

Parent Council Meeting 24/09/19

At the end of last school year our p6/7 went on their school trip to Lochinch which proved to be hugely successful with pupils and staff all commenting on what a great time they had had – except for one child who contracted chicken pox!! What was equally pleasing was the amazing feedback we received on the behaviour and attitude of our pupils throughout the whole trip. This is something that is a strong feature of our school and is highly pleasing to me .

The New school Year has started well and we have a full compliment of teaching staff with the appointments of Mrs Claire Robertson and Mrs Leanne Hamilton. Both of these teachers are highly professional and effective practitioners and so I am absolutely delighted with their appointments and they will surely be an asset to Brae Primary for years to come.

Our staff in primary and nursery are a major asset doing whatever is required to support pupils - a clear example of this was when an Italian family enrolled in the summer term with no English language whatsoever and our staff fully and successfully engaged with this family and the pupils and parents were supported to allow them to settle into Shetland and to school comfortably and to flourish. (We now have a 4 year old Italian boy who is fairly fluent in English with a strong Shetland twang!!!)

ASN support is somewhat restricted at the moment due to staff moving on, this is causing concern however the recruitment process is underway and we have 2 new members of staff starting next week and are hopeful of appointing new ASN teaching staff before the end of term.

School roll – The primary school roll has been rising steadily over the last 2-3 years from a low of 98 to a current school roll of 142 and whilst this is extremely positive and to be welcomed it is putting additional stresses on staff and resources. Our classrooms aren't particularly large fortunately we have the open area in our upper school which allows pupils to "spill out" and work in groups or as individuals which has a number of benefits and helps us cope with the larger class sizes. Next school year our school roll rises naturally with the number of p7s leaving and the new large p1 intake and this will allow us to get a further teacher and so we would have 7 straight classes from p1-p7. We would at this point likely lose our "family room" as it would be required as a classroom however we are looking at alternatives to this.

Our Nursery department is now also running smoothly with our second year operating as an expanded hours nursery although we do not currently have a full staff compliment due to staff moving on and replacements still to be appointed. After a great deal of "chasing" it looks like we are finally going to get our temporary extra storage space as work is due to start this weekend to move the portacabin from secondary dept to car park area immediately outside Nursery. This will allow us to empty the "quiet room" of all resources and have it as a fully functioning quiet room. Phase 2 of our Nursery development is still to

be done and I am hopeful that this will get the green light this summer? There is much still to do in terms of implementing the various changes in pedagogy in the early years however we have a fully committed staff who are all working hard to make the developments required. Our p1 learning experience is aligned with the nursery and so transition is, as always, extremely good with little or no upset for our new p1s as they begin formal schooling. I do have a concern relating to the difference in staffing provision in nursery compared to p1 and for some of our more vulnerable children this is an issue. It is also a greater strain on the class teacher in P1 and I have taken steps to mitigate this - I will continue to raise this concern however it is at National level that this will have to be resolved. Front gate – concerns have been raised around the efficiency of the locking system on the front gate to primary lower playground and the possibility of nursery pupils “escaping”. I propose to look at getting a new gate or to get the current gate professionally adapted.

School dinners – some secondary parents have voiced concerns over time available for lunch and whilst this will improve slightly as our brand new p1s become more proficient at choosing and eating we are constricted by the timetable, the canteen size, the amount of pupils and the amount of time available.(we have 35% more pupils in primary than we did 3 years ago) Today there were 6 p7 pupils in the queue when the first secondary pupils arrived. A new menu with 3 options per day is about to begin as part of a pilot scheme and whilst this will provide potentially more/better choice I fear that it may also take children longer to choose?

3-18 school – already much has been done to bring the secondary and primary departments together more than has previously been the case and there are many positive aspects in relation to this with great potential for improved outcomes for our pupils. Primary and secondary staff have met on several occasions already this school year looking at our improvement plan and this also will help support pupils more as they move through their learning journey in Brae. There are a number of physical issues which do not help our desire to combine the departments into one school not least we have 2 separate buildings. Whilst this is not readily resolved we are looking at what we can do with things as they are in terms of working collegiately and possible adjustments we can easily make but also looking at how this could be changed in the future in terms of building works.