



STEPS PRIMARY PARENT COUNCIL

Agenda
Monday 6th June
7pm



1. Welcome and apologies
2. Head Teacher's report
3. School works update
4. School Lets
5. Transitions/ P7 residential/ school trips
6. MELM
7. Homework Survey
8. Treasurer/banking
9. AOB

Next Meeting Date: To be confirmed

In attendance

Lorraine Kerr	Parent/ Chairperson
Diane Delaney	Parent/ Secretary
Lynne Blair	Parent
Suzanne Ryan	Parent
Ailsa Slavin	Parent
Louise Laing	Parent
Paul McKeever	Head Teacher
Shirley Allan	Principal Teacher
Paula Jeffreys	Deputy Head Teacher

Apologies

Rachael Topping	Parent
Sharon Bowie	Parent
Kelly Chalmers	Parent
Angela Power	Parent
Emma Dalziel	Parent

Cllr McLaren	Councillor
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1. Welcome and apologies

Lorraine welcomed everyone to the meeting. Lorraine introduced Louise Laing to the meeting. Louise has been a PTA member for a few years and is considering joining the Parent Council.

2. Head Teacher's report

Mr McKeever updated on numbers for the new term at this time:

Children

P1 - 66 children

Mr McKeever advised that he also has several new children starting in other year groups too including P2, P3, P5 and P6.

Mr McKeever confirmed there will be no composite classes this year.

It is hoped that children and families will be advised of classes and teachers in advance of the final week of term. Mr McKeever is just waiting to finalise the teachers that will be placed in the school for next term.

Staffing

Mr McKeever advised that there will be some staff changes again this year with the school awaiting final confirmation on whether a newly qualified teacher will be placed in the school and that four existing teachers are moving on.

This will leave a 0.5 vacancy – the authority is looking to fill this, on a temporary basis. Mr McKeever will update when this has been confirmed.

Lorraine advised the meeting that a complaint was submitted to the council in relation to concerns raised by parents about staffing levels. This will be addressed later in the meeting.

Mr McKeever advised that currently other than the 0.5 vacancy he has a full staff team.

PEF Money

Mr McKeever advised of a low response rate from parents to the PEF consultation, with only 9 parent responses. However, this was more than last year. Mr McKeever noted that responses included parents requesting a focus on:

- Additional ASNA

- Support for health and wellbeing
- Play based learning
- Outdoor learning

Mr McKeever was pleased to see the parent responses because they were aligned with the thoughts of school staff too.

Mr McKeever advised that the school team are very much focused on progressing play based learning and outdoor learning and advised that there are a few staff members leading on progressing this approach.

Mr McKeever advised that the school team are exploring different approaches and strategies in working with P1 children particularly in relation to reading, writing and numeracy. The aim is to slow the pace down to relieve pressure by introducing more opportunity for consolidation and review. Mrs Howie has been piloting this and has noted a significant difference and in fact it appears to have embedded the learning more deeply. Mrs Jeffries advised that they have invested in the jelly and bean books – using learning in context and this has helped – improving the children’s confidence.

SPARK

Mrs Jeffries took the opportunity to discuss SPARK at this time as one of the areas that PEF money had been used was to purchase sessions to support the children’s health and wellbeing. This has been identified as a significant need by teachers, children and parents.

Group sessions have been popular, sessions started with P7’s working on friendship and social media. They then moved on to working with P1 – 3 – working on friendship/ relationship. They are about to move on to P4 and P5 boys regarding relationships, resolving conflicts.

Mrs Jeffries advised that the original plan was to have some individual counselling sessions. However, after some initial sessions feedback from children and families wasn’t overall positive. Families are looking for a more partnership/ collaborative approach with their child to address mental/ emotional health issues with their children. This this wasn’t offered from Spark because they advised that due to confidentiality they could not work directly with parents regarding the work with children.

Mrs Jeffries advised that they are looking at other options including Barnardo’s who they are meeting next week. Barnardo’s use LIAM (Let’s Introduce Anxiety Management), and will also allow a straight referral to CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services) where required. The school has recognised that since Covid incidence of anxiety has increased significantly within the school. The school are trying to purchase a service that will meet the needs of children and their families whilst supporting as many children as possible.

Do Be Mindful

Mrs Jeffries they will be recruiting the services of Do Be Mindful to train staff on mindfulness. This training will benefit both staff and children.

- Staff would be trained first- 5 hourly sessions to train up on foundation programme
- Staff then roll out a sequence of lessons in term 3 to children
- In term 4 – the main trainer would link with parents
- It's been really successful in the nursery
- The school have information sheets if anyone wants more information on this and there is also a website.

Mr McKeever advised that Emotion Works will also continue and will complement the other approaches being used.

STEAMO

Science, Technology, Art, Maths, Outdoor

Mr McKeever advised that the scheduled themed work for STEAMO activities continue to be a success for everyone and staff continue to work on this in order to embed STEAMO activities into weekly learning

Mrs Shaw is a great ambassador for outdoor learning, and she has been building a resource base to progress more outdoor learning for children. This includes looking at the John Muir award and this means activities can be done at home and school. This normally starts at P4 stage.

As mentioned previously outdoor learning and play are being developed further but there is recognition that staff need training in this in order for it to be done properly.

Lorraine updated the meeting that the Community have been assigned £20,000 to develop the path around the school. The Community Council will work with the school, and with St Joseph's PC, to develop this and the initial response from everyone is lots of excitement.

Layout of School

Mr McKeever took the opportunity to mention the layout of the school given that the drainage works have now been completed, however he advised that there is still work to be done to the cultural/ community centre.

In terms of the school the plan for next year is:

P1 – P3 in the infant bay (consideration had been given to move P1s to the new part of the building but this would mean P4s remaining in the infant bay

and Mr McKeever suggested this would not work given the larger furniture (desks/tables) would not fit and also the P4s would have been very disappointed they wouldn't move to the senior wing, which is something they look forward to and is milestone in their school life.

P4-7 will remain in the senior pay.

There are 2 rooms, that were previously community rooms, currently being used as P7 classrooms. These rooms will return to the community for evening lets and therefore cannot be used as classrooms; however, they can be utilised by the school for other projects/ classes/ specific activities. This is because the community cannot access these classes during the day as they are part of the school building.

The two modular units and the 'green room' will return to the community. Again, it is not clear yet what will happen exactly with these spaces.

Writing Programme

Mr McKeever advised that the school are looking to introduce a new writing programme, 'Talk to Write'. This programme focuses on building children's experiences even before putting pen to paper. There will be lots of opportunity to explore writing, learn about characters and pictures. The focus will be on being able to orally tell a story before writing. The intention is that children will then be motivated to write. Colourful semantics will also be used.

Support Needs

Mr McKeever advised that they would enlist the support of an occupational therapist next term to carry out functional and sensory needs assessments on children with additional support needs and perhaps just generally in order to maximise opportunities to provide a learning environment conducive to children's needs.

Lorraine advised that there has been a lot of discussion via NLC parent council collaborative meetings about nurture rooms for children, but it is not clear from these discussions how individual children or even families access them as it appears that they are situated within wellbeing hubs. Mr McKeever confirmed that Stepps Primary have a sanctuary room and they are hoping to make this even more therapeutic for children in the next term. We all agreed on the benefit of this for children in schools because children who are struggling, unwell or unhappy cannot learn as effectively.

Mrs Jeffreys advised that she will be requesting any donations for the sanctuary room in the near future for old cushions for children to chill out on.

3. School works update

Lorraine advised that she would provide an update on this.

The community, parent council and therefore the parent forum are still waiting for the consultation to begin on the re-purposing of the two modular units and other community spaces within the campus.

Lorraine advised that Mr McPherson Stepps' Community Champion attended the Community Council meeting this month. He did not mention this school during his presentation but both Lorraine and the Chair of the Community Council Ms Morton asked questions about the school. Mr McPherson stated that he could not answer the specific questions being asked particularly regarding the storage issue in the hall being used by the afterschool care group. The suggestion from the school/parent council that the afterschool group could use an outdoor storage unit has not been picked up by anyone yet. As it stands this means that neither the parent/ teacher association or the school can use this hall due to health and safety concerns.

Lorraine advised that the parent council remains concerned about the lack of communication and partnership working from the council on these matters. The school community is increasing in terms of numbers of children accessing the school.

Apparently, there will be work completed during the summer holidays on the community part of the building. This means all school resources must be moved by the end of term. All lets have been cancelled including the afterschool care group who are moving to St Joseph's.

There is unanimous agreement from parents that there is a significant disconnection between the idea of the school being a community hub/resource as well as a school. The school community have not been able to access the school building both because of Covid and the building works related to the drainage issue. Parents are increasingly frustrated and unhappy that wider school community appear to continue to have barriers placed in front of them to engage in social and wellbeing based activities such as school discos, schools shows, events with families etc. Families are feeling that the Council are pushing them away from the school estate and this feels unfair and placing some families at a disadvantage because some of them don't have community or relationship links elsewhere.

Lorraine advised that at the community council meeting in June Mr McPherson stated that the consultation has not been introduced because the council are waiting on building standards agreeing/ signing off plans to allow the work to go ahead. Parents have not been privy to what these plans are, again the parent council want it noted that this is unacceptable and resulting in dissatisfaction in terms of the role of the parent council as set out by the Parental Involvement Act 2006.

Mr McPherson did state that the school bubble cannot be broken – the school building requires to be safe and secure for children and the community cannot have access to this space during school hours. Therefore, the school will be in one space and the community centre will be at the other end of the school building. Two rooms will be returned to the community. Lorraine advised that these obviously cannot be day lets because they are situated within the school, but nothing has been confirmed about this from the council. Mr McPherson could not give parents or the community council any time scales. Lorraine relayed that the community council chair made clear the dissatisfaction of the community in relation to the poor communication and collaboration on this.

Lorraine advised that the parent council were previously told that all works would be completed for the school to return to normal by August 2022. It seems quite clear this is unlikely to happen, and the parent council are very dissatisfied that even this information cannot be communicated to us.

Lorraine has no idea when the consultation will be released, and she has shared concern from others that a consultation occurring during the summer holidays would be completely ineffective due to the number of parents/wider community on holiday.

Lorraine advised that because of the repeated failures of the council to share information, consult with parents or meet deadlines, as well as address the multiple other outstanding issues including the state of the playground and the size of the canteen, a formal complaint was submitted to Education. The complaint was not upheld, it was responded to by Mr McLaughlin. The complaint response has been shared with the parent council. There is unanimous agreement that the response is unsatisfactory, it doesn't answer the points raised in some areas and we continue to remain unclear of timescales, what work will be done during the summer, what our school estate will look like after the summer, and this means we cannot communicate this to children and families.

Members noted their concerns regarding the response about access to the school estate for children to engage in social/ wellbeing activities like school shows, discos, assemblies, and events for parents to attend. Pre the school building works, the entire school community were invited into the school for events. The school estate was able to accommodate this and not only did this enhance the relationships and connection of the school community it ensures equity and inclusivity in that all families were able to access the school. In the response we have been advised, 'The majority of educational establishments only have one gym hall and organise school events, completing risk assessments to determine hall capacity. As a result of the community facilities, previously the Stepps PC were able to book the community room too. However, until all community facilities within the campus have been reinstated the capacity to book community areas continue to be under review at this time due to completion of ongoing work. You can book the school hall. This hall should be able to accommodate entire year groups subject to appropriate risk assessment. The Head

Teacher will manage this accordingly.’ Members agreed the school hall does not have sufficient capacity to host P1-P3 and P4-P7 discos, or any of the whole school type events. Everyone agrees that this is wholly detrimental to our school community particularly given the known impacts of Covid-19. The parent council are concerned about equality, equity, and inclusivity by removing the ability of families to attend the school for one or all of their children as they did previously. We are not asking for anything more than we had access to before the building works.

Agreement therefore to progress to a stage 2 complaint. Diane also advised that a freedom of information request was also submitted due to repeated issues in communicating with the Council about our concerns over staffing numbers/ levels. This is due to be returned in mid-June.

Mr McKeever advised that there were some workers visiting the school playground engaged in assessing the damage/ issues that have been raised. He will update the parent council if there is any progress on this.

4. School Lets

Lorraine advised that the school lets issue links to some of the discussion from the previous agenda item on the school building works.

The PTA had communicated with NLC lets about arranging a school disco in the hall (as they have always done) however because of the afterschool care storing volumes of equipment and resources there, the infant and senior group discos cannot go ahead at the moment. This resulted in a conversation between the PTA and parent council and unanimous concerns raised as noted above.

Lorraine had written to the school lets department to raise concerns on behalf of parents. A response came via Jackie Lawson, who then proposed a meeting with Ms A Hanlon to discuss. However, this meeting never went ahead, but a phone call took place between Lorraine and Ms Hanlon.

Some confusion initially about the purpose of the meeting; Lorraine clarified that School Lets had made the meeting. Lorraine advised that Ms Hanlon stated that many schools operate with a maximum capacity of 120 and therefore we would have to manage with this. Lorraine pointed out that with a school capacity of 400 children plus staff and parents, alongside the fact that the entire school community have always been able to access the halls, it doesn't make sense that the council are now refusing access to this. However, Ms Hanlon stated that she is not refusing access, she advised that requests would need to be made in advance with dates, numbers, and justification for the hall to be used. Again, this is confusing because this is what the school community and PTA have always done. Lorraine advised that there will be no end of school discos this term which is extremely disappointing for everyone given the difficulties that families have endured

with covid and the building works but hopefully for the new term, events will be able to go ahead as suggested by Ms Hanlon.

The PTA are arranging for an ice cream van to come on the last day of school for free ice creams for everyone!

Lorraine also noted that Mr McKeever has never been invited to or included in any of the discussions around accessing the school building as part of the discussions between the PTA and parent council. It is unclear to the parent council why this is the case.

Lorraine also advised that there was a discussion about the health and safety issue relating to the resources/ equipment in the hall being used currently by the afterschool care. Lorraine advised that Ms Hanlon has stated that a referral will be made to the health and safety officers for assessment. Mr McKeever advised that he has also raised concerns about this.

Ailsa advised that her child attends the afterschool care and in general many parents are still not entering the building/ hall even though there are no restrictions any longer preventing access. This means that most parents are probably not aware of how the resources and equipment is currently being stored and that concerns have been raised about health and safety (due to large and heavy items not being secured to the wall).

Further discussion took place about the suggestion by the council that only groups of a maximum of 120 people can access the school hall for events. The parent council agreed that it was extremely unlikely that even 120 people would fit in the hall. There are concerns about what this means for events especially for families with multiple children having to attend multiple events to accommodate smaller groups in the hall. Not only is this not practice, affordable or feasible, it reduces opportunities for children to mix with their peers from different classes and age groups. Diane highlighted the research available just now recognising the benefits of children mixing in different age groups.

5. Transitions/ P7 residential/ school trips

School Trips

Mr McKeever looked at trying to organise a whole school trip and other options but there were many barriers including lack of space/ booking opportunities, issues with transport and price. Cost was very expensive (around £15 per pupil). There was also issues with getting dates that suited.

School trips will recommence next term. The school staff want a trip to be meaningful and affordable for families, therefore they will book early for next year to get in on time.

It was noted trips for the nursery children and the P7's has been booked. These groups were specifically selected as it is their final year of nursery/school.

6. MELM

Lorraine advised that most people are probably aware now that MELM in Chryston has been removed. However, the report provided from the Council continues to highlight the benefits of MELM and therefore there are concerns that MELM may be considered elsewhere in NLC. Parents are extremely frustrated at this position from the Council given the consultation and feedback from parents. There is a full council meeting on 9th June and the parent council will await the outcome of this for any further updates.

Lorraine also advised that Cllr McLaren who was re-elected during the local elections in May also attended the Community Council meeting in June. Lorraine advised that Cllr McLaren was assertive and clear about his position against MELM in NLC, he is also supporting the Stepps Parent Council in relation to the other issues we have raised. This is positive for parents at Stepps. Mr McLaren sent his apologies for tonight's meeting. Cllr Cairns and Cllr Williams were also invited but did not respond.

Transitions/ P7 residential

Ailsa advised that P7 residential will go ahead next year and thanked the staff involved in organising this. Ailsa advised that parents and young people are very excited about going for 3 days to a residential centre in Inverclyde. Mrs Jeffreys visited the site and said it was excellent.

More information will be provided to parents in the new term with an opportunity to save up money for the trip that is costing £299.

7. Homework/ survey

Lorraine advised Mr McKeever and the meeting that parent council members continue to receive feedback from parents about their views on homework. These vary from parents having a view that they don't think this has any benefit for children, to children refusing to do this, parents not having enough time to engage, too much homework etc. Therefore, Lorraine asked Mr McKeever for an update since the outcome of the homework survey.

Mr McKeever advised that despite most parents responding in favour of homework (approx. 87%), since the survey on average only 42% of children return completed homework. Sometimes returns are as low as 24% and maximum return rate is 57%. Therefore, Mr McKeever agrees that there is a disconnect between what parents wrote in the survey, their beliefs and actual engagement in the homework.

McKeever advised that most parents had opted for homework via Teams but there is low response rate of work completed via Teams.

Ailsa advised that she personally has found it difficult to understand the homework sheet and she believes that other people feel this way too. Diane agreed that sometimes it is not clear on the sheet what is optional and what is core.

Mr McKeever advised there is a challenge in finding the balance because some children and families do want homework and he believes that engaging in spelling and reading is advantageous for all children. There was a suggestion about using the digital/ virtual platform on offer from NLC, but Lynne advised that personally she and her children had struggled with this. Feedback from parents is that quite often the digital learning activities on offer do not link to what the child is learning in school at the time. The local authority also needs to recognise that quite often children are not supported by their parents to engage in homework, instead many go to afterschool care services (who are not allowed to access digital platforms), others go to childminders, grandparents, and other family members. It is highly unlikely that these other people are going to be able to access and navigate the digital virtual classroom. This also makes homework in general a challenge.

Diane also advised that the digital offering has been discussed many times at the NLC parent council collaborative meeting. Diane feedback to the collaborative meeting the issues that parents have with accessing the digital platform, however the response was that other people do successfully access this. There was a consensus from the meeting that parents need access to simple, straightforward, timely information that they can support their children with, and for those children who can access the platform independently they also need the process to be simpler.

There was another suggestion made by Ailsa and agreed by others that parents are keen to know what their children are learning and if Mr McKeever was able to create a method of sharing this. Suzanne advised that Twitter is an excellent method of sharing with parents what their children are learning, she recognised that this is probably time consuming for staff but perhaps more investment in using this as a platform to share learning rather than homework.

We all agreed that it is a difficult issue to get the balance correct to suit all needs. Mr McKeever will send out a new communication re homework, he will highlight what has happened since the homework survey was issued. Potential to move to a non-mandatory fortnightly/monthly homework task sheet with reading and spelling as the core activities. Furthermore, he will emphasise that homework is based on consolidation and revision/ practice rather than doing additional work.

8. Treasurer/Banking

There remains an outstanding issue for the parent council to access funds available to the group. Currently funds provided by NLC for the parent council are paid to the school and the PC has not been able to access this. Mr McKeever advised the AFA has informed him we cannot get access to the funds for our own bank account but they would be accessed via the school. Lorraine will need to follow up with Willie Collum.

9. AOB

Lorraine noted this would have been Sharon's last PC meeting as her son will start high school in August. In order to celebrate her efforts and for a general social event the PC are having a night out on Friday 12th August. She extended this invitation to the SMT.

Minutes completed by Diane Delaney
9th June 2022
Stepps Parent Council Secretary