

WHALSAY SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held via Messenger on Thursday 21st May, 2020

Present:

Office Bearers

Carol Ann Reid (CAR) (Chair)
Natalie Constable (Vice Chair)
Moira Dally (MD) Clerk

Members

Sarah Anderson (SA)
Elizabeth Nisbet (EN)
Odette Anderson (OD)
Debbie Saunderson (DB)
Samantha Anderson (SA)
Jeni Polson (JP)

Staff

Garry Spence (GS) Head Teacher
Pauline Irvine (PI) DHT

Apologies

Kathleen Jamieson
Audrey Polson
Leona Jamieson
Angela Cooper
Angela Williamson
Iain MacInnes

Welcome and Attendees

The Chair welcomed all attendees to this remote meeting and noted apologies.

Treasurer's Report

CAR advised that the available funds stand at £5,448.67.

Approval of previous Minutes 11.02.2020

Minutes were approved by Sarah Anderson and seconded by Samantha Anderson..

Matters Arising

CAR advised that she had purchased goods for the Coffee Morning which should have been held in April. These items would be kept until the next fund raising event. All Reps gave £10 toward purchasing an Amazon Echo Show for a raffle prize, the £60 left over after the purchase had been made would be put towards the next PC event.

HT/AHT Report (see separate sheet)

Questions from Reps

Prior to the Meeting all reps had the chance to complete a survey form sent from the school, highlighting their specific class questions/concerns. CAR asked each Rep. starting from Nursery to share these with the Meeting -

Nursery

SA believed that it would be good to increase communications between school and home. Guidance was being sought re the possibility of posting photos/videos on the Blog/Glow. Parents were concerned about the transition of pupils from Nursery into Primary. GS said the school was looking at setting up a link on the Blog for only Nursery Staff and parents to access. to help with this.

Primary 1 – 4

No specific questions or concerns came from these classes.

Primary 5

OA said that parents were worried that pupils were getting behind with their education due to the lockdown. GS tried to reassure her that their children were 'on track' and that children/parents should try not to get too anxious, as pupils' health and well-being was the most important issue. One third of parents of this group had contacted their Rep with concerns which ranged from

- questioning the lack of school communications
- parents overwhelmed by technology
- the amount of time pupils were spending on line
- problems with internet connections not always good
- some parents would prefer to see books being sent home instead of receiving work on line

GS/PI addressed these concerns by saying that 'Glow' had had limited use in the school before lockdown so there had been no time for staff to get to grips with the technology either or to provide any training to parents. He felt that there had been lots of problems initially but that functionality had improved.

As books are already shared in the classroom setting it would not be practical to allow books to leave the school.

GS took on board the point that OA stressed that parents were looking for reassurances from the school, not from the class Rep. GS to address this situation.

OA to submit other concerns/questions of a more individual nature direct to GS.

Primary 6

Issues from this class were

- poor internet speed
- new technology issues and challenges for parents and pupils

GS reiterated that he felt that the functionality of 'Teams' in Glow were now operating better, and things were settling down.

Primary 7

JP could report that bairns were losing confidence and were worried. She asked if there were any plans to have the class in school before Summer but GS said plans would be developed as the school received more advice on how to do this safely. GS said that Pri 7 reports would go to Sec staff to allow them to get a handle on the pupils. Brenda Hughson (Sec Pupil Support) will be working on a transition booklet for pupils and there was also the possibility of a transition online 'tour' of the secondary school being produced by BH to aid the transition process and ease pupil worries.

JP felt that there should be enhanced support plan for all pupils at this stage. She also asked if there would be the possibility of an alternative Parents' Evening – video/phone call with the teacher. Pupil Reports would be going out shortly to parents but GS said there would be no face to face teacher/parent communications.

JP said that there needed to be more communications and more reassurances coming from the school, with the health and well being of pupils being the focus.

GS asked all present if they considered that bairns were coping – Reps gave a mixed response.

Secondary 1

CAR reported that parents were seeking reassurances/input from Pupil Support on a regular basis. GS will look in to this but said that 'No news is good news'

Secondary 2

OA reporting for AC reported the following concerns –

- The move from Sec 2 to Sec 3 and the fact that no subject choices had been made before lock down or participation in Parents' Evening to discuss.
- Parents/pupils want engagement with the school to get this done as pupils are anxious and keen to move on. GS to look at discussions on how this could be achieved.
- Pupils require maths jotters. GS advised that if he got pupil names these jotters could be left in the Pri porch for collection next week.
- Could the week 25-29th May be looked at as a 'Catch Up and Well Being Week' for pupils, as is being done in other Shetland Schools. GS said that this had been discussed at the Pri HT Group but there had been no discussion round this at a Secondary Level. He said that perhaps individual Schools like Baltasound may be doing this as a whole school activity. A 'Little Light' week is being planned for the Pri Dept instead of a 'Reflection Week'.

Secondary 3

Rep NC expressed the following concerns –

- Pupils were worried about their final year and how the lockdown was going to affect them in general. GS said that the SQA may have to adjust their expectations, but he assured parents that the school would be doing its best, when everyone got back to work.

- Time lost was a worry, but some pupils were enjoying and appreciating certain online lessons. When NC asked if more online lessons could be delivered GS responded saying that he didn't feel it would be possible, as it was not a compulsory part of the Shetland strategy but he would make other teachers aware that this had worked well with one class in Secondary. There were other good reasons why it cannot be done across the board – varying levels of internet connectivity, presence of several school age children in a household who get to do the online meeting with their teachers and varying degrees of engagement on the part of the pupils themselves.

Primary General

The question was put to GS – would primary teachers be taking the same class as they have had this year. The response was that teachers will not be in the same classes but the decision on this has been delayed authority wide.

The Way Forward for the PC under lockdown restrictions

CAR informed the meeting that a total of seven reps. which included three office bearers were due to stand down/replaced at the AGM in June. As there will be no AGM, due to lock down, all three office bearers (CAR, NC and MD) had previously offered to stay on for another year. She stressed that not everyone need feel obliged to do so, but said that any rep could personal message her to discuss.

Sarah Anderson offered to Rep for both Nursery and Pri 1

Samantha Anderson offered to remain on for another year also.

No firm decision was taken on whether these proposals were going to be acceptable, as parents will need to be informed in the first instance.

Date of Next Meeting

Decision on the above to follow, but not likely to take place before week beginning 15 June.

This being the business the meeting closed at 3.35 pm