



## MINUTE OF MEETING OF ST JAMES' PARENT GROUP

**Monday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 18:45**

**Committee Members:** Kelly Nugent, Adele McLean, Marie Prior, Claire McLaughlin, Caroline O'Neill, Claire Ferguson, and Kerrie Duffy.

**Chair – Alison Allan**

### **1. Welcome**

Alison Allan welcomed all to the first meeting of the new school year.

### **2. Apologies**

Apologies were given from Caroline O'Neill, Claire Ferguson, Father John Eagers and Mr Healy.

### **3. Minute of previous meeting, on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2023, to be agreed.**

Minute of the previous meeting agreed with no amendments.

### **4. Treasurer / Finance Update – Marie Prior**

Marie advised that the current balance of the PG bank account is approximately £1000 after the outgoings at the end of the previous school year. There are two cheques to be deposited: the school's share of the P7 leavers' hoodies and parent contributions towards 2023 prom costs.

### **5. P7 Activity Days – Mrs Pacitti**

Mrs Pacitti gave an update on the 2022/23 P7 activity at the KGVs; the event was well organised by the school and One Ren/ Active Schools team. All pupils enjoyed the KGVs and the variety of activities provided.

Mr Moran and Mrs Pacitti are currently looking into options for the 2023/24 cohort which includes Tree Tops at Loch Lomond. There was discussion around options and concerns with transport costs. It was suggested that due to numbers, the year group would be split, continuing with the event at the KGVs as organised by Active Schools alongside an activity out with the school over two days. Options will continue to be looked at and anyone with a suggestion should email the school enquiries mailbox.

### **6. Parent Run Clubs – Mrs Bradford**

Mrs Bradford introduced the school's new Parent Run Club initiative that they are hoping to set up this session. The school are appealing to any parents/ carers with specific hobbies, talents, passions or training to come into the school and deliver extracurricular programmes to pupils. PVGs would be carried out by the school and activities can be for short blocks if time commitments prove to be a barrier.



## 7. Events

### Halloween Disco

Let approved for Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023. A Allan proposed that P1s can attend with parents being informed beforehand that they can help out at the disco if they are concerned about their child becoming overwhelmed. It was noted, that there were very few issues/ concerns last year with P1s in attendance and most seemed to enjoy it.

### Christmas Fayre

Discussion around the best date to hold the Christmas Fayre, Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November was proposed as the best date and an action taken to apply for let. It was noted that the Parent Group will need the gym hall/ atrium throughout the day on the 16<sup>th</sup> for set up.

### P7 Leavers Event

Discussion around theme for P7 leaver event this year, festival theme suggested by several members. There was also discussion around the cost of the Bonkers buses. The evaluation of the 2022/23 event highlighted that for many pupils, the bus was their favourite part of the evening. It was agreed that the parent group would distribute a further survey to P7 parents around the cost/ theme/ activity.

## 8. Grant Funding

It was agreed that the Parent Group would apply for further Tesco Grant funding in the New Year after direction from the school on what is needed in the playground etc.

The school sound system is in desperate need of an update. C McLaughlin and Mrs Fitzsimmons will investigate Renfrew Local Partnership Fund after another local school successfully obtained funding for a new sound system using this grant.



## 9. Catholic Education Week – Mrs Bradford

Catholic Education week is from, Mrs Bradford is working with all cluster schools to create a booklet containing information on Catholic Education: pupil, staff and parent voice are crucial to the creation of this booklet and all stakeholders will be invited to participate shortly. If attendees at the meeting tonight could start this by adding a post it on the board provided when leaving.

## 10. Hopscotch Pantomime

Mrs Fitzsimmons asked if the Parent Group would pay for Hopscotch Panto to attend the school again this year, in December 2023. Pupils in P1 to P4 really enjoyed this last year and it was agreed that the Parent Group would fund this. The Parent Group and the school will continue to look into a festive event for P5 to P7 pupils.

## 11. School Entry change

The change to the 'soft start' is at the request of teaching unions as the Working Time Agreement does not allow for classrooms to be open before 9am. Mrs Fitzsimmons advised that they are now playing a song at the beginning of each school day and pupils have responded well to this. Pupils are being asked to suggest a song and then songs are chosen at random. Song choices should focus on school values.

## 12. Head Teacher Report – Mrs Fitzsimmons

### START TO TERM

I would like to thank the Parent Council and all Parents and Carers for the on-going support of our school. Seeing our children come back in smiling, full of chat and stories of their summer, ready and excited to learn, dressed for excellence and genuinely happy to be here shows us that you, with us are proud of our school and share and encourage your children to have the same positive thoughts about school. The buzz around the school has been lovely, one of fun, hard work and kindness, it's been genuinely a lovely place to work.

We have been delighted to welcome our new Primary 1 cohort who are settling in well and another really lovely wee year group, our Buddies are doing an incredible job and we are grateful to have the extra help. In addition to these new children, we have also welcomed 21 additional children across the school since the start of the new term. Many of these families have come from all over the world to St James and we now have 46 registered languages being spoken here in the school, it's amazing.

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Respect  
Kindness



#### STAFFING UPDATE

This year we welcome:

- 2 Newly Qualified Teachers – Miss Campbell and Mrs MacLean
- 1 Temp Supply Teacher – Mrs Magee, as we have 2 teachers now on maternity leave – Miss McGinnigle who has just had twin boys and Mrs Fee who has had another little girl.
- 1 Additional Support Needs Assistant – Mrs Luse who is also a parent in our school and very active member of the school community and Parent Council. This now brings our number of parents working in the school to 6 which is just lovely. Who better to look after and help our young people grow than parents – adults who have huge, vested interest in this school and it doing well, welcome Shauna, I'm glad you are now finally being paid for all the work you have done in here for years!
- Mr Horn is still seconded to St Catherine's Primary for the time being so we are fortunate to continue having our Acting Principal Teachers – Mr Moran and Mrs Gillies in post (2 x 0.7 full time equivalent), 1.4 made up of Mr Horn (1.0 FTE) and the backfill of Mr Healy's (0.4FTE) Principal Teacher position.
- Our Health and Wellbeing Officer has secured a promotion elsewhere in the council and so has left us, we wish her well in her new role, she has had a very positive impact on many of our learners throughout the school.

#### COMMS UPDATE

Due to changes in guidance around GDPR we have upgraded our Seesaw account to the full version instead of the previously used free version, this obviously has cost implications for the school budget. Seesaw use will be monitored closely by our ICT coordinator to ensure this is still a good option. Feedback from parents in previous Communications Group evidenced the preference for Seesaw as a tool for class teachers to use for communication with parents. It is important that ALL families are signed up to Seesaw to enable access to their child's class comms. We will continue to use email and newsletter to send out more general information, we ask that ALL families read the information we are sending out, we often receive calls from families saying they haven't had information sent out, please read all comms sent out for your information.

#### SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT 2023-2024

You may remember in 2020 we launched our Vision, Values and Aims which we continue to reflect on to ensure they are still relevant and that they reflect our shared ambitions for our children. Following the past few challenging years, we are confident that our Vision, Values and Aims are not only relevant but even more pertinent as we endeavour to minimise the impact of the disruption caused by Covid and the cost of living crisis for our children, families and team.

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To this end, we will continue to give our school Values top priority through all that we do, we thank you for your continued support in helping us to live these values of kindness, respect and commitment every day and in how we work together with our young people and in how we communicate and work with one another, one of our favourite sayings here in St James' is 'Teamwork makes the dreamwork' and we do believe this to be alive and in action here in St James, thank you.

- This year we decided to take a slightly different approach to sharing our summary of the impact of last sessions improvement priorities. Our Principal Teachers pulled our evaluation and evidence together to create a SWAY of our young people's achievements over this past year, this will be launched on our school website along with our School Improvement Plan for 2023 – 2024, please remember to give us your feedback and suggestions through the usual channels on this work.
- At our last meeting the members of the Senior Leadership Team shared with you some of the exciting work we are undertaking this session to ensure our young people continue to flourish and thrive in Maths Recovery, Talk for Writing, Health and Wellbeing items including continued work on Renfrewshire's Nurturing Relationships Approaches, CIRCLE (Child Inclusion Research into Curriculum Learning Education) and RICE (Renfrewshire's Inclusive Communication Environment) to help us to meet the speech, language and communication needs of all pupils.
- All members of the Senior Leadership Team have undertaken training in NVR (Non-violent Resistance) training which is a way of working with parents and carers and their support network in a very specific way. The approach uses strategies from Ghandhi's "nonviolent resistance" and from the civil rights movement. It looks at the model of escalation processes between parents and child and ways for overcoming escalation. It encourages parents to take an active stance and reclaim parental presence with their children.
- Father John will continue to be very much an active part of our school community with his weekly visits, Masses, spiritual and faith guidance and teachings and we hope to get the many groups back up and running that were vibrant in the school pre-covid, please let us know of any family members who would be able and willing to help support us with any aspects of our school improvement, we would love to have more involvement from our community.
- Due to the change to our Health and Wellbeing Officer status, we are in the process of revisiting our School Improvement Plan and areas where we had planned her support, the School Improvement Plan will be updated and adapted over the coming months in light of this change, please continue to access the school website for these updates on our School Improvement Plan.
- This year we hope to increase school attendance for children who struggle to attend school with the use of the EBSA Toolkit (Emotionally Based School Avoidance), this is a priority for some learners, if they are not here they can't learn!



- As a nation, schools have been setting specific school targets for improving outcomes for all while working to close the poverty-related attainment gap. In order to do this, we set targets annually which are both ambitious and achievable. Our targets are focussed and take account of individual progress. We have also been working with our new Education Manager and one of the Renfrewshire Council Data Analysts as part of the Quality Assurance process, we continue to look at trend data in order to make improvements to our pedagogy (how we teach and learn) and curriculum (what we teach and learn) here in St James and we have continued to make good progress in all areas over time.

We look forward to the year ahead, growing our Parent Council and building on the excellent practice that we already have here tonight. Thank you everyone for all your hard work, dedication, and time, it is very much appreciated by all who work here in St James.

Natalie Fitzsimmons  
Head Teacher

### **13. Correspondence – consultation on school holidays 24/25**

Committee members commented on the change in the Easter holidays as they are normally the first two weeks in April. There was also discussion on the first school day for pupils in the new school year being Friday 16<sup>th</sup> August. It was agreed this feedback would be provided to the consultation.

### **14. AOCB**

It was noted that the new P1s are settling well into school and adapting to new routines etc.

2024 Communion Dates – classes will continue to make their first communions on separate dates. The dates are still TBC but are currently being looked at.

Confirmation Date – all cluster schools will now return to St Mirin's Cathedral for Confirmation, this will take place on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024.

School Lunches – the issue of pupils receiving a later lunch/ returning late to class after lunch was raised. Mrs Fitzsimmons confirmed this had been the case due to staffing issues across the authority. The local authority and the school are working to alleviate this problem and there has been an improvement this week. The school will ensure that pupils are given adequate time for lunch.

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### 15. Date of next meeting

Next meeting is scheduled for 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023, this may be rescheduled given proposed Christmas Fayre date.