

Aith Parent Council Meeting
Tuesday 1st June 2021 at 7 pm
via Webex

Present: Catherine Hughson, Duncan McWhannell, Frances Moffat, Jacqueline Johnston, Michael Spence, James Garrick, Ingrid Smith, Kirsty Smith, Sarah Quinell, Angela Leask

Apologies: Inga Irvine, Jimmy Mercer, Kirsty Nicolson

Matters Arising: Gardening equipment, RNIL Boat for nursery

1. Approval of Minutes, 09.03.21, Duncan McWhannell, Angela Leask

There was a generalisation noted in the last minutes, this was updated after the meeting and approved by the aforementioned members.

2. School update

Michael Spence:

Shetland dropped down to level 1 covid restrictions earlier last month. This affects the music teacher who can now move between the westside school on a daily basis.

Essential visitors to schools only (This may include, for example, educational psychology and outreach services, nurses and other health professionals, social workers, youth workers, Skills Development Scotland advisors, outdoor learning specialists, Active Schools Staff, and those providing direct therapeutic support)

The primary 7 to secondary 1 transition will be two days on the 10th and 17th of June, the first in the leisure centre and the second within the school. As there is no parents' night for the parents and guardians to visit the school, the school is offering an info night through video conferencing on Vscene. Micheal is still hopeful parents that have not been to the school before will be able to come visit out-with school hours.

The ease of restrictions has allowed pupils to get out of the school more, some pupils have visted Michaels Wood and the harbour.

16 to 18 students are currently working towards a Duke of Edinburgh award, this involves volunteering and hiking activities (no camping - as this is against covid restrictions).

Youth worker Stewart Hornal from Youth Services has been given a position at the school on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays, to aid transitions and work with pupils in PSE workshops, Individual support, pupil council, princess trust and youth philanthropy initiative.

The primary departments composite classes for next year will be finalised this month. There will be a probationary teacher covering Mrs Goodlad's class, which is currently being covered by Mrs Mcniven and Mrs Leask.

The secondary has no staff changes.

Michael concluded every year the school has to propose 4 holidays, many of which are fixed. For the one floating day in 2022 Michael proposed the date Monday 23rd of May. This was verified with the Parent Council chair.

SQA update

James Garrick:

Secondary 4 have been working towards nat 4 and 5 qualifications. Due to school lockdowns the class have had limited time to work towards this, though the SQA are marking with quality over quantity and a more evidence based assessment.

The school staff are busy generating assessments that adheres to the standards of the SQA, this involves creating marking schemes, grading and collaborating with staff at the school and wider groups.

There will be no study leave for the secondary 4s, they will start at the Anderson High School on the 14th of June.

3. Space within the school and playground

Michael continued on from the school update to the third point on the agenda. Stating, Shona Thompson, executive manager for schools, has recently done a survey on the school which outlined the lack of space within the School. Michael first noted the 27 parking spaces, noting when he first came to the school in 2013 there was 44 staff and 32 daily maximum, this has now grown to 59 staff and 50 daily staff. Meaning there is a huge overspill onto the local businesses.

The growth of the school is an issue within the primary school, where the 2013 role was 63 split between 3 classes. This left space for ASN and class break out space. Now in 2021 there is a primary role of 103, making little space for privacy or ASN. Although, pupils requiring support are up fourfold, with these pupils being kept in Aith and not travelling to the Anderson High School or Bells Brae.

Other issues found with the building; no staff cloakroom, no meeting room, no pupil support, no counseling space, no music instructing space, no private dining space, no ventilation or window in the sick room and the staff toilets lead straight onto the main corridors. The dining hall is too busy, the primary cannot fit in all together.

The feedback from Shona came back to reveal the Aith school's ranking as 4th lowest, given the grade C - impeding functions of the school making Aith the lowest scoring secondary school.

Michael then told the council that two portacabins would be arriving at the school tomorrow(02.06.21). These will be used for ASN primary teaching space and ASN pupils. Michael admitted these were not the best.

Duncan then thanked Michael for his excellent report on the issue. then asked about the long-term use of the portacabins, how they would fare in the winter and how pupil friendly they will be. Michael then replied the portacabins have no toilets but do have excellent facilities: new doors, freshly painted walls and new interactive whiteboards.

Councilor Catherine Hughson replied saying the report on Aith will go into the government. There is still a lot of work to do and needs to be done soon, Catherine is hopeful to get other

councilors on board. Duncan noted as we are now aware of the extent of the problem, we can try to help and push the councilors to work on this issue.

Angela Leask asked where they could build extensions or new facilities. Michael replied he is thinking big and hopes for a reconfiguration of the school grounds that works for the school. Adding there is still hope to acquire the space between the school and the Aith shop for extra playground space for the primaries.

Ingrid Smith spoke on the topic, space is the biggest headache for staff. Although the building is kept in good condition by the pupils, the space is really a problem. When the school was designed the classroom sizes were a lot smaller. Ingrid concluded, incoming teachers often note how small the classrooms are.

After the meeting Michael spoke to Shona, who would be keen to attend a Parent Council Meeting in September to update parents and guardians on the topic.

4. Childcare

Duncan introduced the topic, Emma Chittick STEM Engagement Adviser is raising the issue of no local childcare on the westside. A survey on the topic will be going out soon and any input or viewpoints will be greatly appreciated. Michael replied, staff at the school often live out west but have to drive to scalloway for childcare and back before the school day starts, suggesting child care within the school would be ideal. Duncan replied with a concern for a centralised westside that will harm the other smaller schools.

5. Recent Fundraising

Received:

- Scottish Seafarms and Rearo Supplies - 16 laptops and a charging cart.
- VAS funding - Families on free school meals.
- Community Council Distribution grant:
 - Covid related purchases - visualisers, headsets, ipads etc.
 - Playground equipment, storage, diggers etc.

Applying:

- Viking Energy - Wheelchair accessible playground equipment.
- Invest in the West - Wheelchair accessible path down to the hockey pitch and trees

Duncan asked the committee for help for organising the application for these active grants, and will send out information via email.

6. AOCB

Gardening Equipment

James Garrick asked the Parent Council for funds for the school's Gardening Club. This would be gardening equipment between £200 - £250. This was agreed by the council, and backed up by Michael and Frances' praise of the Gardening Club.

RNLI play boat for nursery

Jacqueline Johnston alerted the Parent Council to a play boat bought last year before the nursery was complete. Jacqueline asked for someone to build and take the boat to the nursery. Angela asked if this could be a volunteering opportunity for some of the Duke of Edinburgh awards after school or in the craft and design workshop. Michael replied noting the lack of space in the workshop for large projects, but praised the offer and hoped they could find space out-with the school.

7. Next meeting

Duncan proposed 29th of September 2021, Michael agreed.