



STEPPS PRIMARY PARENT COUNCIL

Agenda Monday 25th April 2022



1. Welcome and apologies
2. MELM
3. Head Teacher's report
4. School works update
5. Covid update
6. Transitions/ P7 residential
7. Treasurer/ Bank
8. Review previous minutes and actions
9. AOB

Next Meeting Date: 6th June 2022 7pm

In attendance

Lorraine Kerr	Parent/ Chairperson
Diane Delaney	Parent/ Secretary
Lynne Blair	Parent
Suzanne Ryan	Parent (online)
Ailsa Slavin	Parent
Rachael Topping	Parent (online)
Sharon Bowie	Parent*
Kelly Chalmers	Parent
Angela Power	Parent
Paul McKeever	Head Teacher
Shirley Allan	Principal Teacher
Paula Jeffreys	Deputy Head Teacher
Iain McQuarrie	SNP Councillor Candidate*

Apologies

Emma Dalziel	Parent
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*Arrived part way through

1. Welcome and apologies

Lorraine Kerr welcomed everyone to the first face-to-face meeting since pre pandemic. This meeting is also the first one where the meeting will also be hosted online to allow parents to continue to attend.

Lorraine advised that as a result of time restrictions and the number of important agenda items, the agenda order will change to allow Mr McKeever to present his report first and the remaining time can be spent discussing the Multi Establishment Leadership Model (MELM) consultation.

Everyone in agreement with this.

2. Head Teacher's report

COVID

Mr McKeever advised that the local authority has stated that schools/ staff should return to 'normal' school life but to do so with caution now that all Covid-19 restrictions have been removed.

Staff do not require to wear masks in classrooms; however, the advice is for staff to continue to wear masks in corridors and communal areas.

Mr McKeever alongside the nursery staff have decided to continue to use 'bubbles' within the nursery as this model during Covid appeared to produce positive outcomes for the nursery children. Mr McKeever advised that groups within the nursery will and do come together now and again and changes can be made as necessary but for the moment this model will continue. He also advised that most of the time the children are outdoors.

Regarding social distancing, there are no rules in place, however staff have agreed to proceed with caution and to use common sense and therefore to maintain social distancing where possible. Within the staff room, staff continue to use two rooms to allow for continued distancing.

Mr McKeever advised that there are still Covid cases within the school and therefore they will continue to monitor plans and procedures as necessary. The authority has advised schools to prepare for all scenarios and eventualities including a return to lockdown if this is necessary.

Mr McKeever confirmed that visitors are now permitted to access the school based on risk assessments. Visitors are asked to wear a mask and maintain social distancing, and this seems to be working well. Covid testing via lateral flow tests have now stopped as per Government instruction.

Enhanced cleaning continues with cleaners coming in at lunch time and cleaning high contact areas like door handles, desktops etc.

Ventilation remains the biggest risk, all teaching areas now have CO2 monitors, this is an increase since the last meeting. Teachers are asked to monitor readings. If the reading changes to red, strategies/ procedures to increase ventilation to the area should be invoked (opening more doors and windows). If the warning of red does not reduce, a report should be sent to the janitor who will then enact further procedures by alerting the appropriate people.

Mr McKeever confirmed that the windows are always open and the open plan areas are good for ventilation. The new classes are also well ventilated. The main areas for concern and those evidenced as being the highest risk areas are 'the green room' and Mrs Jeffreys room. This is because both rooms have no windows. Therefore, activities are shorter in these rooms with less people. There are no plans for filters in the school at the moment.

STAFFING

Mr McKeever was delighted to report that he currently has all core staff in place. All staff are back after long term sick. Mr McKeever advised that he is still working out leave for staff owed time, however he is not experiencing staffing difficulties as he was a few months ago. It was noted that the children and young people were sad to see Mrs McGarry leave, unfortunately she had to be re-located to another school. Miss Theobald has been made a permanent teacher; she was previously on a temporary contract.

CLASSES

Mr McKeever advised that this year, the first time in a long time, there will be no composite classes. There will be three P1 classes with a roll of approximately 61 P1's next term (including placing requests).

- There will be 15 classes next term
- There are approximately 386 pupils in Stepps Primary
- 48 P7s are leaving
- More coming into P1 than leaving again this year

School capacity will be reassessed due to the extension work.

Angela enquired about capacity issues give the new houses being built beside the Garfield Hotel. Ailsa advised that those purchasing houses at this site have been told that Stepps Primary will be a catchment for these houses. However, Diane advised that at a recent Community Council meeting, Councillor McLaren advised that children from the new houses would go to the new Chryston Hub where the new primary school is being built. Everyone agreed that there are significant concerns within the community about the lack of infrastructure to accommodate the volumes of people that will come into Stepps as a result of the house building. Everyone is concerned about what this means for

education and the community. Lorraine advised the meeting that we have been previously assured by NLC that the works being completed are to allow enough space for the current school roll, not to increase capacity.

Angela also asked about the library and whether this would return to the school campus. Lorraine advised that we are awaiting the consultation to be launched from the Council that would allow a discussion within the school and wider community about the best uses of the two modular units at the end of the school building. The community council were promised that the library would return, however it is clear that Stepps Primary and St Joseph's cannot accommodate all of the children that will require to access primary schools in the area.

There are ongoing issues in relation to the space within the school and who can and cannot access it. Mr McKeever advised that at present the school are unable to access one of the halls due to the current let to an Afterschool Care Group. The equipment in the hall would make it unsafe for primary school children to use this hall and at present there is no appropriate or acceptable method of being able to move or store this equipment. The janitor was asked to move the equipment but with fridges, large and heavy storage cupboards, it would be impossible for this equipment to be moved forward and back frequently.

Mr McKeever advised that he has reported health and safety concerns to the Council as a result of heavy and large equipment being stacked up on top of one another and not being secured.

Lorraine advised that she and the PTA chair are writing to the NL Lets Department about this because the PTA are looking to host events like school discos for the children before the end of the year. The school would also like to use this space to return to whole school events like assemblies and plays etc.

One suggestion could be for a storage container to be used to put equipment and this could be located just outside and behind the hall for easy access.

There is also no kitchen available at the moment within the letting area.

END OF TERM EVENTS

P7 GRADUATION

Mr McKeever confirmed that he is hoping to arrange an in-school event that would allow parents to attend a graduation ceremony for P7's. He advised that it probably won't reflect the normal or usual events pre-Covid. He will communicate with P7's and parents as plans emerge.

P1 Transition

Mr McKeever is hoping that both pre-school children and their parents will be able to visit the school as part of transition this year. Arrangements will not be pre-Covid either but will be good to bring the children into the school. They will not be able to see their actual class (the P1-P3s are currently in the larger upper bays, since the lower bay not yet re-opened), but they can get an idea.

Diane and Lorraine suggested invitations to parent council members to be involved in transition events in order to reach out to new parents and welcome them into the school.

The Buddy system will return again this year. Some of the P6's, who will be buddies, have visited the nursery children to read to them.

SPORTS DAY

Mr McKeever is trying to plan an event for the children and families. Again, this will not be like pre Covid events, but it will be a step forward from the previous years. The school are aware that North Lanarkshire continues to have high Covid transmission rates and therefore will continue to use a common-sense approach to planning for this.

PUPIL EQUITY FUND (PEF)

Mr McKeever advised that our school allocation has reduced this year despite an increase in allocation from the Scottish Government. Last year we received **£56,400** this year we will receive **£48,400**

Everyone relayed their disappointment at hearing this and some dismay about the amount of money that has dropped given Covid and all the obvious impacts to individuals, families and the community.

Mr McKeever advised that PEF entitlement is linked to the number of families claiming for free school meals, clothing grant etc. It was highlighted that as a result of more families in primary schools accessing free school meals, it is likely that less families are 'applying' for this because they are getting it automatically now. This may be impacting on our PEF allocation. We agreed that this is probably happening across Scotland now and is worth following up.

Ian McQuarrie advised that he would flag this up to his colleagues and that he could look into this further if elected in May.

Mr McKeever advised that he would send out a survey to the parent forum for views on how the PEF money should be prioritised/ spent. Mr McKeever advised it is extremely difficult with such a small amount of money and the number of areas that the money could be used for. He advised that paying for the additional ASNA (Mrs McLeod) is critical. Mrs McLeod plays a fundamental role in the school for many children not just those with ASN, including offering emotional and pastoral support. Mr McKeever advised that Spark Counselling

Services will be available again and this appears to have been well received and valuable in terms of outcomes. Mr McKeever advised that both parents and young people themselves came forward seeking out this service in the last year. Overall, there has been good feedback about this service.

Mr McKeever advised that the authority made it mandatory, at the start of this school year, that schools paid 0.2fte of a probation teacher from PEF allocation. Mr McKeever advised that there was a small amount of money left over from last year which allowed him to pay for an additional teacher, however another teacher went off sick which meant the additional teacher became a core teacher. This is the first time in a long time that Mr McKeever has some flexibility with his staffing.

Mr McKeever also advised that they are seeking out views on whether to continue with the Growth Mindset/ Power Maths work.

PACKED LUNCHES

Kelly asked if there was any feedback/ update/ outcome of sending packed lunches home with children.

Mr McKeever advised that he was not informed of the trial to send packed lunches home to those children who brought a packed lunch to school. The information went from the Council direct to the kitchen staff team. Mr McKeever advised that it is unclear what the goal or rationale is for this trial; it appears the aim is to try and encourage better uptake of taking school meals, however the concern and main feedback has been that there are huge amounts of food leftovers/waste. Given all the work that the school and the wider authority have done on climate change, recycling and looking after the environment, many people are concerned about the wastage. Most children coming to school with packed lunches do not want to be going home with a packed lunch.

Angela raised the issue of stigma too that some families may not want it to be obvious if there are needing extra food.

Mr McKeever confirmed that the authority has not yet sought views or feedback on this yet.

SCHOOL WORKS UPDATE

Diane requested a school works update given that we are no longer receiving updates or communication from the education managers. The previous deadlines given to the Parent council have now passed.

Mr McKeever advised that he has been advised of the following information:

During the summer holidays the following will happen

- Door needs to be knocked though from the hall to the green room
- A kitchen will be created for community use – cooker/ units etc

- There needs to be a door knocked through from the hall to the toilets – this is for safety and security so that the school and the community don't cross paths during the day
- New community entry needs to be installed – entry from the back of the building
- They need to brick up the link to the modular units or remove the link

Diane enquired about what maintenance was happening just now. Mr McKeever advised that he was not informed that workmen would enter the school during the Easter holidays to paint. This meant that wall displays were ruined, and some were destroyed by workmen removing these to paint. The walls were painted yellow. Diane enquired if the children, young people or anyone had been involved in discussion about the decorating of the school. Mr McKeever advised that no one had been involved in the discussion. Lorraine highlighted that the Parent Council had specifically asked for the walls to be painted white because most people including the children did not like the yellow. Therefore, we noted our disappointment and concern about the lack of involvement, communication and engagement with anyone regarding this matter.

Mr McKeever advised that a new flooring (lino) would be put down too.

Everyone is delighted at the new decoration, but it feels frustrating that even the children cannot be involved in the planning and decision making for these things that have such an impact directly on them. Diane wondered how these types of decisions can be justified in the era of UNCRC and children being involved in all aspects of their education including their environment.

Lorraine advised that the playground remains an issue also. The Parent Council have been liaising with Mr McLaughlin and local councillors over ongoing concerns about the state and size of the playground. Lorraine advised that we have been told that there will be a 'holistic review' of the playground. However, no one is clear about what this actually means. There continues to be major issue with drainage when it rains. The Parent Council noted their disappointment, frustration and exasperation at hearing the local nearby school St Joseph's received an extension to their playground. No one has any information about how this decision was made. Diane advised that she had asked Councillor McLaren about this at the last Community Council meeting and despite him standing in a photoshoot for this piece of publicity advertised online, he said he had no idea how this decision had been made. In response to Diane's concerns about the state of Stepps playground he suggested that the pond at the front of the school could be removed. Everyone noted their confusion and concern at this statement because this area would not be suitable as a playground due to the proximity to the road.

A question was asked about PTA funds and if they could be used for the playground. Mr McKeever advised that all decision on the spending of this money has been paused while the school community awaits a decision, feedback or information from the Council on what their 'holistic assessment' will entail.

Lorraine advised that the dining hall remains an issue still because of the shape and size in comparison to the volume of children and young people. Mr McKeever advised that the situation is better now that Covid restrictions have been removed and they can now offer children one, long staggered lunch break.

RESIDENTIAL FOR P7s

Ailsa asked Mr McKeever about plans for next year for the current P6's who will move into P7 after the summer in terms of access to a residential holiday. Ailsa advised that parents and families want to begin planning for this now and families are very keen for this to happen. Families are concerned that their children will miss out on any opportunity at all given the way the Council are allocating spaces to schools across NLC.

Mr McKeever advised that NLC were going to provide a list of approved locations/sites for residential stays and there needs to be more information provided for this. Mrs Jeffreys advised she will follow up on this.

Ailsa advised that families want some certainty moving forward and want to know what their options are including paying for something themselves.

Mr McKeever advised that the feedback from the Strathclyde Park activities has been really positive, and Mrs Jeffreys and Mrs Allan said they noted that the young people appeared to gain the same experiences and outcomes from Strathclyde as they had done from residential trips.

Mr McKeever advised that there are added complications now due to Covid with residential, such as what would happen if one person tested positive for Covid while away or were feeling unwell etc. Mr McKeever said that the Strathclyde Park option has suited those children who don't like to go on residential trips/be away from home.

Lorraine advised that both East Dunbartonshire and Glasgow have offered residential trips for young people this year so there must be strategies in place to allow this to happen.

ROAD SAFETY

Diane asked the meeting for any updates on road safety given that this has been a long-standing agenda item.

Mrs Jeffreys advised that the consultation responses from parents has been gathered. She advised that children have written letters to local councillors and the school are working on a campaign to improve road safety along with the children.

Mr McKeever advised that inappropriate and unsafe parking remains an issue. Lorraine advised that the Parent Council will write

a letter to all parents to request that they consider their driving behaviour within the school to ensure safety as a priority for children and those in the school grounds.

There is a road safety person at Blenheim Avenue and there is a consultation out by NLC regarding introducing parking restrictions.

Mr McKeever, Mrs Allan and Mrs Jeffries left the meeting at this point

3. MELM

Lorraine provided an update and overview to the meeting on the Chryston Parent Council Parents Against MELM Campaign that has resulted in the Council issuing a consultation to Stepps Parent Council for views on the introduction of MELM.

Timeline as follows:

25 th Feb	Stepps PC made aware of concerns from Chryston PC re MELM —
28 th Feb	Stepps PC via Chair wrote to Mr McLaughlin, Education Managers, MSP Fulton MacGregor and elected Councillors outlining our concerns about MELM
1 st March	Response received from Fulton MacGregor MSP acknowledging our concerns – agreed to raise to Scottish Government via Minister
11 th March	Response from Cllr Goldsachs stating his opposition of MELM and agreed to oppose in Committee Cllr Lynn Anderson - non contactable Cllr John McLaren – did not respond
11 th March	Response received from Mr McLaughlin, long and incomprehensive response, lots of links and information that didn't make sense and was not accessible for the average parent.
18 th March	Reply from Parent Council via Chair to Mr McLaughlin, with questions and more concerns raised Parents and wider community wrote to Cllrs and MSPs raising concerns Increasing concerns from Chryston primary and high school resulting in the Parents Against MELM Campaign evolving and seeking out wider support from parents

- 21st March NLC Parent Collaborative Meeting. Attempts to raise MELM issue were denied as labelled as 'one school issue'. Significant concerns raised by parents from different Councils about MELM and the need for there to be a meeting, discussion or consultation.
- 7th April Diane attended Community Council Meeting and raised issues and concerns about MELM and the wider lack of communication, engagement and parent involvement. Cllr McLaren attended this meeting advising that MELM was a 'one school' issue, however accepted that he was wrong on that when I pointed out that Stepps is a feeder school to Chryston. Cllr McLaren told Diane that he could not publicly support the campaign against MELM and could not advise of the action he would take if re-elected but stated that he would challenge the Council to stop MELM
- 19th April Community based MELM questionnaire published. Stepps Parent Council raised concerns about why parents were not being contacted. No deadline date was provided with the consultation and immediate concerns were raised about the supporting information being factually incorrect, misleading and biased. It did not mention the campaign against it, unions against or that the schools identified as examples could never be used to compare with Chryston Primary and Secondary.
- 20th April Stepps Parent Council issued with Consultation via Mr McKeever
Deadline for submission is 28th April

The Parent Council worked through the Consultation and the attached document will reflect the views of the Parent Council submitted for the Consultation

4. AOB

Lorraine advised the meeting that Diane has been writing to Mr McLaughlin and elected political representatives regarding issues we had raised regarding staffing within the school. Specifically relating to insufficient staffing to meet the needs of disabled children, children with additional support needs and learning needs. We were also concerned that the administration worker on maternity leave is not being replaced. The response from the Head of Education has left us concerned due to his response that reflected that school has all the staffing required and Mr McKeever has access to resources to remedy any deficits in staffing. Diane and Lorraine will follow up this correspondence with Freedom of Information Requests as a result of the differences in information provided between the Head of Education and our own experiences.

Diane Delaney
Minutes Completed on 28th April 2022

ATTACHED DOCUMENT (MELM) CONSULTATION

Steps Parent Council MELM Consultation Response

1. Do you understand what a Multi-Establishment Head Teacher (MELM) is?

Answer: Y

2. Do you think Chryston Primary School and Chryston High School are suitable for a MELM?

Answer: N

3. Can you identify the benefits of this model for the community?

Answer: Steps Primary Parent Council can identify zero benefits of this model.

4. Can you identify any challenges of this model for the community?

Answer: Steps Primary Parent Council can identify numerous challenges of this model:

- There is no educational rationale behind this plan.
- The projected roll of both schools is in excess of 2000 pupils. It is not feasible for 1 head teacher to be able to lead both schools effectively and to support GIRFEC.
- The introduction of a single head teacher will severely limit visibility, accessibility and support of the head teacher for children, parents and staff. This is of particular importance in a Primary School setting.
- Loss of school community and identity. A head teacher sets the tone of a school.
- Leaderships of both schools will be stretched beyond any sustainable capacity, which in turn will negatively impact on the quality of leadership in both schools.
- A shared head will have a negative impact on staff moral and welfare.
- Issues surrounding health and safety, child protection and safeguarding issues.
- The model does not support the Scottish Government's empowered system, which actually recognises the key and fundamental role head

teachers play in our education system and that school leadership is a key driver for change.

- An 'all through schools' approach is also being used to justify the introduction of MELM. We do not support this. Such a model is not equitable to either the children of Chryston Primary and Secondary or the feeder Primary schools.
- The proposed model treats the children from feeder schools differently to the children of Chryston Primary. It seems to indicate our children will be at a disadvantage. This is not fair or equitable. Similarly, the children of Chryston High will be at a disadvantage to children from other high schools who have a dedicated head teacher.
- In addition, all through schools is based on a shared campus. Also, the committee paper referred to at least two learning establishments in one building. This is not the case for Chryston.
- Why are no comparable examples provided? Some of the examples provided are misleading, e.g., reference to Banton/Chapelgreen – these are 2 small fairly rural primary schools – Banton has a role of 47 and Chapelgreen 50. Carnbroe and Sikeside – again quite misleading since Sikeside only has a role of 84 and is being amalgamated with the larger Carnbroe (266) in a brand-new school, which will have 1 dedicated head teacher.
- No cross-sector mainstream schools have used such a model.
- Also, no mention of those schools in NLC that removed shared headships as a result of poor inspection reports.
- In the table, there is also reference to Argyll and Bute schools – there is a campaign in this area to stop shared headships. The model is not supported by children, parents or teachers.
- The model is not supported by teaching Unions – why does the supporting document state there is a national agreement? This is inaccurate and misleading.
- Small rural same sector schools cannot be compared to the Chryston situation.
- The supporting paper states the new deposes will have a 'much more operational role focusing on learning and teaching'. So, what is the role of this new head position? What exactly does a 'strategic management role' mean in reality? Sounds like the depute will be doing the head's job.
- MELM is moving education to a commercial business model. This is not acceptable at any time but particularly in the current covid climate and the amount of education loss experienced. Strong dedicated head teachers are fundamental.
- Experience/qualification of MELM – the document states this could have either primary or secondary background. How will this be – currently primary HT can only teach to S3 level?
- We fear the introduction of MELM will result in loss of talented teaching staff to other councils.
- What will happen to our talented head teachers in NLC?
- Feedback from the current 'pilot' has raised a number of concerns and shows that the model does not work, for example, a significant amount of unspent PEF money due to no dedicated leader being in place to

make decisions, children not knowing who the head teacher is, children on a reduced timetable due to lack of staff/support provision.

5. Any further comments/feedback?

Answer: Stepps Primary Parent Council have a number of concerns regarding both the approach to this consultation and the inaccuracies and non-biased basis of the supporting document:

o We have been in contact with NLC since February of this year to raise our concerns over the proposed MELM model, which we only became aware of via Chryston Primary PC. While we agree they are a priority stakeholder, as a feeder primary school it is not accurate that it is a one school issue. NLC should have communicated, as a minimum, with all feeder primary schools. This consultation is actually the first formal communication we have received from NLC regarding MELM.

o Parental engagement, per the requirements of the Parental Involvement Act have not been followed.

o How will Parent Councils continue to be involved with the interview/recruitment of head teachers?

o The consultation process has not been open and transparent, failing to follow the North Lanarkshire Framework for working with communities.

o The consultation was issued to community forums prior to parent councils. This is very disappointing.

o There is no closing date on the consultation – we had to ask!

o With regards to the content of the supporting document we have some very major concerns regarding some inaccurate content. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency:

- ■■■ Why does it say there is a national Union agreement in place for this model? We have correspondence from unions stating their complete opposition to this model.
- ■■■ Why does it fail to mention that parents, children, families, some Cllrs and the community have challenged the MELM model and provide a balanced, non-biased, transparent view of the proposal and timeline?
- ■■■ It states the 'council raised the idea to introduce the multi-establishment leadership model (formally executive headships) at the Education and Families Committee in May 2020 and this received cross-party approval as part of a proposal to develop a range of headship models for schools and early learning establishments'. Was the model agreed at an Education and Families Committee meeting in May 2020 or was this approved via delegated authority? We have been

advised it was via delegated authority (GOLD COMMAND) due to covid. If this is the case this is a serious misrepresentation.