**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PARENT COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT MONCREIFFE PRIMARY SCHOOL ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2014**

**PRESENT**

Fiona Carruthers, Iain Collin, Carole Davidson, Adele Evans, Ali Karley, Darlene MacDonald, Nicola Murray, Kirsty Stewart, Deborah Swan, Kevin Wilkie.

**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

In the event of late and unexpected apologies from chair Kate Marshall, Adele Evans opened the meeting and asked for introductions. Apologies were also indicated from Alastair Campbell, Hannah Blair, Felicity Graham and Audrey Lindsay.

**MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting on May 28 were approved by members.

**STAFFING UPDATE & P5 TEACHER**

Fiona Carruthers (FC) welcomed the opportunity to address the Parent Council (PC) for the first time since her appointment over the summer holidays and gave a detailed report on staffing and associated matters.

She said the school was ‘getting to grips’ with the changes made by the government to nursery hours provision and discussed the appointment for the new session of a music teacher, Connie Appleton, and a new gym teachers, Flo Wilkie.

FC then went on to discuss the topic of P5 teacher Mrs Dunbar, who had been signed off by her GP and was due to go off on maternity leave at the end of the October holidays. She informed the meeting that an advert had been placed to find a replacement on a fixed-term contract of up to a year, starting after the October holidays. She discussed the recruitment process and her hopes of finding a suitable candidate to start after the holidays.

FC indicated a letter had gone out to P5 parents, as well as a text, and insisted she was keen generally to enjoy good communication between the school and home.

On that topic, she said it was planned to have newsletters going out once a month and electronically where possible. This prompted a discussion on communication in the past, with Ali Karley (AK) asking whether it would be possible to have texts sent out at the same time as emails and also email prompts when important paperwork had been sent home.

**NEW HIGH SCHOOL**

The meeting heard from FC on Perth and Kinross Council’s (PKC’s) plans for a new high school at Inveralmond. Perth High School (PHS) is almost at capacity and the aim is to reduce numbers there, but Moncreiffe PS pupils would continue to go to PHS. Roadshows are planned to give parents more information.

**HEADTEACHER’S REPORT**

FC said her first impressions of Moncreiffe had been very good and that it was a very positive school. She said she was well aware of the recent staffing difficulties but that as a team the staff had a ‘real commitment to improve the learning environment for the school’.

All teachers had been, with counterparts from Craigie and Forteviot schools, taking part in Teaching Learning Committees (TLCs), which bring together teachers to promote debate and build action plans/goals to take back and implement in class. A measure of continuing professional development (CPD) and peer support, it is designed to find the best way to improve learning and to boost teachers’ levels of confidence and understanding. Kirsty Stewart (KS) is lead at Moncreiffe and FC indicated the role would also be good for KS’s leadership skills.

Responding to a question from AK on language, FC detailed plans for teaching foreign language in schools. The ‘1+2’ scheme is designed to develop language learning from early years as a way of children being able to compete in future in a global market. It is aimed at teaching the child’s mother tongue (1), plus two other languages. It is planned the scheme will be fully implemented by 2020. The other languages will be school/geographically specific and teachers will require to be ‘upskilled’ to carry scheme out in class.

FC discussed her hopes of gathering parental views – on school priorities and on what could be done better in school - and the best way of doing this. AK indicated the PC would be very happy to work with the school to implement this and that parent contact events may be best time to catch parents.

FC also said ideas for curriculum workshops were also being looked at.

AK asked whether, given the recent rate of change, pictures of school staff could be made available to inform parents/carers of those working in the school. She said she felt, ‘through no fault of the school or staff’, that a barrier had grown between parents and the school. She discussed the possibility of staff being able to be visible in the playground before lessons as a way of improving the atmosphere. FC said she had done that in her first week in the job but that staff’s priority at that point in the day is to get lessons ready for children. She did reveal, however, that the importance of staff being visible had been discussed at a recent in-service day.

**VOLUNTEERS**

AK asked if there was an update on attempts to improve volunteering at the school from the parent forum and whether there was any way the PC could help. FC said it would be useful to have a bank of people willing to volunteer in a range of areas. It was agreed that the PC and school would work to try and collate a list of possible volunteers.

**FrOM UPDATE**

Darlene MacDonald gave the FrOM update and told the meeting that FrOM’s AGM was imminent. Dates were provided for the Hallowe’en parties, pamper night and Christmas Fair.

**TREASURER’S UPDATE**

AK gave an update of PC funds and indicated the bank account stood at £1290.73. An application had been submitted for the new year’s grant.

Given the healthy nature of the PC’s funds the meeting discussed how best to use the available money, within the PC’s remit of improving links between school and home. With FC indicating the school was looking at alternatives to online learning resource Education City, members were shown Espresso Education, which could also be utilised by parents and pupils at home. It was agreed that the PC could possibly fund the change.

FC also indicated that the school’s digital cameras were in need of updating.

**Action:** FC to cost cameras and report back to PC and keep PC up to date on online learning.

**PARENT COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

Members discussed the planned priorities for the PC for the coming year and it was decided updating the parents’ handbook and improving the PC’s presence on the school website should be looked at.

There was also a discussion centred on trying to involve more parents/carers in the PC and AK mentioned that some parents had, in the past, been unable to attend meetings because of childcare issues. It was decided that, starting with the next meeting, the PC would try and run a taster session with local groups, etc. to coincide with the meeting, thereby allowing parents without childcare at home to participate.

**Action:** Enjoy-a-ball leader to be approached to hold session on date of next meeting.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND AGM**

It was decided the next meeting, incorporating the AGM, would be on November 3 at 6.30.