

Braco Primary School Parent Council

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 1st February 2023 6.30pm

Braco Primary School

Present: Becca MacRae (Chair), Dominic Edward (Secretary), Adrian Davidson (Treasurer), Gillian Nixon (Committee Member), Rhona Nuttall (Committee Member), Kirsty Binnie (Acting Head Teacher), Craig Torrens (Principal Teacher), Louise Fridge (Early Childhood Practitioner - Nursery), Rachel Beaton, Dee Campbell, Rhiannon Howie-Davies, Jill Johnston (Parent & PSA), Cara Stewart.

Apologies: Fiona Kerr

1. Head Teacher Report

KB thanked parents for all the cards and gifts at Christmas, these were very much appreciated. Thanks also to parents for supporting their children's learning at home and throughout the busy festive season. Thanks to parent council for help funding coaches, trips and festive gifts. Since the last meeting, class trips have been to Dundee Science Centre (P67) and Kelvingrove (P45). P123 have an upcoming trip to Deep Sea World. The whole school attended the Pantomime in Perth which was Jack and the Beanstalk this year. Nursery have also been busy, visiting the Perth Theatre to see Cloudman and attending the senior citizens Christmas party. Class Get Togethers this term have given every class an opportunity to share their learning with the school and parents and carers. Finally, a big thanks and well done to children and parents for supporting our recent Scots Poetry Event and entries to the Blackford Burns Club poetry competition.

The hub/breakout space, used especially for reading groups and visiting specialist teachers, has been refurbished – decorated and new carpets. Children's opinions will be sought for further additions to the resources in this space. This improvement was funded by PKC and comes off the back of the school walkaround at the end of last academic year. Refurbishment of the storage containers is now also complete – with improved shelving. A new water fountain providing chilled water has now been installed.

Attention will now focus on improving the P1/2/3 cloakroom area and library, with an application to Foyles Library Grants being submitted hopefully to financially support any works. If any parents with experience of writing grant applications would like to assist with this project, please contact the school.

KB informed the meeting that a further visit by staff responsible for estates at PKC will be arranged soon to continue work to improve the suitability of the school.

Following the successful application by CT to support forest schools, staff have received further forest school training.

KB was pleased to announce that Miss Rogers had successfully applied for a £500 grant to be able to invite an author to visit the school. The invite for this event will also be opened up to other schools. Any surplus funds would be used to purchase resources that would support literacy.

During the February inset day, school staff will be attending a joint training session with the Local Management Group of schools (Braco, Muthill, Madderty, Comrie) focussing on trauma informed practice and writing.

Issues with the school app should now be resolved. As a result of this disruption, the school has been awarded 3 months free provision of this service. The school will review the procedure for maintaining contact with parents should a similar issue arise in the future. Please see the message from ConnectUs who we buy the School App from;

I deeply apologise for the inconvenience caused to you, your team and parents and carers. The situation, in summary, was caused by a rogue SSL security certificate. This was a unique situation that all involved had never seen before, new procedures have been put in place that will mean that such a situation will not occur again.

Our aim at Connectus has, and will continue to be, to provide the highest level of service possible. Thank you for your support over the last six years. I can confirm that we will extend your current subscription by three months to the 21st October 2023.

Potential configurations of the composite classes for academic year 23/24 are under discussion. This will be finalised during the summer term dependent on final enrolment figures nearer the time. However, KB wished to inform parents that it was possible there might either be one large and 2 small classes or else that one year group may be split. If this were the case, parents would be consulted and PKC guidance would be followed.

KB also noted that this year children who are not five by the start of the academic year are being offered the opportunity to stay another year fully funded year at nursery. This could mean more children staying in nursery this year. GN enquired what the cut-off date is for children choosing between either P1 or staying in nursery? LF advised that this would be communicated to parents nearer the time and that they would be happy to help answer any questions parents may have. A Parent Meeting to discuss further is to be scheduled. More information about funded early learning and childcare for 3-5 year olds can be found here:

[Funded early learning and childcare for 3-5 year olds - 2023-2024 - Perth & Kinross Council \(pkc.gov.uk\)](https://pkc.gov.uk)

In response to feedback, Tayside Contracts will be introducing a 2 tier portion size for school lunches from April 2023. P5-7 will get a larger portion than other years.

KB asked for parents opinions on hoodies for P7. Hoodies for leavers were introduced during covid to mark the end of primary education as there was limited opportunity to put on any events. Do parents want these to continue? Is it better to purchase them at easter so they can be worn during the summer term? Could the cost be supported by parent council, ADT or a legacy fund? CT noted that at Auchterarder there is a legacy fund that supports leaver events, clothing, presents etc. This fund is supported by P7 leavers fundraising each year and adding to the fund for subsequent years. Due to the size of Braco and fluctuation in class sizes this model may not work so well though. GN appreciated the hoodies but noted that a consideration is sustainability - once outgrown the personalised hoodies are difficult to reuse. RHD thought it would be good to have these from easter, and to consider more uniform colours – as in previous years. It was decided that hoodies would be considered for purchase after easter, in school colours and that options for funding these would be investigated with the P7 children potentially putting in a funding bid to ADT.

Dates for school events up to Easter will be circulated on the school app. These include class get togethers, forest school, bake off, daffodil tea, whole school trip to Auchingarrich and an end of term service. Additional dates may be added as they arise. RB also appreciate when messages about forest school, for example, were issued on the app the night before.

2. School Estate Update

BM spoke with Brian Reid (Service Manager at PKC) for an update on the purchase of land for the proposed new school. The council had submitted a final offer to the landowner. This was accepted, but with a condition that was not acceptable to PKC. The sticking point in negotiations is not around the size of land or value, but that the landowner has asked the council to take responsibility for trees on adjacent retained land or else that they be taken down. The project team are consulting internally before deciding how to proceed.

AD felt that this was not an accurate reflection of matters. AD's understanding was that the landowner had not asked for trees to be removed, but had simply requested that the council assume responsibility for the additional liability incurred by owning trees on land next to a school as compared to an empty field. AD thought that this issue was not something new, but a matter that had been raised much earlier in negotiations that had not been satisfactorily addressed.

RB asked if there had been any progress on setting up a consultation/user reference group following the last parent council meeting. GN said that the council would not tend to set these up until the land purchase has been secured.

AD asked if there was any further information that could be shared with parents at this stage about, for example, how the new school would be funded and how planning permission would be progressed. GN/RN/BM responded that there was no further information to provide at this time, design/planning and community consultation would not progress until after a land purchase agreement is concluded.

BM had also asked Brian Reid about the school condition survey. *[This survey is separate from the suitability survey and concerns the state of the fabric of the school. Braco Primary School is currently rated as B – Satisfactory. Performing adequately but showing minor deterioration (physical element carries out function satisfactorily, may show signs of age and including consideration of some transverse elements).]* This survey was last completed in Feb 2017 and should be renewed every 5 years, hence due Feb 2022. Brian Reid had explained that this survey has been delayed due to the possibility that a new school could have been built. The next condition survey will be completed shortly.

3. Fundraising

Thank-you to everyone who attended and helped organise the Christmas Fair/Santa Dash last year. We raised a total of £503.53 for parent council funds – including £112 raised from the tombola; £222 from Santa dash entries; and the remainder from donations. The event was supported with a total grant of £534.15 from ADT that covered the cost of refreshments, prizes etc.

Our next fundraising event will be a Bingo Tea, organised by BM. The date for this was set at 17th March. There was general discussion about contacting local businesses for donations of prizes and perhaps also offering a hamper raffle, as this was not done at Christmas.

The treasurer provided an update on the account balances:

Parent Council Account - £1,219

Perth & Kinross Account - £229

STEM Account - £2,267

4. AOB

BM had spoken with a number of parents who had expressed their concern about what would happen when the current acting head role comes to an end. DE clarified that the current acting head teacher post will expire at the end of this term (Easter), not in May as some parents may have presumed. BM has contacted the schools QIO (Quality Improvement Officer) – Gillian Knox. She was unable to provide any information about what would be happening, but reassured that when this was known she would be in touch with a letter to all parents. It was anticipated that this would be prior to the end of this term. The general sentiment in response to this amongst those parents present was negative – surprise that the post was ending sooner than expected; concern at the lack of continuity/stability for the children; disappointment with the lack of communication from Perth and Kinross Council; and concern at the lack of foresight into how much more difficult it could be to recruit a new head during the academic year.

AD raised a concern that not all children from P6/7 were going to be attending the ski trip this year. AD asked whether this was about the cost of the ski trip? AD asked whether the costs be reduced through a cheaper venue or shorter length. DE suggested that for future years parents could be asked for their views on the trip and cost at the planning stage – with potential consideration of alternative itineraries to ensure that the trip remained affordable and value for money. AD also noted that there were hidden costs to account for, such as clothing. RHD noted that being able to pay through instalments was appreciated. LF/CT noted that staff had rallied round to help provide equipment to children this year. CT added that parents were asked about affordability of this trip after the previous event. KB shared that there would not be any further residential trips happening this academic year, but that there would be non-residential days out.

RB asked whether there would be any swimming lessons for children. KB was pleased to inform that this would be happening for P6/7 children during the summer term at the Strathearn Campus (Crieff). These will be on a Monday morning from 17/4/23 to 26/6/23.

BM raised a suggestion from the community that following the recent sad loss of a long standing and respected member of the Braco Community, perhaps an annual award at the school could be instigated in memory of David Cairns. Similar, for example, to the Bobby Muir cup that is awarded each year for Scots poetry. It was suggested that an award might reflect David's love of the outdoors and photography whilst incorporating some element of sustainability. An idea that was floated in the meeting was an award for photography that could perhaps be developed into a calendar. If anyone has any suggestions for such an award, please contact Parent Council.