

WHALSAY SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held via Messenger on Thursday 2nd July, 2020 at 3pm.

Present:

Office Bearers

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

Members

Sarah Anderson (SA)
Angela Cooper (AC)
Odette Anderson (OD)
Debbie Saunderson (DB)
Samantha Anderson (SA)

Staff

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

Apologies

Kathleen Jamieson
Audrey Polson
Leona Jamieson
Jeni Polson
Iain MacInnes
Elizabeth Nisbet

Welcome and Attendees

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

Treasurer's Report

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

Approval of previous Minutes 11.02.2020

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

CAR started the Meeting by saying that she was personally relieved that it was nearly the end of a very stressful term, and that she fully hoped that come August that all pupils would be returning to school, full time.

Commenting on the Inspection findings released this week, she was surprised and vexed for the Nursery staff but hoped that when the school returned to some normality that all the wrongs would be righted. She added that she felt that there had been a big improvement over the last few years.

HT/AHT Report (see separate sheet)

The Way Forward for the PC under lockdown restrictions

CAR felt that we were no further forward regarding this issue and it was agreed that we would look at it at the next Meeting. Meanwhile SA said she was happy to represent both the new Nursery class and Pri 1, and would set up the appropriate group.

Questions from Reps re the letter from Education Scotland on the recent inspection

Nursery Rep SA said she was surprised with the Inspectors findings with two of the four quality indicators for the nursery dept. being evaluated as weak. GS reported that he had received similar comments from parents voicing surprise, and worry about child led learning. GS sought to clarify the nature of the Inspectors criticism. The school needed to do better incorporating more structure into the child led learning. There has not been a teacher in Nursery for two years and a priority must be made to recruit teacher help after the summer. All Nursery Depts practice child-led learning and we were led to believe by visiting outside agencies that we were doing well. The Inspectors were looking for a more structured input from staff. More training is needed and it was also noted that pupil tracking had been started, which the Inspectors recognised, this had to be developed further. He said with an Action Plan and Training he was certain that the school would get to grips with these issues.

PI – said child-led play-based learning in the Nursery needs to be more structured. In the past 2 years there has been more Nursery to Primary 1 transition time starting around Jan/Feb allowing for a session every Friday with the P1 teacher. This has meant that the pupils are familiar with the school and the teacher, who reports that pupils manage pace and challenge really well. In summing up PI said that finding a balance between play-based learning, new nursery staff, new building and an Action Plan she had every confidence in making improvements in the Nursery.

SA also asked if the Oct. holiday dates were to be altered. GS said that they would be staying the same, but that the Council was meeting today to ratify School Holiday Dates, and a notice would go out once dates were known.

Secondary Two

AC asked if pupils' subject choices were all sorted now. GS said that when the choices came in some needed to be tweaked, and that a timetable would be available to pupils on their return. He said that if parents hadn't had a phone call then they should assume that their child had got their preferred choices. School and pupils would also be having conversations re pupil anxieties during lockdown regarding what they had missed, but that pupil well-being would be a priority.

Secondary Three

This class was also reported to be worried that they were behind in their class work and the question asked, would there be extra support, as they had lost a few months learning.

GS said that home learning had tried to take them forward towards Secondary Four, but he felt that they did have time to catch up with homework and deadlines. Homework Club will be available to pupils this coming year, which would give them the opportunity to make up for lost time. It was the School's intention to accommodate Secondary Four full time if schools did not return to 'normal' in August. They would not be part of the 'blended learning' initiative. This would work for all subjects apart from English/Maths and Design & Manufacture. A supply teacher would need to be put in place to cover the pupils who cannot fit in to the classes on a rotational basis, so that everyone gets equal access to the subject teacher. The SQA will take into account the time missed in school.

The SQA are currently discussing whether exams next year will be as normal or may be taken a bit later.

NC said that based on collective learning she felt that pupils were a bit behind. GS said that some tough conversations would perhaps be needed between parents and their children on whether sport and or working in the shop was more important than school work. He also emphasised that this year's Secondary Four did good in their Prelim Exams, so this means that we have good evidence for them if estimate grades and for appeals should we need it. Pupils needed to knuckle down with the work, on their return to school.

OA felt that Secondary Two had had a delayed transition – that they were not moving ahead and not reassured, especially if they were going back to full time learning on the 11th August. She felt that there had been good communications between staff and pupils but not school with parents. She said that confirmation on subject choices would be reassuring. GS pointed out that there was no assessment for N4/N5 Courses in Secondary Three and pupils are still following the BGE. There is time to make up and teachers were strongly of the opinion that they want to start chosen subjects with the pupils in front of them. He asked if a timetable would be helpful, and offered to put up on Teams, the pupils choices, and timetables for those who requested them before the end of term. . AC said that she felt the pupils here were demotivated when pupils at other schools knew. He reassured the group that teachers wanted to see pupils in front of them instead of in a home learning situation. GS said that lockdown had led to the cancellation of Parents' Evening and the postponement of a lot of discussion with pupils.

A.O.C.B.

No other business discussed.

Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was set for Tuesday 8th September, 5.30 pm in the Primary Dining Hall.

This being the business the Meeting closed at 3.45pm.
