

-Parent Council meeting

Held via Webex

7pm on 25th of May 2022

Present:

Duncan McWhannell- Chair

Michael Spence - Head teacher

Jimmy Mercer- Vice chair

James Garrick -Secondary representative

Angela Leask

Francis Moffat- Primary representative

Jacqueline Johnston

Liz Peterson – Westside councillor

Inga Irvine

John Leask- Westside Councillor

Apologies:

Kirsty Smith

Welcome

Duncan welcomed the councillors to their first parent council meeting and thanked them for attending. Jacqueline is taking minutes as Kirsty was unable to attend.

1. **Approval of minutes, 26.01.22**- Frances and Duncan approved and seconded last minutes.
2. **School update**- Michael gave school update
 - Covid

During 2022 we have had a fair bit of disruption in school due to staff absence, mainly due to Covid. This term is slightly less due to the changes in Covid restrictions.

- Parent information.

Parent's nights:

Primary + S4 parents in November – in person.

S2 online parents - March – mostly positive feedback – some technical issues for some parents and staff. 50:50 on the return to in person parents evening.

S3 online parents – March – mainly positive feedback with some technical issues. 70% would like to move back to in person.

S1 reports have recently gone out.

S1 parents' evening – Monday 6 June – at present 85% are coming in person and 15% with phone calls.

School open day – Saturday 4 June – primary teachers will be in classes.

- I-pads

Funding from Shetland community benefit fund and 29 ipads and cases have been ordered.

- Staffing

Miss Chance will finish her Newly qualified teacher year in July 2022 and we wish her well in her career.

- School Roll – 2022-23

We are predicting 108 in Secondary 109 in primary and 25 in nursery. We will continue to have 5 classes in primary. Composite class teachers and pupils are being finalised.

- School Photos

S4 class photos have been taken and we plan to take other Secondary classes in the coming weeks.

- S4 Exams

These are nearly finished. We still have Art & Design and Computing to finish off.

Friday 3 June	School Holiday
Friday 1 July	Last day of term before Summer holiday.
Monday 15 August	Staff back in school
Wednesday 17 August	Pupils start back

- Timetable for 2022-23

The new timetable started on Monday 9 May.

3. **Responsibility of secondary pupils: e.g. can they go to shop during school time?**

James said this has been a rule for a long time and generally pupils weren't allowed to the shop during school time unless they asked permission and had good reason e.g left lunch at home, the only time this was relaxed was during the exam period for the S4 pupils. It had been felt it wouldn't be encouraged due to issues that may arise such as peer pressure to buy items which may impact pupils who receive free school meals. Michael said a recent report had said with the current cost of living crisis it now cost an additional £400 a year per family of two school age children. James said the shop may not want to be inundated by pupils at break times in case of allegations of shoplifting and we had to be mindful of exposure of covid to vulnerable members of the community. Michael said it was felt that pupils would not make healthy food choices as this had been the case recently when S4 pupils brought back sweets and coke. Duncan said maybe if more trust was put on the pupils and it was a regular occurrence they would be less likely buy treat items. Jimmy said all other secondary's on the mainland allowed pupils to leave the school at break time and he couldn't see what the issue would be, that surely the bairns needed to be trusted. James said if the rule changed what would the boundaries be, could they have access to the whole village including the marina, beach and pier? Liz asked what would happen if a child was hit by a car would the school be liable? Michael said other schools who allow children to leave the school receive regular complaints from the community of anti-social behaviour. Michael

said there was a hope that the leisure centre would return to allowing the senior pupils to spend breaks at the centre where they had access to vending machines and social space. Duncan suggested that it could be a trial for the fourth years to have access to the shop and they would be given the warning that if any complaints were made that the pass would be revoked. This of course would only happen if the shop were in agreement and further discussion should be had about this. ACTION- Contact shop feedback at next PC meeting.

4. Discussion of invisible line in playground and inability of siblings to mix during breaks.

Duncan said this was a direct question from a parent and had been a recurring one during his time with the parent council. Michael responded that this was common in most schools where children keep to class groups and if a pupil wanted to see a sibling they would not be stopped, they just needed to ask the playground supervisor. It was generally done for safety of the younger children as they were around in the area furthest away from cars and the larger play equipment, the school only has two playground supervisors and the lay out of the grounds make it difficult to see more than one area at a time. ACTION- Duncan said he would feed this back to the parent who had asked.

5. Discussion of the “Celebration of Achievement”: how is the school supporting and encouraging *all* pupils?

Michael said there was no planned open event this year due to high school numbers of over 100 children in each department so instead there may be some form of end of year assembly for pupils. When it does happen it will not be in the same format as in the past. Duncan asked where does the school get its advice on such things? Michael said that Education Scotland issued guidance on good practice on celebrating achievements in an inclusive way.

6. Is the use of “traffic light system” and terms like “Golden time” still valid in 2022?

Duncan said this had come as a direct question from a parent and related to the removal of golden time when used as a threat to behave well and how does this fit with article 31- The right to play and was this time to re assess? Michael said that learning that certain behaviours leads to consequences was an important. Liz agreed saying that children need to learn about consequences in order to prepare for real life. Jimmy stated that good behaviour is often ignored so “Golden time” was a useful tool as it rewarded good behaviour. Duncan asked where do schools get guidance on this and who’s responsibility is it when setting up things like golden time. Michael said the curriculum is set by government and it is up to each school to plan on delivery and what schemes are used, staff development happens at “In service” training and after school meetings. Frances added the school was lucky with having a bigger staff group so they could share good practice, they also used resources like the Scottish primary Facebook page to share and develop new ideas. The second part of the question was about the traffic light system and its usefulness, Jacqueline asked what the traffic light system was, Michael said it was the system used by the younger children when evaluating their own work e.g. marking something red if they were finding something hard and struggling so the teachers were able to give further help and guidance. Duncan wasn’t sure if this had been what the parent question had been about, James suggested occasionally at break times a red card yellow card system (as in football) was used by the janitor to give a warning if pupils were pushing boundaries of behaviour. ACTION- Duncan said he would approach the parent again feedback and get clarification and if need be bring this up at the next PC meeting.

7. How is the school identifying and supporting the increasing numbers of pupils suffering greater anxiety and other effects of the pandemic? Do they have access to councillors?

James said there was a noticeable increase in anxiety since the start of the pandemic. A youth worker is now situated at the school 3 days a week and as part of their role they assist with Duke of Edinburgh, Princes Trust Achieve and "Let's introduce anxiety management". The school councillor, CALMS, the school nurse and Mind Your Head early help team all visit the school at different times. Initiatives like "Soft starts" lunch clubs, refuge spots, Enhanced transitions, down time periods, pupil support meetings and pastoral care all happen within the school in some form. The school is able to put systems in place as soon as they are aware of an issue. One of the ways issues are identified is through health and wellbeing self-evaluation feedback which is age specific, for the younger children this may be through the sad face happy face forms. There is teacher liaison with families and feedback is generally positive but there is no quick resolutions as services are not always available and there is a waiting list for school counselling due to lack of staffing which does cause some frustrations. Liz said the demand for such services has probably sky rocketed in the last two years and there aren't enough counsellors to go around. Duncan asked if the SIC were prioritising this issue and looking to recruit more counsellors Liz answered this was a National issue.

8. Suggestion to pause all homework for the rest of the summer term to allow pupils to socialise more after school to counter restriction of the last two years.

Michael said there was no plan to do this, as homework helps with attainment. In 2018 a homework survey was sent to pupils and parents this resulted in 80% being in favour of homework. Duncan said it would be interesting to see the outcome of such a survey now after several episodes of home-schooling. Jimmy stated in his opinion it would be a bad idea to cut back on homework as education had been affected due to the pandemic especially literacy and numeracy and this needed to be addressed. Michael said generally in the summer term there was a reduction in formal homework within the primary setting.

9. Provision of sanitary bins for pupils.

3 sanitary bins are provided by the school, this leads to anxiety as it may be obvious why someone is waiting on a particular cubicle or in the primary dept using the different toilet altogether. Duncan was aware of one pupil who feels unable to attend the school at regular intervals due to this. Michael said it costs £800 a year for this provision as there is only one contractor able to do the disposal of these items and this would be increasing to £1100 with the addition of another bin. The Scottish government were providing free period products but the cost of disposal was being met by the schools from their education budgets. Michael said there had been discussion with Shona Thompson and she was taking this to a higher level and had put means of cheaper safe disposal as an outstanding query to Fiona Johnson (Health and safety). Liz asked that all the details be forwarded to her and she would look into this as she felt that this should not come out of the schools own budget. ACTION-school to provide info for Liz

10. Fundraising-

Duncan asked for fundraising ideas. Angela suggested an online book/toy auction, it would need a bit of work to sort out the lots and take photographs. Duncan said last years on line auction was successful. ACTION- open this up to the wider parent forum.

11. AOCB

- James asked the parent council to provide more footballs, Angela volunteered to organise this. ACTION –Angela to purchase balls

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- Jacqueline asked if there had been any progress on getting new signatories for the cheque book, Duncan said he hasn't been aware of anything coming through yet. ACTION- Jacqueline to contact Kirsty Smith.
- Liz wanted it noted that the school are doing a fantastic job and she and John would endeavour to support it in any way they could in their time on the council.
- Next meeting will be in the new school year, No date set at this time.