

# Brae High School – Parent Council Meeting Minutes

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| <b>Date and Time of Meeting</b> | Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> May 2021   |
| <b>Location</b>                 | Vscene Virtual Meeting   |
| <b>Those Present</b>            | Sarah Johnson, Louise Wood, Vivian Anderson, Janis Nicolson, Logan Nicolson, Julie Johnson, Emma McDonald, Shona Carter, Alison Johnson, Andrea Manson, Ann Bennett, Billy Forsyth, Emma Wilkinson, George Smith, Alistair Cooper, Laura Edwardson, Loren Manson, Shona Hughson, Vikki Parry, Shona Thompson, Helene Ratter, Paula Manson, Karen Thompson, Marie Duncan, Astrid Nicolson (Clerk) |
| <b>Apologies From</b>           | Theo Smith, Steve Macdonald, Patricia Batty, Janette Budge, Laeanne Johnson  |

| <b>Agenda Items No.</b> |   | <b>Person Responsible</b>         |
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| 1                       | <b>Welcome and Apologies noted as above</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Louise welcomed everyone to the meeting.</li> <li>Apologies shared.</li> </ul>   |                                   |
| 2                       | <b>Approval of Minutes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed by Shona, seconded by Louise</li> </ul>  |                                   |
| 3                       | <b>Chairs Report on Actions/Matters Arising</b><br><br><b>Current Actions-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recycling opportunities- Ryan Thomason had been in contact, but due to the pupil council meeting on hold, Logan had a brief meeting with a few senior pupils on their thoughts. It was decided they would like to try and get plastics up and running so Ryan was going to go ahead with this.</li> </ul> | <p><b>LN</b></p> <p><b>LN</b></p> |

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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School gate –DLO still working on it, waiting on an update from Possum a company that specializes in automatic and accessible doors to see if they can provide a gate that was accessible to all.</li> <li>• School logo- ongoing, Communications dept working on a few samples.</li> <li>• Virtual Drop-in Session – Logan to update in the school report.</li> <li>• System for Kids Council thoughts to be heard – Youth services looking into ways to catch pupils voices without breaking bubbles. Logan working with focus groups from different year groups to get their opinions on what’s gone well this year, what they have enjoyed about remote learning and the lessons learned, also what they have enjoyed about being back and their priorities are into the next year.</li> <li>• Information to parents of National 5’s – Information was sent out to parents</li> </ul> | LN<br>LN<br>LN |
| 4 | <b>Treasurers Report</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balance £1406.63</li> <li>• The PC has been approached by the teachers to see if they could donate some funds to provide some new materials for working in the poly tunnel and outdoor games/activities, the PC have agreed to do this and were also hoping to get some local donations of plants and things from parents and grandparents for the poly tunnel too. Logan said Sadie the school librarian had been in touch asking about lunch time game activities so she may be in touch with the PC about that also.</li> </ul>  | PC             |
| 5 | <b>Pupil Council Reports</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Primary</b> – No meetings have been held due to current restrictions.</li> <li><b>Secondary</b> - No meetings have been held due to current restrictions.<br/>Logan and the PC is looking into ways of doing this virtually this term.</li> </ol>  | LN/PC          |
| 6 | <b>School Report from Logan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logan ran through the attached report.</li> </ul>  |                |
| 7 | <b>School Improvement Plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logan ran through as above report.</li> <li>• Logan thanked Pupils, parents and staff for all their hard work, patience and hard work through what has been a very challenging year.<br/>Emma Wilkinson- thanked Logan for having the outside space as its making children happier and more settled.<br/>Louise commends the staff and pupils for their creativity within the restrictions we are living in.</li> <li>• Logan asked to set next year’s Occasional holiday as Friday 27<sup>th</sup> May and the PC agreed.</li> </ul>   |                |

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| 8 | <p><b>Post Office</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Louise told the meeting that the Post office is now using part of the Leisure Centre as a sorting office and the carparking outside. The school and local authority had no consultation in the process and the PC is confused with the already lack of parking and concerned about the increase in traffic in terms of safety, especially in the winter months. The vans are using the one-way system at the busy time between 8-9 in the morning when everyone is coming to school. She asked Logan if the SRT had provided the risk assessment as promised?</li> </ul> <p>Logan told the meeting that when the school and local authority became aware of this, they immediately contacted SRT to try to work out how this could work out safely on school grounds. The School had no locus in the decision but are trying to mitigate anything. Bruce Crossan from the Royal Mail has been very helpful and came for a meeting to try and iron out any issues, they have been very open speaking about issues with winter being a concern of theirs also. The school has still to receive a risk assessment from the Leisure Center, but Logan will be chasing this up. SRT have committed to installing better lighting for the winter months.</p>  |  |
| 9 | <p><b>School building and grounds – the way forward</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Louise, Sarah and Vivian ran through the attached document with the comments below for each section.</li> <li><b><u>The physical building (construction and appearance)</u></b><br/> <b>Julie Johnson-</b> Being a 3-18 school, having it across our current 2 buildings is not allowing us to make the most of it. Having a unified structure would allow us to do this.<br/><br/> <b>Emma Wilkinson-</b> having the unity of a 3-18 campus would be very helpful from personal experience. We have the vision, just need the physical.<br/><br/> <b>Logan Nicolson-</b> A lot of work needs done on the harl on the exterior of the building. A large section came away just this week. There are some Sullom blocks in varying conditions, but if the harl continues to deteriorate they will deteriorate as well. The building is not structural dangerous, but work needs to be carried out.</li> <li><b><u>The surrounding grounds</u></b><br/> <b>Loren Manson</b> – the New area is making the kids happier and more creative, but the lower area is small, hard and off putting with there being a large, grassed area that’s not being put to good use. The facility could be very off putting to new parents planning on where they are going to put their child to school. I spoke to a family that had moved here from England recently, and they thought with first impressions of the school compared to the other schools on the island it</li> </ul> |  |

was very off putting. They had found a home in Brae so decided to put their child to our school, they had however found the inside/heart of the school to be great and were impressed by the way they had been supported.

**Logan Nicolson-** Vandalism hasn't been bad for the past year compared to about 2 years ago but have had some again recently, because of this I asked the police if they could support us, they had a visiting officer that specializes in antisocial behaviour and vandalism, he came for a site visit to see what could be done to deter this, but unfortunately the cost of improving anything would be so high due the school being a public thoroughfare and the design of the building with multiple wings creating lots of blind spots for people to hide in. There are also low roofs that can be accessed from the ground.

**Billy Forsyth-** the school is a thoroughfare even during the school day, we have occasionally had people walking through the school playgrounds with big dogs when the children are out playing.

- **Car parking**

**Julie Johnson-** there are not accessible car parking spaces.

**Paula Manson-** there is not enough spaces, I have experienced people having to wait to access these limited spaces. I currently use the bus stop most of the time as it is easier and has more space. Logan asked if the spaces were adequate? Paula said the ones at the secondary were fine but the one that was at the nursery side really wasn't big enough and too close to the barrier for bigger vehicles to manoeuvre in and out of.

**Alison Johnson-** asked if the spaces that were barriered off at the moment for the nursery/primary was now permanent? **Logan** said he wasn't sure at the moment. There were benefits to the pupils in their learning, social and emotional wellbeing having the direct access to the outside space, it also depends on how long bubbles need to be in place for. If it is to be made permanent it would only be half the area currently sectioned off which would reinstate 12 parking spaces. Alison said the parking has been an issue for years but is fully worse now. Logan pointed out that the ELC dept had gone from 2 staff members to 10 and older pupils were also using the car parking. He also said the Mid Brae inn had offered their parking facilities and he would speak to them about using that also.

- **Inside space and environment**

**Julie Johnson-** We are really struggling with lack of breakout spaces. Some pupils have complex needs and it's not appropriate for them to be in with other people at times but at the moment we are having to share spaces which is proving to be really tricky. There is such a lack of spaces for ASN but we are trying to make things work as best we can.

Classroom sizes are really not adequate for wheelchair access or being able to manoeuvre wheelchairs around especially in the secondary classrooms. Roofing tiles in the primary buildings are not suitable for using hoists so having to use portable ones. Ramps for easy access outside in case of fire and for health and safety are there but, at a very big cost. We are having to be very reactive to things as the facilities are not there, we are always having to try and find a solution to a problem which takes up valuable time and energy that could be better used spent working with the pupils.

**Paula Manson-** We need more breakout spaces moving through the primary.

**Vivian Anderson-** parents are concerned there is not enough toilets or access to the correct toilets required.

**Shona Hughson-** I agree with the lack of breakout spaces, there will be more pupils coming to the school that require the breakout spaces, where are they going to go?

**Logan Nicolson-** There is a staff room in the secondary but not in the primary currently, teachers have to use a pupil breakout area if they need a cup of tea. With the layout of the building's we have to have 2 of everything i.e. 2 staffrooms, 2 offices but if it was 1 building this wouldn't be required. We spend a lot of time trying to retrofit the building happily for the requirements needed but this time would be better spent with the pupils. There is a lot of concern about the heating at the moment, rooms are to be well ventilated due to the covid guidelines, these recommend opening the higher windows in the room, but currently the majority of skylight windows in the secondary are so old you can't get replacement parts, so they are sealed shut. As a result, the lower windows are opened making the rooms very cold and really at a much lower temperature than you would want for a working classroom. A lack of modern heating system doesn't help either. I am currently working with health and safety to try and find a solution to this. The insulation in the buildings is inadequate as well. The building was designed and built when inclusion wasn't a part of the agenda but is crucial to education now.

- **School layout**

**Helene Ratter-** The security systems is very outdated. Secondary has no visual of people entering the building apart from a few cameras and outdated intercom which is situated in the office in not a very practical position leading to a lot of wasted time that could be better spent.

**Emma Wilkinson-** being able to function as a 3-18 campus it would be great to have a hub where the parents come in that meets the needs of parents, pupils and teachers. With a centered facility this is good for security and health and safety. A hub could be at the heart of the communication for all.

**Julie Johnson-** ASN dept goal is to make the pupils as independent as possible, having the accessibility that they are able to arrive at the front door and push a button and it opens and they can do this themselves while not having to rely on someone else to do it can make a huge difference.

**Logan Nicolson-** we are delighted to work with other agencies but with the lack of services in the north mainland they like to be based within the school, currently we have Children's Services Resources base is in the old janitors house but with the ELC dept expanding into phase 2 they will be moving into here so we need to relocate Children's Services Resources elsewhere within the school adding to pressure on space. We also need to find a space for the new counselling service and Skills development Scotland, which currently the careers advisor is having to work in the science room when the science teacher is not in, which is not the best environment as it not set up for this. There are 2 youth services staff based in the school along with the school nurse when required which all adds more pressure to the lack of space. Louise added that the lack of facilities would impact on all the other services ability to deliver a consistent and effective service. Julie from ASN has had to move offices 3 times this school year already.

- **Mental health and well-being**

**Emma Wilkinson-**It's not just about the children but about the extended community of the school, the parents, staff and about everybody. It is important for everyone to feel included which I do.

**Logan Nicolson** – another constraint with the building is a lot of the smaller rooms that could be used as offices or breakout spaces but they have no natural or very little light which is not the best, currently my office was a store cupboard!

- **Conclusion**

**George Smith-** Thanked the Parent Council for the invite. He noted the passion for the school and the commitment and clear partnership working relationship between the Parent council members, wider school community and staff. Some really important issues have been raised. There hasn't been the investment needed in the school estate to keep up with changes in learning, there is no argument in that, we just need a plan to see how we can go about it. There are other issues all over Shetland and as a council we want a learning estate that is sustainable into the future. There needs to be investment in both long term and short term. Walk around assessments have been done to look at the condition and

suitability of the building. We will have to prioritise as there isn't unlimited funds but clearly investment is needed. We would like a continuation of the partnership to try and achieve as much as we can. This council wanted to move away from the negativity around the previous school closures in the last council.

Louise asked about External Funds. There is Scottish Government funding, SIC still need to put forward their plan to get funding secured. Longer term plan is needed to use the money wisely.

**Shona Thompson** - The Scottish government issued new guidelines for the condition of buildings and the suitability of buildings, every school had to be assessed and audited. Due to covid we are running approximately a year behind schedule but there is now a full picture of the suitability, condition and accessibility factors of all schools across Shetland which is being looked at to see what the options might be.

Government also issued a new Learning Estates Strategy for Scotland which is being drafted at the moment, this is aimed to be finished by the end of June. At which time we hope to meet and discuss what the direction might be. The councils have 4 aspirations for education which are Equity, Excellence, Inclusion and Sustainability.

**Emma McDonald** – Thanked the PC for the presentation and said she really enjoyed coming to the meetings as it gave a good way to see the other side of what's going on as I sit on the Education and Families committee. Everything in the presentation was relevant and both the council and Parent Council are on the same page with something needing to be done with the school. It showed the passion for the school.

Louise thanked all the council officials for attending the meeting.

**Alistair Cooper**- I am not surprised by the presentation as the school was built in the 70's when poor construction and building was happening. I would advocate a new school being built behind the existing one to allow the education to continue as the new school is being built instead of trying to fix the existing one.

**Andrea Manson** – Logan walked me around the school last year and I have been involved with the school for many years both as a parent and now as a grandparent. We were always very proud of the school with it being the centre of the community. When it was built it was very adequate for what was expected of it but as education has changed with different layers of education, sport and social work the requirements have changed and it is very important to bring it into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The current footprint of the school could nearly be the required carpark, with carparking being an ongoing issue from the 1990's. I would like to see better shelter for the playground and gardens. You have the full backing of the 3 North councillors.

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| 10 | <b>AOB</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nothing raised</li></ul>  |  |
| 11 | <b>Date and Time of Next Meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 6pm</li></ul> |  |



| <b>Action No.</b> |  | <b>Person Responsible</b>      | <b>Update on Progress</b> |
|-------------------|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
|                   | Logan and Ryan Thomson to look into the recycling opportunities and get update to the PC                       | <b>LN</b>                      | Logan to progress         |
|                   | System to be implemented for Kids council's thoughts to be heard, PC Office bearers to help facilitate this    | <b>LN/BF/PC Office Bearers</b> | Logan to progress         |
|                   | Speak to DLO about the safety of the school gates. PC to email Logan to assist/progress the issue with the DLO | <b>LN</b>                      | On going                  |
|                   | Logan to speak to Neil Beattie about Hot trollies and Shona Thompson about Vending machines.                   | <b>LN</b>                      | On hold                   |
|                   | Logan and PC to look into hot drink vending machines   | <b>LN/PC</b>                   | On hold                   |
|                   | In PC update, ask parents for ideas on how the Primary concert could be done differently this year.            | <b>PC Office Bearers</b>       | On hold                   |