

Aith Parent Council Meeting

Wednesday 24th January 2022 at 7 pm

via Webex

Present: Duncan McWhannell, Frances Moffat, Michael Spence, James Garrick, Ingrid Smith, Kirsty Smith, Ingrid Smith, Erica Gadsby

Guests: Catherine Hughson (Councillor Shetland West)

Apologies: Martin Dodd, Inga Irvine

AOCB: Update from Shona Thompson, Aith School Centenary, Applying for funds: Ipad

Parent Council Meeting

1. Approval of minutes, 29.09.21

1st Ingrid Smith, 2nd Duncan McWhannell

2. School Update

Michael Spence

The musical performance of Jack and the beanstalk went very well. A major organisation by multiple staff: Art and Design, Technical, Music departments as well as the Primary teachers and support workers and local visitors Marsali and Izzy. All primary pupils took part in the play, the Secondary pupils played music and created backdrops and props. The play was filmed, with a video link going out to Parents/Carers before the Christmas holidays.

Parent Evening information:

S1 monitoring – Term 2 (S1 reports next term and Parents/Carers evening 6 June)

S2 reports – Term 1 (S2 monitoring this week) S2 Parents/Carers evening 2 March)

S3 monitoring - Term 1 (S3 reports this term – Parents/Carers evening 10 march)

S4 reports - Term 2 (S4 Parents/Carers' evening – November) S4 post prelim monitoring after prelims

Primary Parents/Carers night in November ran as a tester for the school, Parents/Carers had the choice of an in-person visit or a phone - 70% in-person others phone call. Feedback from Parents/Carers said 83% thought 10 minute meeting time was fine, with the rest asking for

15 minutes. The response from the school was that Parents/Carers are free to contact the school at any point.

Laptops:

Laptops that were funded through Parent Council Application to Cooke Aquaculture are now up and running. This has been valued by staff and pupils as pupils now have a laptop each.

Covid cases:

There were a few COVID cases before Christmas and again since Christmas, we have had less than 10 cases that we know of. Low-risk letters will be shared with Parents/Carers of children in Primary or Secondary with the class indicated.

Mitigations in place:

- The use of face coverings for school staff and secondary pupils (some pupils require daily reminders to wear their face coverings correctly – please can you remind your children of the importance of wearing a face covering.)
- 2-metre physical distancing requirements for staff in school and nursery
- The use of hand sanitisers regularly throughout the school day;
- Daily hand sanitisation for all children and young people on arrival at school
- Enhanced daily cleaning during the school day and further cleaning is undertaken daily at the end of each day;
- Parents/Carers continue to be advised to avoid contact with other Parents/Carers, children and young people at the school entrance, on the way to school, and after school as well as wearing face coverings;
- Careful monitoring to ensure the appropriate level of ventilation and adequate airflow throughout the building with CO2 monitors deployed, monitoring the level of CO2, and temperature in classrooms;
- Access to asymptomatic, lateral flow, testing kits for all school and early learning and childcare staff and secondary aged learners. It is strongly recommended that adults and secondary pupils test at least twice a week.

Staff can now work in more than one school per day. We have a couple of staff that are affected by this and welcome the change.

Essential visitors in School (ultimate decision left to head-teacher to decide)

Retirement

Our Head Cook, Maria Anderson, will be retiring at the end of January after working in the School Canteen for 34 years and being Head Cook for 28 of those years. Lynn Stedden will replace her as Head Cook, feedback from canteen staff think they'll be fine.

Staffing Changes

New Nursery teacher Jennifer Munro will start next week, working 2 and a half days a week. She has experience as a ASN and primary teacher.

P5/6 teacher – Kirsten Smith starting maternity – Bronwyn Smith covering until Summer.

School Photos

The primary classes have had their photos taken and these were distributed to pupils before Christmas. These were taken by one of the teachers - halving the price of the photographs (@£5).

Secondary pupils had to wear face coverings at that time and we plan to take their class photos outside later in the year.

Scottish Qualifications Authority

The SQA has produced an information booklet giving details of National Qualifications for 2021-22. S4 pupils have been given a paper copy of this document to share with parents.

S4 Prelims and Exams

We are planning for a prelim timetable starting on Monday 31 January for two weeks. The timetable for this has been issued to S4 pupils and parents.

The National 5 external exams begin on Wednesday 27 April and the dates for these can be found here [2022-exam-timetable](#).

Past exam papers and further information on qualifications can be found at the Scottish Qualifications Authority - SQA

Friday 25 February School Holiday

Monday 28 February School Holiday

Friday 1 April School closes at 2 pm for Easter Holidays

James Garrick added the prelims will be realistic practice for exams, but realistically it's squashed together. The Rankin Lounge will be used throughout.

Options

S2-S3 and S3-S4 option process has started.

Queries:

Duncan queried the school's notification of covid in schools to let the whole primary know, but not the whole school. Michael replied the local authorities' advice is to alert the class only, but we felt there was a need to inform the whole primary or secondary. The school is hoping to delay any fears and anxious feelings within the school. Michael then stated he would be happy to hear some feedback on the notification process

Duncan responded he didn't know how the notification system worked and assumed he was notified of secondary ones as well. He went on, personally, I want to be notified of any cases in the school, comforting to know there are so few.

Michael replied he was concerned Parents/Carers would be given too many notifications, but maybe be best to keep information out, more discussions are needed, and some Parents/Carers keep children off because of fears. Duncan replied Parents/Carers have the right to be provided with information. He then requested to consider alerting the whole school of a positive covid test. Michael responded he will get back to us in the coming weeks.

3. Council Funding for Inclusive Playparks

Duncan began by referring to a Shetnews article on the 12th of January, stating the council has been given the grant to upgrade playparks to be more inclusive. Councillor Catherine Hughson responded the SIC has been granted £28,000, which is realistically 1 piece of equipment - very expensive, no play areas listed specifically but Lerwick King Harrold street playpark has been mentioned. There is still a lot of work to do but the council has agreed to accept the money but the official process has not started. Catherine then mentioned there is potentially more money next year - up to £70,000.

Duncan quoted the article up to £300,000 was available. The money would be very beneficial to Aith school, he then asked Catherine if Aith school could be mentioned in discussions? Catherine replied as the Aith school has asked for enhanced provision there is no harm in recommending Aith to be considered - Neil Watt is the head of Sports and Leisure at Hayfield and he would be the one to speak to.

Duncan said we could ask Shona Thompson. Michael agreed, when we look at a school it is not only the inside but the outside too. Frances added there are already conversations within the community, people looking for a committee to move the playpark to a more central area. The interest for a more inclusive playpark in Aith is definitely out there.

4. Air Filters in Classrooms

Duncan asked the school representatives: some schools down south are being offered air filters in school, has this been considered in the school? Michael replied the local authority is not pursuing air filters, this has been discussed in parliament but no push from the Scottish government.

Parent Council member Erica Gadsby added research from public health has no great deal of evidence for cost-effective air filtration. These systems are very hard to get right, and conditions have to be right for them to work properly. The windows may be hard to stay open but are way more effective.

Primary representative Ingrid Smith replied the windows open in the winter may be a challenge. In the teacher union meeting last week this was mentioned as very expensive and might not be beneficial.

Duncan concluded the topic by asking for any updates please let us know.

5. How to Provide School Meal Feedback?

A request from parent feedback regarding school meals, not sure how to provide feedback to the school. In this incident, a pupil had described pizza as a grease pool.

Michael replied the canteen has to keep to certain guidelines, not managed by school but by Neil Beattie, people can go directly to him or through the Parent Council or school management meals team. In the past asked pupils what they liked, more chicken more pasta, eat it - enjoyed it more and the school found there was less waste, although this was before school meals were microscopically managed/standardised by the government. Michael suggested that the parent council could put out a feedback form to the Parents/Carers and pupils, and get responses from Parents/Carers and pupils.

Erica mentioned how much waste is interesting, making sure pupils can get feedback is very important. Duncan agreed, pupils should have feedback. He then suggested we go with a Parent Council questionnaire survey to Parents/Carers first -system feedback from kids carefully managed. response to query go with a survey to Parents/Carers first

Frances replied a survey to Parents/Carers would be discussed with the children. Duncan agreed. Michael offered to give out data, on how many takes packed lunch/school dinners.

James mentioned it's difficult for Parents/Carers to see the situation of the canteen, as many children are fussy, not very hungry or rush to get out and play. Duncan replied trends in the survey could be useful and help those working in the canteen. Michael agreed he and the canteen staff would like to hear feedback.

6. Nursery Pirate Ship

Angela Lleask was not present at the meeting but later emailed to ask if the Parent Council would pay for paint and accessories for a pirate ship being gifted to the nursery (up to £110). This request was approved by Duncan.

7. AOCB

a. Update from Shona Thompson

Duncan has been in touch with Shona for an update on the Advanced Provision. The 'business case' for Aith school is currently being created to be presented to the council. Shona has recently been in touch with a company called Keegan's which will visit all the schools making comprehensive reports for the enhanced provision for the schools. They will be visiting the Aith School on the 7th of February and will review the whole building as well as the outdoor space.

James replied he is interested to know the outcome of this visit. Catherine responded that Keegans have reviewed the care homes across Shetland and wrote very impressive reports on the state of the buildings, in Catherine's experience the company have been 'approachable and good listeners'.

Catherine commented these things often take a long while to get through the councils 'business cases'. Duncan asked if there was any chance of immediate provisions. Michael replied the meeting with Keegans will happen in early February, and then discussions will happen in the school.

Duncan then asked if there has been any updates on the steps for the portacabin. Michael responded this will be covered during the visit.

b. Aith School Centenary

James asked the Parent Council - the school is looking for a way to celebrate 100 years of the Aith school and 40 years of the building, tree planting has been mentioned any other ideas? Michael replied teas have been suggested also a celebration of the history of Aith. This would be a great way to raise the profile of the school when advocating for advanced provision. Catherine replied Ian Robinson has done some work for Whiteness school's birthday recently. Duncan responded it would be good to get in contact with other schools to see how they have celebrated or to ask Parents/Carers on the Facebook page.

c. Applying for funds: I pads

Duncan mentioned he is starting the process of applying for a grant that would pay for 10 I pads for the school. Michael replied this would be exceedingly beneficial to the school as the ones used are 8 years old and used daily. Used for literary, maths and projects they increase communication skills and promote social equality.

8. Date of Next Meeting

To be decided.