

**Aith Parent Council Meeting**  
**Wednesday 25th November 2020 at 7 pm**  
**via Webex**

Present:

Inga Irvine, Jacqueline Johnston, Duncan McWhannell, Frances Moffat, Kirsty Nicolson, Ingrid Smith, Michael Spence, Erica Gadsby, Jimmy Mercer, James Garrick, Inga Irvine, Beatrice Wishart

Apologies: Lynn Rich, Angela Leask, Sarah Quinell

Approval of 15.09.20 Minutes: Duncan McWhannell

Matters Arising: Playground feedback

1. Approval

Action Plan: Duncan Whannell, Erica Gadsby

Social Media Policy: Duncan Whannell, Jaqueline Johnston

2. School Update

Nursery Build completed, teachers and pupils have settled in well. Parents have not yet been able to visit due to the covid restrictions on visitors.

Hot school meals are now being served, with more pupils taking a school lunch than last term when the pupils were given a cold lunch. The hot lunch is placed on the table for the older pupils to help themselves and the younger classes are served by canteen helpers. Lunchtime has been made safer by perspex screens and the staggered times.

The school will be offering milk again to the pupils as the Scottish government has pledged to replace the past funding from the EU.

The school is bustling with student teachers, there is currently one in Primary 4 and 5, Biology and in nursery.

Attendance for the school is much the same as last year, showing the school has not been affected by coronavirus. In the recent past a few children took time off anxious about covid spreading around local schools, though this has not affected the school this term.

The school is ever expanding, with only 20 less pupils than Sandwick. Two portacabins will be placed near the canteen entrance for additional support needs. In the long term, an extension will be needed for the 3 students within the school.

Shetland Youth Services is still visiting the school. Stewart Hornal has been working with the secondary pupils towards the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the Achieve program.

The school improvement plan has been sent out to parents. This includes the results of the home learning surveys done with parents and another with pupils, Slideshows internet speeds, access to technology and the effect of home learning on pupils education. Over half of the answers showing the families would have difficulties with another lockdown. In the past lockdown about 10 laptops were handed to pupils unable to access digital school work otherwise.

Jimi brought up the issue with his fluctuating internet speeds, finding daytime to be especially slow. Michael addressed this problem, bringing up the possibility of a video call classroom and the small-percentage of pupils that would be unable to attend due to bad connections.

James then added;

SQA has been slow to make decisions on what needs changing and whether the exams will take place. The slow rollout of information from the SQA is having an effect on pupils and teachers who are trying their best to get evidence based work ready and study for the exams. James then placed emphasis on the use of national 4s and 5s as preparation for highschool.

1 way system throughout the school has been successful.

### 3. Fundraising Ideas

Duncan instigated the topic noting, due to recent events fundraising this year will be updated to suit COVID restrictions. Erica Gadsby spoke about the increased use of online auctions due to their success, stating a recent one she was involved in raised over £2,500. Duncan then offered his idea to get pupils directly involved in fundraising, a treasure hunt for kids around aith and the local areas, where kids could pay to partake and win prizes. Kirsty Nicolson then added a suggestion for an online quiz to become a sociable form of fundraising, where the funds could be raised in an entrance fee. Frances agreed on all the ideas but suggested the online actions are a little overdone and the more different ideas might get more people involved.

### 4. COVID Grant Expenditure

Duncan introduced the item, asking if the money could be spent in the secondary department. James replied all recent purchases have been utilized all over the school, though if the Parent Council would like to aim the older pupils there is a need for footballs and webcams for in class. Ingrid echoed James's reply stating the webcams would be a success across the school, noting her classes use of webcams to meet with teachers from other classes and learning Mandarin with teachers in China.

Duncan agreed, stating the money available would be clarified for a list to be brought together for items then to be purchased.

### 5. Beatrice Wishart MSP Q&A

Beatrice introduced her role in the Education and skills committee, where she worked to amend the recent SQA debacle and made the steps to prevent it in the future. More recently she has been writing up legislation to financially aid abuse in care survivors. Beatrice then discussed the issue of slow internet speeds, stating digital inequality is a problem affecting all of Scotland. Ending her introduction by asking for questions.

First Duncan asked if there would be additional support for teachers and pupils having to isolate or in a future lockdown. Beatrice replied by bringing awareness to the local authorities responsibility to organise support.

James then told Beatrice how well the pupils fitted back into normal school life. Ingrid then confirmed James' statement, adding south schools might be different but the pupils are glad to be in school as many found online schooling challenging. James agreed, making Beatrice aware of the children's determination to stay safe and avoid another lockdown. He then stated the staff are having trouble following the everchanging and often delayed guidelines. Beatrice confirmed the rules do change a lot as the new research is published and many scientists disagree. Micheal replied most of the only 31% of teachers felt safe in their jobs. James added all teachers are front line staff yet will not be getting the vaccine any time soon. Beatrice replied the plan is to keep the school open, and over time there will be vaccines for the teachers.

The conversation was then changed to the subject of University. James began with a worry about the young students coming home after testing and quarantining at home, or not following advice. Beatrice echoed James' worry and stated the students can stay at university or come home, as they

are inside student flats most of the time she thinks most will follow advice so they can see family and friends safely.

Jimmy added to the topic of university by asking about the tests to get into a degree, specifically The Law National Aptitude Test. Stating the Shetland pupils wanting to study will have to do this test which is held in Edinburgh. Beatrice replied stating there are exceptions for going through zones, as she did not know these rules off her head she would find out and email them to Jimmy.

Jacquiline asked Beatrice about the effect of the lack of exams on new 5th year students. Beatrice replied stating the Scottish Government is determined to sit exams this year, although it is not finalised how they will sit exams - the SQA have till February to decide. Micheal added that late decision making has a huge impact on staff, Jimmy added the impact is great on the students sitting prelims in March and getting the evidence based work ready.

Duncan asked Beatrice if more teachers would be employed in reaction to COVID. Beatrice replied half have been recruited already. Duncan added the teachers are working through the holidays to and in constant training for rolling out the new regulations.

Duncan then thanked Beatrice for her time and exchanged email for Beatrice to send further information.

#### 6. AOCB

Jacquiline made the council aware of an email sent from Tesco asking for a 5 year update from the playground amenities that they in part funded for the parent council. The company asked for photographs and statements from the school. Michael then said he would have the office staff look into it as a parent council member would not be able to visit the school at this time.

On the subject of playground equipment James praised the wooden mud kitchens recently purchased by the Parent Council for the primary and nursery children.