

# St Bride's Primary School and Nursery – Parent Council

## Minute of meeting on 16 February 2021

Present: Christabel Boyle, Jemma Callahan, Mrs Clelland, Angela Coia, Richard Conway, Alastair Cumming, Anne-Marie Cusick, Cara Docherty, Kathleen Elliott, Amanda Gilfedder, Mrs McCarron, Paul McLaughlin, Chris McLeish, Lauren Millar, Mrs Pacitti, Joanna Pugh, Nicola Stubbs

### 1. Welcome and apologies

Jemma welcomed attendees and noted apologies.

### 2. Update on home learning

Thanks were expressed by parent members for the ongoing efforts of the school staff, and for their dedication in ensuring that the children continue to be educated to a high standard in challenging circumstances.

Mrs Pacitti echoed this sentiment and advised that she had received much positive feedback from parents.

Mrs Pacitti gave special mention to Father Coyle who, during his time providing temporary cover during Father Hughes' absence, has been very much involved in the life of the school within the context of the St Bride's parish community. Father Coyle intends to continue to provide weekly messages to pupils via Google Classroom.

Mrs Pacitti provided a summary of some of the key positive aspects of the current home learning arrangements, in particular:

- a good structure is in place with regards the teaching arrangements, in terms of the use of Google Classroom, the posting of daily tasks, daily 'Google Meets' between teacher and class, correction of pupils' work and supporting children with their learning;
- teachers, pupils, and parents have been better prepared, this time around, for the introduction of the home learning arrangements;
- visible contact between pupils and teacher (via Google Classroom) is a considerable improvement on the 'text-only' chat with teachers during the first lockdown;
- the posting of tasks earlier in the day, allowing parents more time to get children prepared for the day (it was agreed that posting the work any earlier would not have allowed for responsive planning by teachers);

- ‘FaceTime Friday’ and afternoon recorded tasks, which are for pupils across the school, allowing an ongoing sense of school community and affording pupils connectedness to the school as a whole and not just to their own classmates;
- increased time for feedback to pupils and improved capacity for one-to-one engagement between pupil and teacher;
- every child in the ‘hub’ has been able to see their own class teacher at some point during the school week;
- facility for pupils to work in small groups (of twos and threes);
- improved IT support for the home learning arrangements, including the distribution of sixteen *Chromebooks* across the school to support various learning requirements;
- the upskilling of staff in the use of IT, with an expectation that virtual classrooms will continue to be used as a teaching tool post-lockdown (for homework, for example).

Feedback from parent members indicated that the current daily cycle of task allocation is much preferable to the weekly cycle which was the norm during the first lockdown. This new approach supports an ethos of “little and often”, allowing pupils to progress more effectively with their work during the course of the school week, and keeping their weekends free. (During the first lockdown, weekends had been viewed as a time to catch-up on the weekly quota of tasks, and this presented issues in terms of work-life balance for children and parents alike.)

Mrs Pacitti advised that both the Scottish Government and South Lanarkshire Council are keen that proper monitoring is in place, and in this regard there are currently no concerns with pupils’ pace and progress. There is a concentration at present on the core learning areas of numeracy and literacy. It is acknowledged that there will be a need for learning in other areas to be filled in, but the appropriate time to do this is when the pupils physically return to the school (on 22 February for P1-3 pupils, possibly March for P4-7 pupils).

Mrs Pacitti advised that all pupils will be contacted by their teachers by telephone during the coming week. This is in order to support the need for pupils to be fully engaged with teachers. The intended time for each of these calls will be notified via Google Classroom at some point this week.

Mrs Pacitti reassured parent members that pupils would not be disadvantaged (in terms of marking of work or reporting) if tasks were completed outwith the ‘standard’ daily cycle (for example, owing to the unavailability of parents to support a child with particular tasks at the initial time of task allocation, and having to submit tasks in the evening or on the next day). Mrs Pacitti advised that there is not an expectation that pupils attend each and every ‘meet’ with teachers, rather that there is a ‘baseline’ of expectation, acknowledging that there will inevitably be a level of catch-up required depending on the varying requirements of pupils within the context of their own particular domestic circumstances. Teachers will use their own judgement to establish the appropriate frequency of contact with individual pupils.

Mrs Pacitti agreed to advise teachers that the afternoon ‘meets’ should be limited in duration to around 30 minutes or so.

Mrs Pacitti advised that there is a good balance of teacher-to-pupil and teacher-to-teacher contact, with departmental meetings and 'Google Meets' among staff taking place on a regular basis. The communication arrangements have helped to give teachers a good understanding as to how well things are working across each of the classes.

There was some discussion on the specifics of daily task posting, with improvements suggested for the arrangement of documentation and tasks on Google Classroom, and the highlighting of the 'priority tasks' within the task lists that are provided each day.

Mrs Pacitti confirmed that parent reporting would take place on the dates originally planned, the next being Thursday 18 March.

The hub will continue to be run within the school for as long as is required.

### **3. Return to school for nursery and P1-3 children**

The school received confirmation today (16 February) that everything is in place for the return to the school on Monday 22 February of all nursery and P1-3 children (including the P3 children within the existing P3/4 composite class). This will mean that there will be five primary classes operating within the school. There will be a dedicated teacher and support assistant for each class, thus minimising the risk of cross-contamination between class 'bubbles'.

The children returning will follow the normal school day and a full timetable, including PE. School uniform and PE kit will be required as normal. Resource packs issued in January should be brought back to school by the returning pupils.

The pre-Christmas pupil drop-off and pick-up arrangements will continue, so that social distancing of parents at the various school access points is properly maintained. Parents will continue to require to wear face coverings whilst dropping off and picking up children.

There will be a focus for staff in the coming weeks on ensuring the P1-3 pupils are working as far as possible at the appropriate curriculum level, with the same for P4-7 pupils once they have also returned (hopefully in a few weeks' time).

The nursery will operate normal opening hours of 8.30am to 3pm, and will have a full complement of staff.

All staff have been issued with Covid-19 lateral flow testing kits and will commence their testing programme from this Sunday 21 February.

The possibility of concern amongst siblings was raised, whereby a P1-3 pupil returns to school (from 22 February) whilst their (P4-7) sibling requires to remain at home. The possibility in such a scenario of the siblings being confused regarding the relative risks of being back within the school environment was discussed. Parents were reassured that staff would be conscious of this and appropriate support would be available. Mrs Pacitti also advised that an NHS Scotland video (aimed at children) is available that addresses children's questions regarding Covid-19 and vaccination and she agreed this would be posted on the school's Twitter account.

#### **4. Any other competent business**

**Google survey:** Mrs Pacitti advised that it is still the intention to carry out a Google survey to garner views and feedback on the home learning arrangements, in particular to identify areas of anxiety or concern for pupils and parents.

**Breakfast club:** It appears that South Lanarkshire Council is currently considering removal of breakfast club funding as part of the current round of spending cuts. Mrs Pacitti advised that the current working assumption is that the breakfast club at St Bride's will operate as normal from August 2021. If Council funding for the breakfast club were to be cut, there is the potential to look to the private sector to run a similar facility at the school going forward. This is already happening in other schools.

**Sacraments:** Mrs Pacitti advised that the current dates for First Communion (P4 and P5 children) are still being worked to, whilst the date for First Confession (P3 children) is to be brought forward by one week so that Father Coyle and Father Hughes can both be involved. This will clearly be dependent on government guidance and there may be changes to the format of the day. This is obviously outwith the school's control.

**Next meeting:** to be arranged