

Crieff High School Parent Council – Virtual Meeting (Core Group) – 18 May 2020. Minute of meeting

Attendees:

John Donnelly (JD) - Headteacher/Campus Leader, Jessica Murphy (JM) – Head Girl, Rian Harvey (RH) – Head Boy, Cathy Tilbrook (CT) - Chair, Morven Harrower – Vice Chair, Betsy Vielhaber – Secretary, Billy Russell - Treasurer, Gillian Rose, Lindsay Lennie, Helen McCrorie, Nina Stenhouse, Catriona Cunningham, Emily James, Suzanne Harvey, Isla Robb, Sam Walker

Apologies: Jo Perry, Aileen Turkington, Laura Fraser

Welcome and introductions, aim of meeting

Cathy welcomed attendees and explained that it had taken a while to organise a Parent Council meeting due to heavy work commitments and need to investigate online meeting options. Thanks to Logos and Jessica / Caroline Murphy for facilitating the use of their Zoom account. If the format and technology work successfully then there will be a follow up meeting, inviting input from a wider group of parents. Cathy noted that there had been a useful response received from Nick Keiller to questions raised about school and extracurricular sport. This was circulated previously and will be discussed at a later meeting, but the focus of this meeting was on the current delivery of online teaching and plans for return to school.

Update on current arrangements and respond to specific questions from parents:

1. Almost all school work being assigned to pupils is on a self-learn basis (possible exception – some language classes?) Is there any plan for teachers to deliver any virtual classes or tutorials where pupils can ask specific questions and have a one-to-one explanation on work they are struggling with?

John Donnelly (JD) response: IT proficiency has been an issue but staff have now been able to move onto setting and marking virtual classes. Getting feedback from other schools – some have live lessons with timetable. However, some teachers have childcare etc. and some pupils can't follow a day long curriculum. CHS requires each teacher to have weekly input for each class.

Discussion: Pupils need more time to just clarify with teacher what is needed and sending emails / messages does not work for all subjects. Ideally need face to face or live virtual chat. Microsoft teams approach (as for language) requested for other subjects. Kids are nervous about sending messages to teachers – bit of a barrier. Need reassurance about this.

2. Workload seems very variable for different subjects and year groups. Is there any overview of this?

JD response: There is an overview – year group, subject and class teacher homework set has been monitored (reviewed on Monday) and deputy head discusses with the teacher, e.g. some tasks require 2 weeks of work. New timetable should be better in terms of spacing the work.

Discussion: Parents felt that the situation was better with new timetable and weekly tasks set on Monday for all subjects to help with work planning. Many felt that for some tasks, there needed to be more input from teachers as work is being progressed and clearer feedback on work submitted.

Timing of tasks is also strange, e.g. for N5 and H Modern studies – first task is to choose the topic of AVU, before there has been any overview / context of the course content so there can be a more informed choice of topic. Jessica (S6) – commented she has not

had any work set since beginning of lockdown, but has had help from Guidance staff on Univ application process.

3. Parents are struggling to know how much time their children should be spending on schoolwork whilst at home, as opposed to other domestic and recreational activities. Is there any guidance on this for different age groups?

JD response: There is no PKC / national guidance on this. Guidance teachers talking to pupils about this and barriers to learning e.g. connectivity, access to computers, etc. Try to achieve some structure in the day but can be challenging.

Discussion: Parents felt it would be really helpful to have guidance on how much time pupils should be spending on schoolwork and PE. (JD commented - Don't want to put pressure on some families who can't meet a target of time to spend. Speak to guidance staff if children need to be stretched more). Teachers are finding the provision of feedback via online platforms is most time consuming element. Could teachers do more to share good practice? Feedback on work submitted is intended to be very positive but needs to clearly indicate if something is being done incorrectly.

Action: JD to investigate if teachers could provide an optional extra reading list.

4. How is pupil attendance being recorded during this time? What, if any, is the impact of university and other external applications?

JD response: At present, school is coded as closed. No pupil attendance is being recorded although engagement in learning (e.g. completion and quality of homework submissions) is being monitored and recorded. Social work concerns are being monitored separately. UCAS released a statement last week expecting student numbers in 2020/21 to be lower due to smaller foreign student intake (and therefore reduced funding). This may create a backlog leading to more competition for Univ places next year.

5. Given that pupils are required to self-learn what plans are being put into place to assist pupils that are not able, for various reasons, to progress as expected, especially those in the exam years?

JD response: All SQA qualifications based on 160 hours of completed work (including homework). No guidance from SQA yet on implications for next year's exams. If impossible to complete syllabus then SQA may reduce the exam scope (e.g. remove part of course to make it more achievable). Everyone nationally will be in a similar position but they will fall behind previous years. Trying to ensure that virtual learning will keep up with this. School recognise difficulties for pupils sitting exams next year and will try to get H and AH pupils back as soon as possible.

Discussion: Parents commented that some schools in other areas are doing more timetabled live classes (e.g. via Zoom) and are recording attendance in these classes. Wanted to ensure that CHS pupils are not disadvantaged by lack of such recording.

6. Can PKC add relevant school books to their stock of on-line text books and study guides in e-book form to allow students to access key resources?

JD response: This hasn't been previously been kept in a central location.

Action: JD to investigate if links to these resources can be compiled in a single document

7. What are the current timescales and plans for a return to school?
 - a. How can pupils get to school given social distancing?
 - b. How can social distancing be maintained given current class sizes and classroom availability?

JD response: This is in early stage of planning in PKC. Different scenarios being considered. Even when pupils return, it is very unlikely to be at current class sizes and

buses to ensure social distancing. May need car travel to school. Potential for pupils to come in on different days by year group or to prioritise some subjects which are difficult to deliver remotely, e.g. technical, etc. No real detail on this yet. Noted that LiveActive is not included in discussions on school return.

8. Can you explain more about the process for teacher assessment of student grades for SQA exams? Will these be made available to pupils/parents ahead of the SQA release of results? There has been some media coverage of the potential impact of past school exam results in determining the SQA assessments for this year, and the accuracy of the school's predicted grades for students. Can you comment on how this might impact on CHS results this year?

JD response: 29 May – deadline for all schools to send their SQA estimates. From recent meetings, CHS feel that they are ahead of many other schools in this. Not new to estimate bands – teachers always do this (1-9). Now need to split into more categories (upper and lower brackets). Rank all the pupils from top to bottom within the bands (including between the different classes). SQA estimate from teacher is main way that certification will be made. Won't be made available to parents beforehand but can be discussed afterwards (potential appeal process). CHS attainment was predicted to rise this year so there is a concern that this could be questioned but JD is confident that he can justify and respond to any challenge.

Discussion: Can the Parent Council help to back up the CHS position on this?

Action: If SQA make a decision to downgrade results based on previous years then Parent Council will draft a letter to support case made by school.

9. The N5 prelim exams are usually scheduled to take place in Nov, but if pupils have not returned to 'normal' schooling what will be the impact?

JD position: If getting towards November without enough cover of curriculum then unlikely to run the prelims as scheduled. Importance of prelims has diminished due to lack of appeals process but they are worthwhile as a trial exam experience. May run them in January with Highers.

10. Are there any plans to defer any of the school years/pupils given the disruption to learning?

JD position: Any deferral is not a school decision – up to the family or young person (or if for the whole year group – would be PKC or Scotland wide),

11. At this time, parents and pupils may be accessing the school website more than usual – is there any update on plans to update the content and structure?

JD response: Laura Fraser has outlined new proposed structure to JD – looks really good. She is working with Lisa in business team and linking all social media posts onto website. Gillian Rose has been helping with the structure etc.

Action: JD to ask Laura Fraser if any input needed to website development from Parent Council at present (e.g. testing structure and checking content).

Staffing update:

Christine Walker (computing) – retiring at end term. Will recruit a replacement.

Miss McCully now recruited permanently in home economics

Dr Paterson leaving. Geography classes can be timetabled without replacing this post.

More teachers now in place for English and Maths – smaller class groups possible

Robyn Craig – new English teacher

Future Meetings and communication:

It was agreed that the Zoom meeting had worked well. Suggestion made that Crowdcast also good, with chat functions to ask questions, but costs around £34 per month. Possible use for Advanced Higher groups, etc?

As Logos Zoom account should be available for future Parent Council meetings on Monday nights, we agreed to repeat this approach. Fiona Perry also kindly offered her account if needed.

Action: JD and CT to arrange next meeting for Mon 8 June, 6.30pm. Message to be sent to invite all parents with RSVP and question ideas needed in advance. If response is large then this could be split to two meetings on different evenings (possibly split by year groups).

AOB

P7 transitions – talking place online.

Action: Jessica offered headgirl / boy input to this process. JD to follow up.

Interviews for senior prefects – Parent Council volunteers sought but some parents cannot participate due to having family ties to potential applicants.

Action: JD to liaise with CT to formalise volunteers (provisionally Morven, Fiona and Betsy)

Giillian Rose mentioned that there may be additional video learning resources for various subjects available on Scholar platform but not all pupils have log in.

Action: JD to check options for access to Scholar.

Parents expressed thanks to school guidance / support staff for regular home phone calls.

Action: JD to pass these thanks back to the guidance / support team.