

**Minutes of Bell's Brae School Parent Council Meeting  
Held in Bell's Brae Primary School Staffroom  
On Monday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 6.30pm**

**Present:**

David Thomson	Chairperson
Laurie Pottinger	Vice Chair
Richard Douglas	Parent Member
Nicole Gilfillan	Parent

**In Attendance:**

Jennifer Wadley	Head Teacher
Robin Calder	Executive Manager
Dawn Ratter	Clerk/Treasurer
Cllr John Fraser	Councillor
Cllr Dennis Leask	Councillor

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Kerri Redfern, Caroline Henderson, Anne-Lise Anderson, Louise Garriock, Cllr S Leask, Cllr Smith, Cllr Robinson and Cllr Pearson.

Kerri Redfern advised she will be standing down with immediate effect.

**2. Approval of Previous Minutes - Monday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2023**

The minutes were approved by Laurie Pottinger and seconded by David Thomson.

**3. Review of matters and actions arising from previous minutes**

Gilbertson Park Path

The path has been completed.

After School Clubs

After school clubs have been offered for P3 and P4.

**4. Treasurer's Report**

See attached.

**5. Review of Action Plan**

The Action Plan for 2023/24 was approved – no changes.

**6. Staffing Update**

This term has been significantly better in terms of staffing, with less absences. For a while vacancies were being advertised more quickly. There is more supply staff available this term with students being home from university.

- ELC Senior Practitioner – Laura Sawkins started in post at the beginning of term.
- Learning Support Worker (temporary) – Heather Shannon starts in post on 29<sup>th</sup> May.
- ASN Teacher – Kari McLennan has been appointed to this post and will start next term.
- ELC Teacher – preferred candidate stage.
- Support Staff x3 – recruitment forms submitted.

Jennifer explained they are again seeing delays with recruitment processes. Robin highlighted Children's Services are facing challenges with the recruitment delays across the school estate, when there are already national and regional challenges around recruitment of teachers in general, especially for specialist subjects. It takes a number of weeks for requests to be assigned to the Executive Manager for approval following the head teacher submitting the request to HR. There are also delays following the preferred candidate stage, with some taking 3 or 4 months to move to a formal offer. This increases the risk of candidates withdrawing from posts, especially for candidates from south. This is challenging at school level and local authority level. Children's Services have raised these concerns with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Education Committee.

## **7. School Improvement Plan Priorities 2023/24**

A focus group of staff met to discuss the survey results and identified 4 main priorities for the new school year before the school received the email to say they were due to be inspected this term. The draft action plans have been paused until they hear the results of the inspection next week to see if the inspectors have different recommendations for the school to work.

The inspection team will be made up of 6 people. There will be a managing inspector, one for the ELC setting, one for the ASN department, a health & nutrition inspector and two team members. They will arrive in school on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May at lunch time and they should finish up on Thursday morning. It will be a short model inspection which will look at two quality indicators.

The two quality indicators the inspectors are looking at during their visit are:

- Learning, Teaching and Assessment – this will predominantly be in classrooms to see learning and teaching.
- Attainment and Achievement – this will look at the school attainment and pupil achievement both in school and wider achievements out with school.

When they arrive on Tuesday, they will meet the staff and then start their inspection activity. This will include meeting with individuals and visiting classrooms. On Wednesday, there will be a full day of inspection. They will meet with parent council representatives, a parent group, various focus groups of pupils at P4 and P7. There will be literacy and numeracy focus groups of pupils to check if the teacher judgement is accurate. They will also be meeting with the janitor, learning support workers, a mixed group of pupils to hear about their school experiences and various meetings with members of the management team to ask key questions. At the end of the day on Wednesday they will meet with two different groups of teachers to discuss aspects that the teachers have identified. One group will look at improving writing and work that has been done this year, and the other group will discuss interdisciplinary learning and play. On Thursday morning they will come back to share their findings with the management team.

The inspectors have asked the school to provide a self-evaluation document. The school staff have taken a lot of time to pull the document together and gather folders of evidence to support the high level messages in the document. Jennifer said the staff are all feeling quite positive about the inspection. The school was last inspected in 2008.

David observed that one of the themes the school are being accredited on is attainment and achievement. Schools are marked on achievement, including external achievement and the opportunities of for external achievement are getting tighter and more challenging with the recent changes being proposed for the removal of school swimming, already lost a lot of the cultural things e.g. music and knitting, the opportunity for school travel, the inter school engagement and competition. This is collectively the external achievements that schools are being assessed on and they are materially expected to provide these opportunities for the children. Laurie added

that this also impacts the cultural pillars that keep Shetland an engaging community that will attract visitors into the future e.g. Shetland Folk Festival, Wool Week. If we have a youth that can't engage in the things that make Shetland culturally different this will have an impact on the future of these events and Shetland.

Cllr Fraser noted there are various different things that are statutory which local authorities must provide and other elements where there is discretion on delivery. The problem at the moment is finding the budget to do the things that they are statutory obliged to do. Thereafter, how to use a non-existent budget to provide the extra things. Ultimately, it is the same government who are expecting schools to provide the external achievements who are also not providing the funds in order to deliver these things that they are expecting to inspect schools on.

Cllr D Leask added that they still have an unsustainable budget and very little cuts have fallen on education budgets but this will have to be looked at.

Robin advised that the swimming review will be presented to the Education Committee meeting due to be held next Monday. There has been extensive engagement with parents, staff, PE teachers and school management and there is a set of proposals for the committee to debate and decide on.

## **8. Review of Class Sizes (R. Calder)**

Robin Calder, Executive Manager – Children's Services attended the meeting to discuss the Maximum Class Size criteria in primary. This criteria is how the central service decides the number of classes in each school per year and the number of teachers they deploy in each school. The current criteria has been in place since 2012 and it conforms to nationally agreed conditions of service around the size of classes. Bell's Brae and Sound Primary Schools have never been on this criteria and as part of the review they are looking at incorporating them into the revised criteria.

There are a number of reasons behind the review of the criteria, one being the review is over 10 years old. The fact that Bell's Brae and Sound Primary Schools are not on the current criteria has caused challenges in other schools in Shetland in the sense of equity, fairness and consistency to ensure all schools are treated in the same way. The budget position is also a clear driver for this review. It forms part of a series of reviews, including swimming, secondary curriculum and staffing, youth work and speech and language therapy that Education & Families Committee agreed to take forward. The review will formally take place in the next academic session, 2023/24 and will look at the existing criteria, what it will mean to take Bell's Brae and Sound onto that criteria and refer to how other schools in the northern alliance deal with schools of this size and how many classes they have. They will reflect very carefully on Bell's Brae's unique position with additional support needs department that caters for children across Shetland as a whole. They would like to engage with staff, parents/carers and young people. The parent council will be an important part of this as well.

As an interim position, it has been agreed with the management team that they will go from 14 classes to 13 classes for the upcoming academic session. This will mean that the current P4 class will come together as a single P5 class of 26 pupils for the new session. Sound Primary School will reduce by 2 classes as an interim position. These decisions have been agreed and communicated with the affected parents and pupils. As a result of this the school will receive 1 probationer instead of 2 this year.

Jennifer explained the school wrote to all members of the parent forum advising them of the decision around the reduction in teacher numbers for the new academic session and the reasons behind this. They then sent a separate letter to the affected parents and carers. A meeting was held in the school last Monday to give the opportunity for parents to come along and discuss any concerns. The school have also had discussions with the current P4 pupils and started to work with them on transition activities. The pupils are used to mixing and already go to PE together. Some pupils have raised concerns with the noise going from a class of 11 to 26. Carly Cheyney has been appointed as the P5 teacher for next session, and she has been into the classes to meet the pupils. The school have allocated the spare classroom to the P5 class and are having ongoing conversations about how the pupils want to use this space. The pupils are very excited to join together as one class. Jennifer also added that currently they have two P7 classes of 24 pupils each so teachers are used with this size of class. The parent body, pupils and staff are all seeing this as a positive move.

David attended the meeting last week, where every parent of the affected class was invited but only 2 parents attended. This brought the conclusion that the majority of parents were happy with the decision. Of the ones who did attend there were some individual concerns raised.

Robin advised they need to look carefully at how the school can come onto the criteria. Teacher numbers are not set in stone. They will be reviewed each year in relation to the school roll. There will be ongoing discussions with the school management team, teachers, parents and carers regarding any future potential changes. By moving onto the criteria, it will move away from the principle that Bell's Brae are always allocated 2 probationers each year. Robin also advised that there is a reduction in the number of primary probationers, and these are being allocated to schools where there are vacancies. Any further changes from the review will only take effect in 2024/25. David concluded that the parent council is interested in engaging with the review.

Robin advised that no one has yet been appointed to this review when he departs his role as Executive Manager in August. David thanked Robin for his work as the link officer for Bell's Brae over his years in post and wished him well in his new role as Head Teacher at Anderson High School.

#### **9. Next Social Items**

There is a requirement for more parent volunteers or parent members before any future social events can be planned. Nicole would be delighted to help with any social events.

#### **10. Fundraising**

As above.

#### **11. Correspondence**

All correspondence has been updated on the Facebook page.

#### **12. AOCB**

##### Lerwick Parent Council Meetings

Cllr Fraser made a plea for consideration to be given when setting dates of future parent council meetings to avoid clashes with other Lerwick parent councils. Dawn will contact Sound Parent Council to check their meetings dates before the AGM.

**ACTION: DR**

### Parent Members

There was a discussion on trying to increase parent member numbers. Nicole suggested encouraging a parent member representative from each year group. David acknowledged there is a feeling of volunteer fatigue across committees, sports clubs, etc.

### **13. Date of AGM and Next Meeting**

The AGM and Term 1 meeting will be held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 6.30pm.

**Bell's Brae Parent Council**  
**Treasurer's Report - May 2023**

	<u>£</u>
Opening Balance as at 01/04/22	2,955.51

**Income**

SIC Admin Grant	170.00	
Arnold Clark Funding	750.00	
Bonus Ball Fundraising	200.00	
	<u>1,120.00</u>	

**Expenditure**

P7 Hoodies Donation	252.00	
Audit of Accounts (2021/22)	20.00	
Bonus Ball Prize - L Sandison	100.00	
Grant u/spend	150.00	
Lottery Licence	40.00	
Halloween Expenses - LP	57.32	
Photocopying	85.00	704.32
	<u>415.68</u>	

<b>Closing Balance (31/03/23)</b>	<b>3,371.19</b>
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Grant Underspend 2022/23	65.00
<b>Available Balance</b>	<u><u>3,306.19</u></u>