

**Minutes of Bell's Brae Primary School Parent Council
Held on Microsoft Teams
On Monday 20th September 2021 at 7.00pm**

Present

David Thomson	Chairperson
Louise Sandison	Vice Chair
Katrina Nicolson	Parent Member
Sarah Moore	Parent Member
Caroline Henderson	Parent Member
Anne-Lise Anderson	Parent Member
Laurie Pottinger	Parent Member
Marianne Masson	Parent Member
Sally Christey-Henry	Parent Member
Susan Lipthorpe	Parent Member

In Attendance

Jennifer Wadley	Head Teacher
Dawn Ratter	Clerk
Cllr John Fraser	Councillor

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Kerri Redfern, Rebecca Sim, Cllr Peter Campbell, Cllr Stephen Flaws and Cllr Amanda Hawick.

2. Approval of the previous minutes (Wednesday 26th May 2021)

The minutes of the last meeting were approved by Sarah Moore and seconded by Katrina Nicolson.

3. Review of matters and actions arising from previous minutes

Donation towards P7 Leaver's Hoodies

The donation of £235 has been paid into the School Fund.

4. Treasurer's Report

The available balance is £1,933.31. An admin grant of £170 from Shetland Islands Council has been approved.

5. Staffing update

- Teacher of Primary 0.4 FTE (temporary) – Kiara Barradas has been appointed to this vacancy. Kiara is doing 1 day in the P2s class to release Leah Henry (probationer supporter) and 1 day cover in the P5n class to release Nicole Douglas (probationer).
- Early Years Practitioner - 1 day – currently advertised. The person currently in post has been appointed to a different post within the school, leaving a 3 day vacancy. Two of these days are being covered by existing staff who have increased their hours.
- PE Teacher – Kerri Redfern's secondment to AHS has been extended until Christmas. James Soper continue to cover this post until Christmas.
- Emotional Support Officer (New Post - temporary) – This is a new post and is unique to Bell's Brae. An opportunity arose to bid for funding through the Charitable Trust. At the time there were Counselling in Schools was being introduced for pupils aged

10 and over who have experienced trauma. Jennifer explained she feels that pupils who have experienced trauma need to be supported before the turn age 10. She contacted Jane Cluness who works in the Emotional and Resilience Project within Children's Services to ask her thoughts on having someone based in the school to provide early intervention and support to pupils who have experienced trauma and to support their families. They have agreed to fund a full time post for 2 years. Vicky Anderson has been appointed this post. Vicky is currently working up some documentation which can be shared with the parent body and the community around trauma. There are a lot of different forms of trauma and effects of trauma. The school are keen for people to start speaking about the impact of trauma and how it impacts on pupils and families. Vicky comes with a wealth of experience who previously worked for the Bridges Project. She has a Community Development degree and experience working with young people and families who have experienced trauma. She is a great asset to the school. The idea with family support will be around trying to help families understand the impact of trauma and to understand that some of the behaviours they might be seeing or the school might be seeing are linked to experiences the pupils may have had and that their behaviour is their way of communicating that they might be struggling. This is an exciting post for the school.

David noted it is fantastic about the Emotional Support Officer post, this will be incredibly valuable for the school, pupils and families. Other Parent Members noted this is a really worthwhile project, and catching them at a younger age will benefit them in the future.

Jennifer highlighted the impact COVID has had on the staff in the school. Since the return to school there has been a huge number of staff absences and the pressure this puts on the service is unbelievable. Jennifer explained it wouldn't be so bad if there was supply staff available to cover the absences but there are occasions where the school are contacting everyone on the supply list and no one is available to cover. This is having an implication, there has been a high level of pupil absence in the last 2 weeks and this is how the school have managed to continue to provide a service. Jennifer attended a Head Teacher's meeting today and all schools are facing the same challenges. There has been conversations in the past around the lack of supply staff available and it was difficult then but it certainly more difficult now. Jennifer said she has mentioned to School's Service staff that it might be time to put out some messaging to the wider Shetland community around the difficulties with staffing and she fears that it might not be COVID that puts schools back to remote-learning but the lack of available staff across the school estate.

A parent raised concerns around the number of job shares and teachers their child has had during their time at school. As a parent this causes concerns around the lack of consistency in class for pupils. She feels that the continual job shares in the same class could be detrimental to their education. Jennifer thanked the parent for raising their concerns and advised they will keep an eye on this for the particular class and think carefully which teacher is allocated to this specific class for the next school year. Jennifer explained that job shares can be difficult and they need two teachers who are really committed to communicating together. There are advantages and disadvantages to a job share – there are some who see real value in a job share situation and believe pupils receive the best of both skill sets and have two perspectives on teacher judgment. The key is the school want every member of staff to build a relationship with pupils and to give their best. She noted they do try to restrict the number of job-shares in the school.

6. COVID

Jennifer noted the support received from the parent body has been phenomenal. The support has been exceptional and this is really appreciated by all staff in the school. Jennifer said

they are missing getting parents into the school and they are hopeful they will be able to hold the Learner Led Event in school in November.

There has been a huge impact on the school community and learners through pandemic. Jennifer noted they are seeing some pupils coming back who are struggling with social play, mental health, lacking resilience. Not everyone was able to engage with learning at home which has had an impact on attainment for some pupils. The school are carefully monitoring this and trying to put in support where they can. There are families who have experienced difficulties through the pandemic. On a positive note, this has strengthened some relationships with families as the school have really got to know some of the issues they are dealing with but there needs to be recognition that some families have found the pandemic a big challenge.

The impact on staff is huge, Jennifer explained they are 5 weeks into the new term and staff are exhausted. There is constant change and it is not business as usual. They are facing high numbers of staff absence and everyone is feeling uncertainty of what is to come. Staff still need to maintain 2m social distancing and are not able to all come together as a team. This is a huge concern for the school.

On a positive note, the Breakfast Club has restarted and the Study Club is up and running again which is superb. The class bubbles has been reduced to allow pupils back into the canteen. There are still staggered break times in place with P1-4 and P5-7. Things are moving in the right direction but Jennifer wanted to make the Parent Council aware of how the school are finding the COVID restrictions in the setting.

7. Cost of the School Day (attached)

This is documentation that the school have been asked to share with parents by the Schools Service. Jennifer said this is something they are very aware of in school and there has been a lot of discussion over the last few years. They are fully aware of the situation some families are in and the cost of living isn't easy for some families. There are a number of things the school are doing to help:

- **Breakfast Club** – this is free to all pupils. It is absolutely lovely. Some pupils come to have their breakfast, or a second breakfast and some attend to socialise or check in with a member of staff. It is very popular and there is no stigma attached to it.
- **Study Club** - this is free to all pupils. Pupils have the opportunity to catch up with some support staff, catch up on homework or play games with other pupils.
- **Stationary Packs** – every pupil has been provided with a stationary pack.
- **Waterproof Clothing** – these have been provided for all pupils in P1-4. There are discussion ongoing at the moment around providing these for all pupils. Jennifer encouraged any family who is having difficulty providing waterproof clothing/footwear for their child to contact the school. The school are keen to promote outdoor play/learning and they are trying their best to think about the cost and mitigate against it as far as possible.
- **Fundraising** – the school are very aware for some families £1 a week might be a lot of money. Communication regarding fundraising is worded very carefully, to ensure families do not feel pressured into contributing if they are not in a position to do so.

The Early Help Team based at Hayfield House are available to help families who are experiencing financial hardship and may require support with food parcels, clothing or accessing benefits.

David noted there is no question that this is becoming more and more of an issue. Relative poverty and absolute poverty are evident locally. There was a discussion on the Parent Council position on this topic:

1. Communication - Improve on communication with the Parent Form on promoting the support and services that are available to families who are facing financial hardship.
2. Fundraising/Social Events – Does having an entry fee to social events cause a barrier for some families? How can the Parent Council work around this to ensure everyone has equal opportunities to attend events but also fundraise to support the school?

Cllr John Fraser raised awareness and asked parents to be mindful of the poverty of opportunity for some pupils. This could be more around how the household income is managed and possibly misappropriated due to other underlying conditions. This could result in some families living in kin to poverty. This is particularly relevant to admissions fees for social events.

Cllr John Fraser noted his thoughts on how to eradicate stigma. Pupils need to be educated at a very young age to know there are people who live in different financial circumstances and that all pupils are equal to each other regardless of their household incomes. Jennifer explained although they maybe don't focus too much on the financial side, there is a lot of work that goes on in the school around differences, and how everyone is unique and the tolerance and accepting of this. The school values are constantly being promoted to pupils to be caring, nurturing and respectful to each other. The school collect in food bank donations from pupils and their families around harvest time. Jennifer has asked the Early Help Team about pupils being involved in the packaging up of the food parcels. This would encourage discussions around why families might need the support and what the community can do to help support these families. Jennifer said she feels the young people in the school are fantastic at accepting and understanding differences.

Following on from the Cost of a School Day, Jennifer has been wondering about the P7 Edinburgh Trip. Having an off island trip was originally raised by the Parent Council, however, it is really expensive, costing around £450-£500 per child. This is expensive for any family, never mind a family who are struggling financially. In the past, they have managed to support some families financially through external funding. School trips are currently halted due to COVID but it might be worth having a think about other opportunities for trips. The school want the trips to be inclusive and for all pupils to be able to access them and this is not always possible if they are off island. Jennifer asked for Parent Council feedback on this topic.

The majority of parents feel the Edinburgh trip provided new experiences for pupils and gave them the opportunity to develop their independence before moving onto high school. It is good to push pupils outside their comfort zone and encourage them to experience new things. However, parents also noted that staying local and embracing it might be more beneficial in terms of economics for families. It would be good to explore different funding options that might be available to help support families with the cost of a school trip off island. David reflected back to previous conversations and the significance of having a trip to Edinburgh was around have a big event/trip to mark the end of primary for those pupils. If there was a way to mark celebrate the significance of finishing primary in a different way with an event or a local trip then this might be a way forward to ensure it is inclusive for all pupils.

Prior to the first lockdown, Laurie had spoken to some class teachers about taking pupils out on walking tours around Lerwick or even hiring a bus and going further afield. She would be more than happy to look into this again once restrictions allow.

8. Grow Shetland (attached)

Jennifer explained they are in the process of setting up leadership groups with P6/7 pupils and one of these groups is likely to be around growing things. All P6/7 pupils will be a part of a leadership group. These groups that move forward developments and make improvements in the school.

David noted this sounds fantastic. Is there anything the Parent Council can do to support the leadership groups? This could be help with supply gardening tools, equipment, or asking members of the parent forum or local businesses for donations towards projects that are running in the school.

9. Next Social Events

There is no indication of when events will be allowed to happen in school again.

There are a couple of fundraising projects ongoing at the moment:

- Christmas Cards – Pupils have been creating their Christmas card designs in Art. The art work will be submitted on the 10th November and should be back by the 24th November.
- Tesco – Bell's Brae Parent Council Breakfast Club has been selected for the financial community grant. However, they are up against Dogs Against Drugs and British Red Cross which are both great causes.

There was a plan to set up a Social Committee meeting but there hasn't been an opportunity to organise any events yet. If any new members would like to join the social committee, please email or message Louise.

A parent asked if Parent Council had approached the Community Council about funding, through the windfarm money. David explained that they need to have a purpose/project for the funding before they can apply to the Community Council. David said they are hoping to look into this type of funding for any improvements around the school that might need to be progressed.

There was a discussion to advertise Easy Fundraising again. It is a good way to raise some money through Christmas shopping. David will put a reminder on the Facebook page.

ACTION: David

There were a few suggestions for alternative fundraising options, while there can't be events held in school – a Bonus Ball Fundraiser, Lottery Club, Big Raffle, Box Clever etc. Louise will organise a fundraising meeting through the social committee.

ACTION: Louise

10. Parent Council Recruitment

David noted it is good to have a healthy number of parents present tonight but the Parent Council need to be conscious that there will be 3 parents stepping down next when their children move onto the high school. David suggested organising a questionnaire to the Parent Forum to see what they would be interested, and to ask questions on subjects that have been discussed at Parent Council meetings. Examples of questions – gather feedback on thoughts about a school trip, if parents are aware of the Parent Council etc.

David will post a question on the 'Parent Council Discussion Group' to gather information on possible questions for a questionnaire.

ACTION: David

11. Correspondence

None.

12. AOCB

Homework

There were some concerns expressed regarding the way the school is doing spelling/writing homework on Glow/Teams. Pupils are now allowed to take homework diaries and reading books home which is great. However, pupils are still doing their written homework on Microsoft word which means teachers might not be picking up spelling mistakes, grammatical errors etc. as these are autocorrected on Microsoft word. For pupils using tablets or ipads, sentences can be created using predictive text. There was also some discussion on older pupils using copy and paste for their spelling words rather than typing these out. Handwriting and spelling skills are very important for children and young people to learn. There was also a feeling that pupils spent so much time online and on screens during lockdown, it would be good to move away from so much screen time.

Jennifer advised the reason homework continues to be online is in relation to national guidance from the Scottish Government around COVID and how the school has to be prepared should they go into a remote learning situation again. Pupils and families need to be familiar with the use of these programmes.

Parents understand the need for pupils and parents to be prepared in case there is ever a period of remote learning again but feel online homework could be done differently and not be used for spelling/writing work. For example, could there be a whole school activity on Glow/Teams each week or every fortnight that pupils complete and submit online. From a development perspective, written work is very important for children and young people and while restrictions have been eased it would be good to see some handwritten work from pupils. On another point, some parents felt it would be good for pupils to be taught some formal typing skills. It can be frustrating for pupils when they can't type and spend so much time looking for the correct keys on the keyboard and not using the proper finger-key combinations.

Jennifer said there have been some good points raised and she would take this back to the staff and see if there are things that can be put in place to keep up the online skill set, meet the national and local guidance regarding this and also try to meet parental expectations. David asked Jennifer to also pass on the thanks and admiration to the staff for all their work and support to pupils under these challenging times. Jennifer asked for some patience from parents while she finds time to meet with staff and discuss these issues. She would hope to raise these points during the October in-service.

ACTION: Jennifer

13. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be Monday 15th November 2021 at 6.30pm.

Grow Shetland



Grow Shetland is a new 3 year project (2021-2024), run by Transition Turrieffield to support the Shetland community to grow more of its own fruit and vegetables, increase access to affordable food and encourage healthy eating.

The project can work with you to help make food growing part of the daily life of your school.

Grow Shetland can:

- Help you think through ideas for a food growing project in your school
- Support your school to start or improve its food growing
- Help teachers, parents and the wider community gain knowledge, skills and confidence to be productive in food growing
- Provide Shetland specific growing advice
- Signpost to services to help you find and access land for growing, if required
- Help you think through opportunities for food sharing
- Provide information on composting and reducing food waste

Grow Shetland can provide:

- Site visits
- Training courses
- Online fact sheets and beginners guides
- Skills videos
- Q & A sessions
- Face to face, email, telephone and video discussions
- Links with local growers



For more information email info@turrieffieldveg.co.uk or telephone 01595 870272

For more about Transition Turrieffield and the work we do: www.turrieffieldveg.co.uk



A list of crops to grow in the school year (August-May) can be found at: <http://www.turrieffieldveg.co.uk/grow-your-own-info>

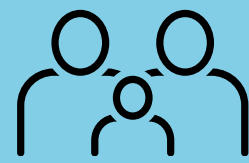


Grow Shetland is working with Teachers, the SIC Education Department and Garden Organic, to develop learning packs to support school staff to make food growing part of the curriculum

TACKLING INEQUALITIES, POVERTY PROOFING AND COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



COST OF LIVING IN
SHETLAND IS
20%-60% HIGHER
THAN THE UK
AVERAGE



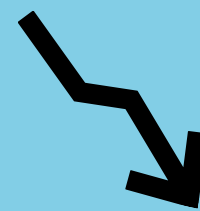
5.7% OF
CHILDREN IN
SHETLAND ARE
LIVING IN LOW
INCOME
FAMILIES,
COUPLED WITH
THE HIGH COST
OF LIVING THIS
COULD MEAN
THEY FACE MORE
FINANCIAL
HARDSHIP



GOOD LEVELS OF
EMPLOYMENT,
HOWEVER 21.3% OF
PEOPLE IN SHETLAND
ARE "UNDER-
EMPLOYED"

47% OF HOUSEHOLDS IN
SHETLAND DO NOT EARN
ENOUGH TO LIVE WELL

POVERTY RATES IN SCOTLAND
CONTINUE TO IMPROVE WHILE
THE RATES IN SHETLAND REMAIN
STATIC OR ARE WORSENING.



Locally we have seen an increase in supports for families regarding their income, struggling to find work, juggling working from home with remote learning or the increased costs of being home all day with heating and food provisions.

The impact on everyone's mental health and wellbeing is evident, parents have often felt overwhelmed trying to manage everything and haven't always wanted to reach out for help, thinking someone else needs it more than they do.

CHILD POVERTY ACTION GROUP (CPAG)

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY TOOLKIT



Resources to promote equity and reduce financial barriers to participation at school



[https://cpag.org.uk/scotland/
CoSD/toolkit](https://cpag.org.uk/scotland/CoSD/toolkit)

CALL TO ACTION

ACCESS THE COSD TOOLKIT

DISCUSS WITH YOUR LINK QIO – CAPTURING
OUTCOMES

CONTACT ANCHOR
([WWW.SHETLAND.GOV.UK/FAMILY-
SUPPORT/ANCHOR-EARLY-ACTION](http://WWW.SHETLAND.GOV.UK/FAMILY-SUPPORT/ANCHOR-EARLY-ACTION))

BOOK ONTO A MONEY WORRIES SESSION (CONTACT
SHET.HEALTHYSHETLAND@NHS.SCOT)



HOW WILL YOU
ENSURE THAT ANY
COSTS RELATED TO
THE SCHOOL DAY ARE
REDUCED AND
ASSOCIATED
BARRIERS TO
PARTICIPATION
MITIGATED?