

Braco Parent Council meeting

26th November 2024

Attendees: Jill Johnston (Treasurer), Julie Reid (Secretary), Craig Torrens (Acting Head), Amelia Conway, Becca Macrae, Ross Nixon, Bridie Grant, Teagan McAvoy, Rhona Nuttal, Rachel Beaton.

JR opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees.

Head Teacher's Report

Mrs Ross Leaving

I would like to start this evening by expressing a heartfelt 'thank you' to Mrs Ross for her many years of dedication and hard work at Braco Primary School. Mrs Ross was Headteacher of Braco for over 7 years, and during this time she always strived to do her best for our young people. Her passion for inclusion, pupil voice, Forest School and many other areas, will leave a positive legacy on our school for years to come. Mrs Ross will be missed greatly by our whole school community.

A lot of our children have been asking if they will get an opportunity to say goodbye to Mrs Ross. I have explained that the school will find an opportunity for her to say goodbye, at an appropriate time. For now, we do not want to cause any confusion or upset by arranging something so soon after the children have been told she is leaving.

The Local Authority have indicated that the recruitment process will start soon, and this presents an opportunity for new and exciting changes in our school.

Staffing updates

Firstly, I'd like to thank parents and carers for their understanding regarding recent changes to staffing at Braco Primary School. Following the news that Mrs Ross would not be returning to Braco as headteacher, there were necessary adjustments that had to be made to staffing. As always, the school will continue to work hard to ensure as much continuity for our learner as possible.

We recently appointed Mrs Karen Carnson in a 17 hour per week Pupil Support Assistant (PSA) role within the school, and she began working at Braco on Monday 25th November. Before starting, Mrs Carnson shared a photo and some information about herself, which was shared with parents by email. She has considerable experience working with children both as a PSA and as an Early Childhood Practitioner (ECP), and her wealth of experience in these roles will make her an asset to our school.

Mrs Duff has recently begun working with our P5/6/7 class on a supply basis until Christmas. She has really enjoyed getting to know the children in our P5/6/7 class last week and I am confident that her holistic and child-centred approach will make her an excellent fit for our school. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Mrs Fergusson for all her hard work during her time at Braco Primary School.

We are in the process of recruiting a Play Assistant for our nursery and are hopeful that this role will be filled in the New Year. The school and nursery are grateful to Mrs Carla Geddes for filling the role on a supply basis.

Communication Methods

Following feedback from parents regarding The School App, the school decided to cease using it from 18th November 2024. A new communication protocol has been set up, with messages being sent to parents via email or Learning Journals, depending on the type of message.

We used our most up-to-date record to create a mailing list, but I would urge any parent who has not received emails from the school to contact the school office asap.

We would also like to highlight our school website, which will be used more frequently now. This features a calendar for parents, which may be of use to parents when planning ahead.

Term Dates

The remainder of this term is going to be great fun, but also very busy.

- Forest School dates have been shared with parents.
- School Pantomime Trip: Wednesday 4th December.
- Nursery Pantomime Trip: Friday 13th December.
- Christmas in the Community Fair: Saturday 14th December.
- Early Years Christmas Craft Morning: Monday 16th December (date subsequently changed to 09.12.24).
- Nativity Performance: Tuesday 17th December at 6pm.
- School Christmas Party: Thursday 19th December.
- Christmas Service: Friday 20th December at 09:30am.

School/parent communication channels

The question was asked “Would WhatsApp not be the easiest option for notifying parents?”, given that some parents are not receiving emails? There are GDPR issues around WhatsApp and therefore the school can’t use it as a method of communication.

There is also a frustration that notification emails for Learning Journals often don’t come through until late and push notifications aren’t available on the app as yet.

JR to contact Learning Journals to see what the timeframe is on an app update

Most parents attending seemed happy with receiving emails with regards to school updates and for Learning Journals to remain focussed on reporting their child/children’s learning.

Mr Torren’s reminded us that as well as sending emails, they are trying hard to promote the school calendar on the website as means of checking what is happening and when at the school.

Update from Learning Journals:

“Push notifications will be enabled with the new parent app which will be released after the new year. I’m afraid I don’t have a more specific timeline than that at the moment, but we are working on getting this out as soon as possible.”

Zebra crossing outside of the school

There is a huge concern about the speed that traffic travel down the Feddal Road, even though there is a 20 MPH speed restriction at school drop off and pick up times. I (JF) have personally witnessed a car not stopping (during drop off time) for an elderly person (with a walking frame) who was waiting to cross. Luckily the person did not attempt to cross, but I'm not sure that this would be the case if it had been a child. Concerns are heightened given that the children need to use the Zebra crossing regularly to access the village hall and MUGA for lunch/get together, PE, music lessons etc.

Rhona informed us that the Community Council have been putting forward the argument that a puffin crossing is needed in place of the zebra crossing, but they were previously advised that funding was not available. The Community Council, as well as the Parent Council, feel that an improvement to the crossing is a priority and they are still pushing for a change to a puffin crossing.

Full speed bumps right across the road were discussed as they may be a cheaper option and quicker to implement. It was agreed that speed cushions would not be enough of a deterrent to adequately slow traffic as large vehicles tend to straddle them. It was recognised that residents opposed the speed bumps being introduced on Front Street, but it is likely there would little to no residents affected by speed bumps on Feddal Road near the school/church/village hall.

The issue with a crossing warden is that there are very few available, so we don't feel that this would be a viable option.

There is a Community Council meeting on Thursday 12th December where the issue will be discussed again.

It was pointed out that in the springtime there will be a battery storage area further up the Feddal Road, which means more lorries/trucks will need to be travelling on the road.

It was discussed that the Pupil Council should perhaps draft a letter from the school pointing out all of our concerns.

In the meantime, until a more permanent solution can be agreed, it was suggested that children shaped cones (like they use outside the primary school in BOFA) may be a way of raising awareness. Becca will ask the school in BOFA more about these.

Mr Torrens is also going to speak to the school taxi to see if there is a safer area for them to park, given the taxis also block driver's visibility of people waiting to cross.

Each attendee of the meeting has witnessed an incident involving the zebra crossing – either with vehicles not stopping at all, or vehicles (including lorries) only just breaking in time. It is the issue we feel is the most urgent that needs rectifying.

One parent present at the meeting felt that the puffin crossing may not be an answer as it requires children to stop and wait until the green man shows and they felt this may not happen.

Fundraising

Instead of a Santa Dash this year (run out of time to organise/get access to the village hall) we will look at a "Easter Hop" instead. Date to be confirmed, but it won't be the weekend of easter (Friday 18th-Monday 21st April 2025) as we feel a lot of people may be away that weekend. In lieu of the raffle that is usually held at the Santa Dash, the School will prepare hampers for which tickets will be sold at the Christmas Faye on Sat 14th Dec and tickets will then also be sold at the Nativity (17th Dec), when the raffle will be drawn. Proceeds from the raffle will kindly be donated to the Parent Council.

An easy to organise fundraising idea is a “break the rules” day, which we will be looking at doing in the New Year. Date and full details to be confirmed shortly.

Jill will set up a new WhatsApp group re Fundraising ideas.

AOB

When the children are painting could they wear aprons or a parent's old shirt over their uniform as it is incredibly difficult to wash out paint stains. Mr Torrens confirmed that children are welcome to bring aprons or old shirts to school in a bag. The school also has a number of painting aprons already, so staff will be reminded to use these when painting.

Should something be organised for Mrs Ross? Mr Torrens' will look into this.

It was asked when the Headteacher post will be advertised. Following a letter from the local authority on 04.12.24, it appears that the recruitment process will begin in the new year.

All the parents attend wanted to thank Mr Torrens and the team at Braco Primary for the seamless staff changes since term started back again in August. There has been much improved communication, and it greatly reduces the anxiety of both children and parents.