**Parent & Carer Focus Group 2 Minute 31st April 2021 Teams 11am-12pm**

**Present**: Patrick Robertson (Head Teacher), Alison Hall (PT), MM (P7 parent, P1 parent), CR (Parent P2 and P4), ET (P1 and P3 parent) and DG (P7 parent and P3 parent).

**Apologies**: NA

**Rationale**

Mr. Robertson outlined the rationale behind the proposal:

* 2018-19 Pupil Council proposed that the afternoon break is taken away during discussion with the HT.
* The previous HT in discussion with Mr. Robertson agreed they would plan to proceed with a consultation around the timings of the school day, including the impact of the break on learning and teaching.
* Mr. Robertson took up the post of Head teacher in August 2019 and agreed to observe the current structure of the school day before proposing any changes.
* March 2020, school closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Consultation process so far**

The consultation process began in session 2020-21.

* Questionnaire was issued to families to gather their views on the proposed change to the end of the school day from 3.30 to 3.15 and change in lunch break from 12-1 to 12.15 to 1.15.
* Meetings have been held with Catering, Cleaning and Transport services.
* Consultation has been carried out with schools in the Learning Community including Balfron High School.
* Support staff and teaching staff have been surveyed.
* Mr. Robertson surveyed and visited all classes for discussion around the proposal.

**Discussion:**

-ET asked if there was any scientific evidence around the removal of the afternoon break, evidence appeared to be anecdotal. PR explained that all class teachers, who are experienced in how children learn, have described the negative impact of the break on children’s reengagement with learning afterwards, in particular momentum lost or refocusing. ET shared concern of negative impact on concentration of lack of afternoon break to split up this period of time. PR explained that teachers plan carefully the breadth of learning and subjects across the week and the afternoon would not involve all children being sat down for two hours in one curricular area. There would be natural transitions and opportunities for outdoor learning and a mix of learning approaches e.g., group work, paired work, whole class. AH repeated the concern around learning time being lost for younger children in preparing for an additional transition in the afternoon (whole school break) and then returning to their school work.

-MM said he felt the consultation had been extremely fair and thorough. All stakeholders had been involved and he trusted the views of teaching staff in their observations and the view that learning would be timetabled effectively for natural breaks whilst making the most of the time available. He would support the change. MM emphasized the learning opportunities available after school which underpin some of the pupil feedback.

-CR supported the change and the earlier finishing time for the reasons outlined for after school opportunities. CR asked about the option for lunch at 12.30pm rather than 12.15pm to make the afternoon session slightly shorter. PR explained that children, and some families, had commented that 12.30pm was quite late for lunch and children were hungry when this model was used initially for staggered breaks as a result of COVID-19.

-DG explained that when she was volunteering in the school, the time after the second break was not particularly valuable and would support the change.

-Group discussed that teachers’ would plan their timetable to meet the needs of pupils within their class. Older classes may sustain focus for longer periods of time. PR explained teachers have commented on the positive opportunities that a longer stretch in the afternoon, without an interruption, would provide for IDL projects and expressive arts lessons.

-AH explained in P1-3, opportunities for play and a mix of learning approaches would mean children have natural breaks and play involves learning. AH explained advice from Ed Scotland on children not sitting listening for too long and an afternoon without a formal break does not mean pupils would be expected to focus for unreasonable periods of time e.g., without moving around and that going outside would be a feature of learning and teaching.

-CR commented benefits of a snack in the afternoon and would hope this could still be factored in to any changes.

**Summary of next steps:**

* PR will share consultation with colleagues in Stirling Council
* Pupil feedback would be added to the school website.
* PR will update school community on the consultation outcome.