

Braco Primary School Parent Council

Meeting Minutes

Monday 20th June 2022 6.30pm

Braco Primary School

Present: Becca MacRae (Chair), Dominic Edward (Secretary), Jenni Allardyce (Treasurer), Gillian Nixon (Committee Member), Kirsty Binnie (Acting Head Teacher), Rachel Beaton, Dee Campbell, Becky Davidson, Bridie Grant, Jill Johnston, Fiona Kerr, Graeme McWhinnie.

On Teams: Iain Howie

Apologies: Sylvia Lauder, Rhiannon Howie-Davies

1. Head Teacher Report

KB took the opportunity of this meeting to introduce herself and thank parents for the warm welcome she has received from the school community since starting in this post. She noted that she has been particularly impressed by the range of enrichment activities and opportunities available – e.g. forest school, bike ability, violin lessons, outdoor adventure week, school show, extra-curricular clubs etc.

She also noted the significant level of parental involvement at the school and would encourage parents to continue to come into the playground to have a chat to teachers, herself, and other parents.

KB thanked Susan Ross for a detailed and comprehensive handover process and noted that they remain in contact to ensure a smooth transition. KB noted that Susan Ross has gone above and beyond to ensure she understood information and procedures about the school to the benefit of all learners.

KB told us about her experiences in school leadership and her career background. She grew up in Dunkeld and went to school in Aberfeldy. Since qualifying as a teacher she has been employed in London primaries, working across the entire age range. In that time, she has taken on the role of assistant head and lead on English teaching, with a particular focus on improving literacy. In her most recent job she was responsible for school improvement, and her school had been shortlisted for school of the year by the UKLA for its teaching of reading.

Though this is her first appointment as a headteacher, she has worked in school leadership teams before and has an MSc in Educational Leadership.

KB is delighted to be in Braco and is looking forward to working with the very strong team at Braco Primary School next academic year.

2. School Estate & Playground

KB had attended a recent meeting with PKC and local councillors to update on improvements to the school estate. The situation remains as per the minutes of 11/5/22 - that the timescale

for completion would be >3 years following the conclusion of land negotiations, though there is still no decision on which site will be used (new build or refurbishment of existing buildings). KB hopes that this decision may come soon.

KB has been in contact with Andrew Davidson and Mairi Milne, who are involved in the building project. KB is keen, given the lengthy timescale before any new school would be available for use, to ensure that the current buildings create the best learning environment possible.

KB took parents on a walkaround of the school. The general consensus among those present was that this was an eye-opening tour, even for parents that had been round the school before. A prevailing theme was the lack of organised storage space. Some of those present were particularly shocked by working conditions for staff – the only staff toilet being directly behind Mrs Speakmans desk in the school office; the staffroom being so small; limited storage for staff personal belongings – to the extent that staff need to use their own cars as changing spaces when running forest school for example. Whilst all the classrooms need revitalised storage and painting, of particular note is the upstairs classroom as it is disjunct from the main circulation area and accessed through the nursery space

KB reported that PKC advised that the site visit to Braco Primary on 21.6.22 should be kept as an internal meeting but was happy to pass on from Parent Council any issues with the current building to the build team. Due to ongoing negotiations, PKC had also decided that parts of a recent meeting between the school leadership, PKC and councillors should be confidential. DE noted that this was a concerning development and contradicted earlier assurances that parents would be involved in all improvements to the school estate. KB explained that this was due to the complexities of the two proposed sites. KB said that she would invite the build team to the next Parent Council to give an update. DC noted that an open forum involving all stakeholders would allow for clearer communication.

BM discussed proposed summer holiday playground Parent Council maintenance days to undertake playground improvements such as removing graffiti on the Arc, painting the railings and playground games. BM will be meeting with pupils from Pupil Council on 28/6/22 with ideas from the children for improving the playground environment during the summer holiday maintenance days.

BM explained to Parent Council that she has been looking for quotes to replace the playground shelter canopy.

Action Point – Parent Council will compose a letter to the council in support of the necessary improvements to the school. Also requesting that parents are involved in all future meetings. Dates of summer holiday maintenance days TBC. Quotes for replacement shelter cover to be shared.

3. Behaviour & Respect

BM noted that the issue of behaviour and respect has been a concern among parents and members of the committee. DE noted that poor behaviour and lack of respect for staff and other pupils has become a significant concern over the past year – ranging from vandalism of school property and use of foul language to ‘low level’ behaviours that can be very disruptive in the classroom. In DE’s opinion, in just the past few weeks there seems to be a significant improvement and a sense that things are starting to change for the better. Parent Council

asked if there are any ways that parents can help to reinforce higher expectations of behaviour to maintain momentum.

KB acknowledged the feedback and reminded Parent Council that as Susan Ross informed them at the last Parent Council meeting “Respectful Relationships”, including addressing learning behaviours, is part of the upcoming School Improvement Plan for next year – so will be a particular focus then.

KB informed the meeting that children have been informed of a new policy for mobile phones – though these may be necessary for some children before/after school – they should be left with Mrs Speakman in the office during school hours. A message will go out on the app to update parents on this.

BM felt that the number of different staff could be an issue, and that it has been difficult for parents to recognise new faces – there are a number of new teachers and support staff that parents don’t recognise and so don’t know who it is that our child may be talking about when recalling their day at school.

KB suggested that a newsletter of next year’s staff members could be produced to help parents recognise staff, also perhaps an in person ‘meet the teachers’ event early in the new academic year.

4. AOCB

ADT funding

BG, in her new role as Development Officer for Ardoch Development Trust, wanted to highlight that opportunities for funding projects was available and would encourage anyone to visit their website for more information on submitting grants. The trust will also be looking for new trustees at their upcoming AGM and is keen to encourage a younger section of the community (8pm – Thursday 30th June – Braco Village Hall).

There was general discussion about the possibility of funding out of school childcare – which had been a significant topic in parent council meetings a few years ago but proved difficult to get off the ground. DE mentioned that ADT had supported Games Club in recent years, those resources are still available in the hall and is something that could be revitalised. There was also widespread appreciation for the after school football club and after school clubs put on by staff.

Parent feedback

KB would like to get feedback from parents that would inform school improvements. It was noted that parents had voiced concerns in our last meeting (11/5/22) about the previous google form survey – principally that comment sections would have been useful so that more qualitative feedback could be given to each question. KB will look into ways parents can provide feedback at the start of next term, possibly combined with focus/discussion groups.

Classes next year

RH-D had asked what class/staffing arrangements are for next year. KB confirmed that the classes would be:

P1/2/3 (21 children) Mrs Champion + ½ half day each week Mrs Binnie
P4/5 (18 children) Mr Torrens + Mrs Rogers on a Thursday
P6/7 (17 children) Miss McKelvie + Mrs Rogers on a Friday + ½ day each week Mrs Binnie

Mr Torrens and Mrs Champion will be swapping class rooms next academic year due to pupil numbers. Next week the school will be making preparations and switching around classrooms ready for next year. If any parents would be available to help, especially on Tuesday 28th, please contact the school.

Funding

JA reported that PC funds are approximately £1,000. She asked if a plan for using PC funds could be discussed early in the new term so that this money can be allocated as fairly as possible. It had been noted by the committee that parents had been asked to fund some school trips and activities without parent council being approached. Parent council would encourage the school to submit requests for funding as there is money to be spent.

KB suggested that a provisional overview of trips and the likely costs for next academic year could be shared with Parent Council at the start of the academic year to help with the allocation of funds.

School reports

RB and FK said that they particularly appreciated the school reports this year, noting that they were detailed and knowledgeable of their children. Parent Council thanked the teachers and staff for their hard work producing such personalised and accurate reports and noted that it came across in the reports how well children are known by all adults in the school. The individual and highly personalised card from Susan Ross, the headteacher, was also appreciated and some touching examples shared with Parent Council.

Covid

BD asked if any covid updates could be relayed to parents, as it was felt that this is still an issue we should not be forgetting about. KB acknowledged this and would pass on any circulars she received where that was possible.

Next Meeting

There was a general consensus that we should try to arrange the next meeting with plenty of notice – this would be the AGM and will likely be held in the first full week of the new term. KB would like to present the School Improvement Plan at that meeting, followed up 4 weeks later with action plans for it's implementation.