

Aith Junior High School Parent Council Meeting

Tuesday 15th September 2020 at 7pm

Via VScene

Present: Jacqueline Johnston, Angela Leask, Duncan McWhannell, Kirsty Nicolson, Frances Moffatt, Sarah Quinell, Lynn Rich, Ingrid Smith, Michael Spence, Erica Gadsby, James Garrick

Apologies: Inga Irvine, Hannah Unwin, Jimmy Mercer

Approval of Minutes: Jacqueline Johnston, Angela Leask

Matters Arising: Gift from Community Council

AGM

1. Annual Report by Jacqueline Johnston

Since Our last AGM which was on 10th September 2019

We have had 4 full meetings One each term with Covid restrictions meaning we had a larger than usual gap between meetings and making us change format to virtual meetings.

This hasn't been our only change we had our clerk Kirsty Nicolson stand down and Kirsty Smith take her place.

We had our annual fundraiser planned for spring which was meant to be a Bingo night which of course was cancelled.

And our co-opted member Betty stood down from her position at our last meeting and she will be greatly missed.

It hasn't all been bad though we put together a grant application to the community council participatory budget grant fund for accessible paths into our wooded area in the lower school grounds to open up the area for all students and were successful in getting through to the final stage the public vote but due to covid this has been put on hold.

During our meetings we have had visitations from local councillors, Neil Beattie from school meals and officials from Hayfield.

Members of the parent councils went to meet with officials at Hayfield on a couple of occasions regarding the provision of an English teacher for Aith secondary dept.

Jacqueline also attended the parent councils of Shetland biannual in November and Hayfield's planning meeting for the socially distanced schooling in June.

Even though we have been unable to fundraise this year we have £5452.63 in our account and have been able to purchase dictionaries, board games, chess sets and timers, outdoor storage boxes, play sand, a gymnastics mat, 2 mud kitchens and 6 blackboard MacBook's.

We would like to commend the secondary school staff for the work they put in with the S4's on the lead up to their prelims with after school clubs and the massive support they gave the pupils prior to what should have been the exam period and that extra dedication meant that when the worst happened and the children weren't able to sit their exams the teachers had the evidence to support the grades the children should have been able to achieve.

And well done to all staff in making this time of uncertainty for the children and parents on the return to schooling go so well. We know the amount of work that they had to do getting the school ready has been immense and Thank you for that.

I would encourage any of you to take on the role of pc chair, as it is really rewarding and absolutely worth the work.

Ingrid thanked the parents for their hard work supporting the children throughout the lockdown and returning to school.

Chair Resignation by Jacqueline Johnston

Due to now working full time as well as studying I feel I do not have enough time to give to the role of chair so will be stepping down at the AGM.

I have been a member of the parent council for over 10 years and have been chair since 2014 so have seen the school go through more challenges than the present covid one and now as before I see the school pulling together being stronger and getting on with the job in hand which is helping to produce happy well educated children.

I have really enjoyed my time on the PC and have huge appreciation for my two fellow joint chairs firstly Jane and latterly Angela and vice chair Jimmy each with our own strengths we have made a great team! It's really due to the dedication of our past and previous clerks Sally and both Kirsty's that have kept me going so long you have all been amazing!

2. Selection of Parent Council Officers and Members

Along with Jacqueline's resignation Angela expressed her resignation as Co-Chair, due to time restraints with her young daughter fulltime work and family. Suggesting someone with more time would be able to attend more meetings and have more to give to the council. Both Jacqueline and Angela would like to stay members without the role of Co-Chair.

Jimmy Mercer has stated he would like to stay as Vice-Chair.

As no one has expressed interest in the Chair role the Parent Council will continue the discussion via the Facebook group.

Kirsty Nicolson indicated the online meetings may encourage more parents to join the Parent Council. Expressing parents may feel more comfortable or may be unable to attend in person, additionally due to the digital format both parents could be able to attend meetings.

3. Discussion of issues the Parent Council would like to raise

Looking back over the last year the Parent Council has accomplished almost everything it has set out to do. This past year's fundraising has been put on hold due to the lockdown and covid restrictions, however the Parent Council will work to raise funds for the school this coming year.

4. Action Plan

Both the Parent Council Constitution and Action Plan needs revising this year. As there is a change in the council's committee the chairs have decided to leave this for the next meeting and the new Parent Council.

Parent Council Meeting

5. School Update

COVID plan for lockdown, blended learning, and then return to school.

Community council has funded the Parent Council to supply the school with products to support social distancing, hygiene and encouraging outdoor classes. The items chosen are visualisers (project an image of an object, document, picture etc. onto the projector screen so that students can see it so teachers can stay 2m

away from pupils), 8x picnic benches made by local woodworker Peter Nicolson (to encourage pupils and classes to sit outside) and plastic storage boxes for the primary.

The Aith Early Years has changed its name back to Aith Nursery. The nursery will stay in the hall until Wednesday the 30th September to then re-open on Wednesday 28th October in the new Nursery within the school. The new Nursery will consist of the teacher Kerry Geddes, senior practitioner Sarah Quinnell, practitioners Donna Robertson and Catherine Henry, support workers Emma McKay, Emily Carter, Rory Cummings and Catherine Robertson and Learning Support Workers Kelly Tait and Maree Deans.

In staffing news our new English teacher Julie Crossan starts Monday 21 September working 4 days a week as English teacher and one day as literacy support for the westside primaries.

The post of PE teacher has become available and has been advertised, in the meantime Elaine Drakeford is the supply teacher.

The Learning Support Worker post has also been advertised.

Other new staff is: Music – Dr Alistair Justice, Chemistry – Gordon Stove, and Primary 4/5 – Mandy Anderson.

The school is looking into plans to continue staying safe during the pandemic. Recently the school has questioned how to have a safe parent's night under covid restrictions. As well as preparing for the next 'wave' of cases by investigating the learning tools pupils have access to at home – parents will expect a questionnaire from the school on this matter. In the instance a pupil will have to quarantine during school term, the school is equipped to support digitized learning and paper material where required.

SQA Exam results were of good attainment this year. James Garrick then discussed the government's use of school averages and prelim grades as exam results, which was then u-turned, and the teachers estimate was reinstated. Resulting in many pupils attaining a higher grade than previously given.

Michael then added to the praise of the students, the S1 home economics class was the best the teacher had seen, due to the lockdown the pupils had been cooking and baking at home.

6. Approval of PC Social Media Policy

The Parent Council social media policy has been sent out to all members for comments and suggestions, to be approved at the next meeting.

7. ACOB

James expanded on the Community Council's covid related highlighting the thousand pounds that is left from the first purchases. He then suggested the Parent Council sending out vouchers to low income families, as the community council had offered vouchers to local shops to residents over 70. Additionally, praising the visualisers as a social distancing tool and a great learning tool in the classrooms.

There was discussion between the council members on how feasible the vouchers for low income families could be. Resulting in James considering using the school to contact free-school-meal pupils to then offer the voucher. Duncan raised the issue of confidentiality within small communities and their amenities, implying a Tesco or co-op voucher would be more anonymous while opening the options to school supplies or clothing. Michael informed the Parent Council on the school handing out art supplies during the lockdown to those families without or unable to supply tools for art and design. Suggesting the money could be spent on school supplies to support learning during another lockdown or in quarantine. The decision was then made for the accepting families to receive a Tesco voucher.

Jacqueline raised the issue of the school goals, offering to purchase new goals for the multi-court as the old goals have pieces missing and are unsuitable for use. Adding this is usually brought up at the Pupil Council meetings as a priority.

The Parent Council would like to speak to the Pupil Council again to support and help them in any needs/wants or fundraising. James highlighted the youth worker Stewart Hornal who had been working with the pupil council towards the Participative Democracy Certificate.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will likely be in the next term, the exact date will be decided by the new chairs.

The meeting ended with a wholehearted thank you and goodbye to our hard-working co-chairs Jacqueline Johnston and Angela Leask.

9. Continued conversation outwith the meeting

Duncan McWhannell has offered to take up the post as chair, Kirsty Nicolson has offered to take up the position as treasurer. This has been proposed by Jacqueline Johnson, and seconded by Erica Gadsby.