900th anniversary celebrations and this will probably involve visits to the church for each class.

1. **AOB**

*Lunch time clubs:* CM asked if there was any scope for running lunch time clubs. LW replied that there are some sports clubs at lunch time taken by the older pupils. There is also an after-school art club and football before school. The P6 girls have asked to run art activities at lunch time, but this may be restricted by availability of supervision and the fact that lunch is only about 20 mins once the children have eaten. The school are also considering how the pupils may have access to the library area at lunch times in the future. LW will summarise the extra clubs available in the next newsletter.

*Wet breaks:* CS said some P1 parents were concerned about their children having screen time during wet breaks. LW said they do sometimes watch a movie for 20 minutes but that this is always supervised and there has only been 1 wet break this term so far, and less than 5 this session. There are only 2 PSAs so the children have to be grouped to allow supervision and no other screens, e.g. netbooks, are allowed.

*Newsletter:* LM asked if the newsletter could also be sent to parents in PDF format to allow ease of viewing on phones. LW said parents can convert it to PDF and the school likes using Sway as it allows them to access analytics on engagement with the newsletter. GW asked if a link to the school calendar could be included in the newsletter.

*Seesaw:* LM highlighted that while parents of P2 children enjoy using the Seesaw app it is not updated regularly for each child or used for home learning. LS explained it was introduced for the early years during lockdown for ease of home schooling but agreed that its use could be reviewed. LW acknowledged that its use by the teacher will depend on workload, e.g., updating the news section of the school app as well.

*Infection control:* LW confirmed that all children are reminded to wash their hands before going to eat their lunch.

*Crossing on Main Street:* DD followed up regarding the installation of a new pedestrian crossing on Main Street and LW said she has asked Police Scotland to visit the vicinity of the school with speed guns at some time in the near future.

*School lunches:* GW mentioned that there had been some comment about the variable quality of school lunches on a couple of recent occasions.