**APS Parent Partnership – AGM Meeting Minutes 20/01/24**

**Attendees:** L Wood, G Cormack, Gabi Sweeney, Katie Brand, Ashling O’Sullivan, Alex McCallum, Lucy Deere, Kira Hays, Elsa Goddard, Jen Hulse

**Apologies:** Cllr Sarah Neal, Cllr David Barratt, Marie Salmon, Claire Stewart, Clare Matthews, Andrea Sykes

**1.      Official Formation of Parent Partnership**

Membership accepted the proposal to form the Parent Partnership with open membership rather than class representative approach. Agreement to monitor attendance and transparently inform parent body if engagement declines. Reinforced importance of having a parent partnership to engage with education issues.

**2.      Head Teacher Update – Polytunnel and Garden Development**

A skin has been sourced for the repairs to the polytunnel and repairs to structure are scheduled. Skin is due to be fitted in March. This has been completed using the £2k funding from Exxon.

Louise is keen to develop the garden spaces this year and Sammi Ritchie (Nursery) has offered to help. Meeting has been scheduled for 3rd Feb to discuss ideas for development and 7 parents have signed up to support this initiative to date. Upper school (P6 and P7) will focus on garden utilisation as a social enterprise for remainder of year with P7 growing food plants in polytunnel and P6 leading a seed swap.

Ashling Osullivan (P7) works with Fife College and suggested that her brickwork and joinery students are looking for community projects they can support with as a part of the development of their meta skills capabilities. This support to build planters etc. would be welcomes by LW and parents.

**3.      School Funding Crisis and response to letter from EIS**

Katie Brand summarised themes from the meeting with EIS hosted in January. There was real concern expressed by the teachers that the current system is not fit for purpose due to lack of funding and support. Violence in schools is becoming a serious problem, and inclusive classrooms do not have the correct level of teacher / PSA support to deliver to children effectively.

Mental health and lack of funding is having an increasing impact particularly on staff absence. Funding challenges mean that Head Teachers have no money available to bring in supply teachers and councils will not provide funding until a member of staff has been absent for more than 20 days. This situation means that all staff are required to support to cover absences and there are less people available to support with violence or challenges in the classroom if they arise.

Cost of transport is also an issue. Many primaries cannot afford to take school trips as cost of tendering busses has increased significantly and there has been no additional funds from local Council. Each individual school has to procure each bus services it requires on an individual basis, and many can no longer afford to include this as past of their operating budget.

Fife Education must save £17m in advance of the next academic session. Fife made the following proposals as to where the savings could be found:

i)                     Non-renewal of teacher contracts at retirement or end of fixed term contract/ reduction in teacher numbers

ii)                    Reduction in the number of PSAs

iii)                  Removal of Music from the curriculum

Sarah Neal Cllr for SNP stated in advance of the meeting that the SNP had rejected all proposals made by Fife.

Broad agreement in the room that the proposals made by the Council seem to lack any understanding of what is happening in schools as violence and mental health will only be negatively impacted by a reduction in staff numbers.

Numerous questions in the room about the decision to spend £16m on rollout of iPads to staff and all students from P7 upwards and broad agreement that this is not the best way to allocate the money. Concerns around longevity of the technology, application of group learning if no upgrades to in classroom tech undertaken and the negative impact of access to the internet on both class behaviour and mental health were all discussed. Parents keen to understand what process was undertaken to determine that this was the most appropriate use of funds. As this initiative has been undertaken in Glasgow, parents are keen to understand if any impact analysis has been completed or considered prior to the rollout being agreed.

Action to be taken in advance of next session:

-          PP agrees to complete a FOI request to understand how decision to spend £16m on iPads was reached.

-          Establish connections with other Parent Councils and work together to oppose funding cuts to education

**4.      Access to 3rd Level texts for P6&P7**

Library resources were heavily invested in 2 years ago and there is a wide variety of 3rd level texts of all types available to children for in class reading. Materials include plays, poems, non-fiction texts and novels and children read a wide variety of texts in their reading groups. There is a real focus across the school on circular reading to develop broad literary capabilities. Question about availability of 3rd level texts in school lending library. LW / GC comfortable there is variety at this level but happy to review and receive donations if applicable.

**5.      AOB**

-          Question from Claire Stweart about the amount of **litter**on the school estate. LW confirmed that the new janitor started today (20/01) and will be responsible for clearing litter. Also confirmed that there is a focus on encouraging children to take greater responsibility for litter and Tupperware / clothing etc.  Agreement that children should take greater personal responsibility. Comments from parents that opening of toilets at breaktime has been inconsistent and LW confirmed that presence of a Janitor for morning break will mean toilets can be opened immediately.

-          Claire Stewart raised a concern that lending Library did not restart this academic session. LW confirmed that Leanne Sweaton monitored use of the lending library last session and engagement had dropped off. Miss Scott is going to speak with the current librarians and see if they can encourage greater attendance – discussion around changing the time / frequency of the library. Outcomes of discussions to be discussed next session.

-          Ashling O’Sullivan raised the issue of the proposed development at Hillside. As this development is very likely to go ahead there was a suggestion that we should start to consider Section 75 money for school and ensure we earmark investment for refurbishment to existing buildings. Broad agreement that school did not benefit from Cala development and need to “box clever” on this occasion to ensure sufficient funds for the school are allocated.