

Minutes of Meeting held 23rd March 2021

Agenda Items:

1. Welcome and Apologies
2. Approval of Minutes from previous meeting (28th January 2021)
3. Head Teacher Report
4. Treasurer Update
5. Fundraising Group Update
6. Composite Classes
7. Remembrance Garden
8. Fundraising / Project Playground / Outdoor Equipment
9. P7 Transition / Graduation / Dalguise
10. Seesaw / School Cloud
11. Dates of Future Meetings

1. Welcome & Apologies

Present:

David Williams (Chair)	Emma Carter (Member)
Anneli Spence (Secretary)	Rona Lockyer (Member)
Susan Henderson (Treasurer)	Jo Falconer (Member)
Andrew Buchanan (Vice-Chair)	Diane Jack (Member)
Alison Webster (Member)	Lorraine Slabbert (Head)
Morag Sorbie (Member)	Ruth Allan (Depute)
Kirsten Rodger (Member)	Shirley Gallivan (Depute)
Linsey Macmillan	Alison Bonner
Mhairi Bowley	Nicola Bonham
Liz Beney	Helen Hopper
Anne Marie Neilson	Joanne Gudgeon
Nicola Smart	Jonathan Narro
Denise Kelly	

Apologies:

Brydie Mclearnon

Laura Whyte

David welcomed everyone to the meeting (held as a virtual meeting over Google Meet due to the current social distancing rules). David noted that it was good to have so many people attending the meeting again.

2. Approval of Minutes: Minutes approved by all.

3. Head Teacher Report:

See Appendix I.

4. Treasurer Update:

There is currently £12,622 in the bank account. An invoice for £500 is due out next week for the Barrington Stoke books that were discussed at the last meeting.

5. Fundraising Group Update

Morag advised that there is not much to report since the last meeting. The fundraising team are planning another magic numbers style fundraiser soon. They are also considering other options, such as an online quiz and another car boot sale once that is allowed again. It's looking very unlikely that the fete will be able to go ahead this year unfortunately.

6. Composite Classes

Copies of the Stirling Council Organisation of Classes Policy and Parent Guide had been sent out to attendees in advance of the meeting for information.

Lorraine explained that, while she understood that composite classes were an area of concern for some parents, the school must stick to the Council guidance when organising classes and has no opportunity to waiver from it.

The school is already looking at class numbers and staff allocation for next session but won't have final numbers until May. Class organisation next year will depend on a number of factors such as enrolment numbers, staff numbers and whether the school is allocated any probationer teachers. The school also needs to comply with the maximum allowed class sizes, as well as leaving flexibility for children moving in and out of the school during the academic year. Putting the classes together is largely a mathematical exercise based

primarily on these numbers and then also looking at gender balance and catering for children with additional support needs.

Lorraine advised that the Council's class organisation policy had been recently reviewed (in 2019) but not much had changed since the previous version. Around 30% of Stirling area primary schools have composite classes in any given year.

Lorraine stated that while she understood there was often a lot of concern amongst parents at this time of year, by October/November most parents usually felt much happier with the situation. Additional support is always made available within the school for any children who are struggling with their class allocation.

Covid unfortunately has had a big impact on what the school can and can't do to encourage mixing between children in composite and straight classes in their year group, but this has been an unprecedented situation. Digital support has been put in place for the children in older year groups which has helped.

Based on current numbers, it looks as if there will be a bigger P1 next year (with 52 P1s enrolled so far) than this year and a smaller P7, however these numbers can still change.

The school cannot guarantee that some children won't be in a composite class 3 years in a row.

Susan asked for clarification of what the primary factor is for why composite classes are needed - is it staff numbers? Lorraine confirmed that was correct and that staffing levels were decided by Stirling Council.

Susan also mentioned that she had heard that Newton Primary does not have any composite classes and wondered how they can avoid it if DPS can't? Lorraine advised that it will simply be based on numbers, that this year they have been able to balance the number of staff and the number of children in each year. Lorraine is aware that Newton did have composite classes last year and the year before, for example.

Mhairi asked for an explanation of what digital support has been offered this year to make up for the lack of normal class mixing. Lorraine explained that for example the P7s have used google meets to collaborate on work with those in the P6/7 class. Mhairi explained her concerns about the lack of mixing for younger children especially - it is only possible outdoors at the moment and that is weather dependent. Mhairi asked what plans are in place to help mixing if Covid bubbles have to continue next session? Lorraine advised that the school would definitely want to continue and expand the use of the digital resources for this, but it is harder to do that with the younger age groups.

Lorraine mentioned that band width in the school can be a problem when using digital resources such as the chrome books to collaborate within the school. Alison Bonner asked if there were plans for that to be upgraded and what the action plan was for that. **Action: Lorraine undertook to contact Stirling Council to try to get that information.**

Denise noted that the Council's policy does not prevent repeated composite years but queried how the school approaches this issue. Denise advised that she had understood that in previous years the school had proceeded on the basis that children would not be in a composite class 2 years in a row - has this changed? Lorraine advised that classes are put together purely on the basis of the Council's policy, which does not prevent repeated composite years and this has not changed from previous versions of the policy. Lorraine cannot speak to what previous head teachers may have done but this has certainly never been Council policy.

Lorraine advised that evidence shows that, with appropriate wellbeing support, composite classes have no negative effect on the children involved. Teachers in year groups with composite classes also work closely together to ensure that there is consistency across the year groups to help to support the composite class children. Denise explained that her concern is more on the emotional side, rather than academic.

Denise asked for an explanation of the 'feathering' approach to class organisation which she has heard about. Lorraine explained that this was an approach where composite classes would be put together by alternating one boy then one girl etc, based on the youngest/oldest in the year group as appropriate. For the last 3 years, this approach has not been used at DPS and composite classes have been put together primarily on the basis of age alone. Gender balance is then looked at as a secondary factor as necessary. The school feels that using age as the primary factor in this way means that children in composites are kept with the same consistent group of friends from one year to the next and so always have peers in their class that they are familiar with.

Nicola Smart pointed out that only 40% of Councils in Scotland use age as the primary factor in class organisation. Nicola expressed her feelings that the P6/7 composite this year has not been a success and asked if the school would commit to not having composite classes for P7s in future. Lorraine responded that she was sorry but that was not possible - the school does not have discretion on class organisation and must stick to the policy.

Susan noted that it was clear that Council policy was the main issue here and queried how parents could challenge that? Lorraine advised that parents needed to challenge the class organisation with her as head teacher first of all. That challenge would need to set out the parent's specific concerns about their particular child being in the composite class. If the

parents were then not happy with the head teacher's response to that challenge then they could then ask the head teacher to raise a Stage 1 concern with the Council. If the parent felt that the Council's response to that was still not satisfactory then the complaint could be raised to Stage 2 level.

7. Remembrance Garden

Lorraine noted that this year has been a significant year, being the 25th anniversary of the tragic events at our school. The parent body as a whole had been supportive of the school's approach to marking the anniversary.

Back in 2019, we had been looking at renewing and upgrading the garden. The Council had agreed to these works and the planters and benches had been fixed and were looking great but then Covid had hit and everything had stopped. Recently, Ruth and Shirley's families have been maintaining the garden and have planted bedding plants.

Looking after the garden is of great importance to the school, the community and of course the families directly involved. Lorraine has recently spoken with some family members and they indicated that they would like to see more regular upkeep of the garden going forward, which the school absolutely supported. This would however need to be a joint effort between the school, the Parent Council and the wider community.

The Land Services team at Stirling Council have agreed to include the garden in their ongoing maintenance schedule but unfortunately all but 3 of their staff are currently furloughed and at the moment they don't have the capacity to do the work. Hopefully this can begin as we go towards summer with the Council working on the garden 4 times a year, which will be great. The Council is also going to help with purchasing new plants and advising on appropriate plants and flowers to use.

All of this is very positive but the school is looking for further support with garden maintenance in between the Council visits to balance the concerns of the families that not enough is being done.

Morag suggested that we contact the DDT/Dunblane in Bloom to ask if they can help. They do great work in the town already and Morag feels that the wider community should be involved here as the garden is important to the community as a whole.

Emma advised that she had previously emailed the DDT asking for advice about the trees in the garden in Nov 2019 but had not had a response. Emma queried if the school now had any more information about the trees and Lorraine advised they didn't but finding out about the significance of the trees would be part of the maintenance process.

Action: David will contact the DDT/Dunblane in Bloom again now on behalf of the school and PC to ask about the possibility of adding the Remembrance Garden to their maintenance rota.

Denise also suggested that we could contact the High School as a link to engage the pupils there with helping out, for example as part of their Duke of Edinburgh volunteering programme.

Anneli noted that parents had previously raised concerns about the lack of lighting in the garden area, which could be quite dangerous in the dark. **Action: Lorraine will raise this with the Stirling Council infrastructure team.**

8. Fundraising / Project Playground / Outdoor Equipment

Shirely was delighted to confirm that the school has been awarded grant funding of £10,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund for outdoor equipment. We can now proceed with getting the new trim trail installed, which is great news. The school had previously got a quote from ScotPlay for £16,706.94 to install a new trim trail, including all equipment, removal of the old structures, etc. Combined with previous grant funding from the Tesco Bags for Life scheme, the school now has £11,000 to fund the trim trail and requested funds from the Parent Council for the balance of the cost.

Jo Gudgeon queried if any of the new equipment would be accessible? Shirley advised that the first draft of the plan did not include accessible items but the plan was not finalised yet. Shirley will ask ScotPlay about what accessible options can be included. The school will also ask the children, families and the wider community about what they would like to see before any plans are finalised. There is a 6-8 week lead time to have the work done. Hopefully the equipment can be installed by the start of the summer holidays.

Denise asked if other quotes had been obtained to compare? Lorraine advised that the school had asked 3 companies for quotes but only ScotPlay had replied.

After discussion there was unanimous agreement that the PC should fund the balance of the cost of the new trim trail, up to £6000. All agreed this was a great use of PC funds and would benefit all of the children at the school and the community as a whole. Improving the playground has been an action point for the PC for several years and it is great to see this progress.

Ruth advised that the older children have also asked for bigger loose parts for the playground such as den building materials. The school would like to develop the loose parts for the older children as they have been such a success for the younger age groups. Den building kits including items such as tarpaulins, planks, nets etc are available for around £500. The school would also like PC funding to cover this cost. Again, following discussion the PC approved the further funding of £500 for additional loose parts for the older children.

Morag queried if there was any possibility of improvements to the outdoor classroom area in the P1/2 playground. Lorraine advised that there were major drainage issues with the ground there and fixing it would be a huge construction job and would be very expensive.

Shirley also advised that one of the school families had volunteered to fix the polytunnel this weekend and the school were very grateful to them for that.

9. P7 Transition / Graduation / Dalguise

Ruth noted that these issues were on lots of parents' minds at the moment.

On the transition, this is ongoing digitally through the google classrooms. The P7s have met online with Mr Ritchie from DHS and some of the current S1s. They have also taken part in online community builder tasks with P7s from Newton and St Marys. Ruth is meeting with staff from the other schools next week to discuss further plans for the transition. Hopefully visits to DHS will take place next term but they can't be confirmed yet. The feedback from last year was that parent transition sessions would be helpful so hopefully that will happen and information about that will follow.

Guidance about Dalguise will come out to parents next week. It is looking unlikely that the trip can take place but the schools are working on alternatives, such as activity days. Information for parents about refunds will come out soon. The school understands this will all be very disappointing for the children.

Dalguise has not yet been booked for next year, on Council advice.

For the graduation, the school is hoping to hold a ceremony outdoors this year. More information on that will follow. One of the P7 parents has also volunteered to coordinate P7 leavers hoodies/t-shirts like last year.

10. Seesaw / School Cloud

Lorraine thanked the PC for the funding for the School Cloud video conferencing for parents' appointments. The school has received very positive feedback on that and would like to keep using that in future. This will involve an annual payment.

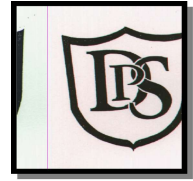
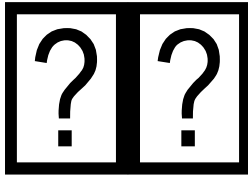
Andrew noted that there seemed to be issues with connections to the school network. Lorraine advised that was the case but some teachers preferred to make the calls from school rather than home for privacy reasons.

For Seesaw, the data store has now been moved out of Europe to the US. The service was previously free but the school has now been advised that, to keep using it, they will have to pay a fee of £2000/year. This would be a huge budget commitment. Seesaw is a great tool but unfortunately this cost is simply not affordable.

Andrew noted that Seesaw is fantastic for feedback, especially for the younger children and queried if there is an alternative? Lorraine advised that the fee is per pupil at £4/head so the school is looking at possibly just using it for the lower school - smaller numbers would mean a lower cost. The school is also looking at other options but there does not seem to be much else available.

11. Dates of Future Meetings:

Thursday 27th May 2021



Parent Council Meeting
Head Teachers Report
March 23rd Report

A significant day indeed for our parent council meeting as this was exactly a year to the day we closed the school doors and did not reopen again for all children until August 10th 2020. What a year it has been with lows for many but highs for us all as we navigated a new way of working and learning together as a school community. At the outset a huge thanks to parents and families for the support they have shown the school in the last year as well as the children who have done so well throughout this whole time. Life changed dramatically for them but they have worked hard, been strong through the struggles and have come back ready to learn and engage.

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STAFFING UPDATE –

Teaching Staff

Mrs Tobin continues her maternity leave but she is returning to school on June 21st to join us prior to the holidays.

Our PTP teachers. Mrs Collington and Mrs Russon are temporarily redeployed to Riverside Primary but we hope to see them returning after Easter.

Ms Anderson and Miss Hutton have ended their temporary posts as Principal teachers. We do however hope to have them as project leads for next school session in the areas of Learning for Sustainability and Digital lead.

Due to changes in staffing for session 21/22 we cannot at this time advertise a permanent PT post but will as soon as staffing allows.

Mrs K McKinney has intimated that she wishes to retire at the Summer break. Mrs McKinney is a well loved and respected member of the team and has been with the school for many, many years. Her passion has always been to see children flourish and progress and we wish her well in the next stage of her own flourishing and progression. I suspect climbing hills will be her next passion!

SLA staff

Miss Rebecca Lindsey is with us now on a fixed term contract until the end of June as well as Mrs Kate Gilmour on a supply basis. Both of these posts are funded through additional funding from Scottish Government for Covid recovery work. Both members of staff are doing targeted interventions and support in the upper years mainly.

Mrs Fisher returned from her career break on Monday 1st March and has now decided that she also wishes to retire from her post. Mrs Fisher has been with the school for a considerable amount of years and has supported hundreds of children throughout her time year. She has now indeed become a Grandmother and wishes to spend precious time with her family going forward. She will retire at the end of the Spring holidays.

Mrs Sheila McGregor has been absent for an extended period of time and is planned to return to work on Monday 29th March. We are delighted to be welcoming her back as will the children. She also plans to retire at the end of the Summer term.

Online Learning

Online learning ceased as of Monday 15th March for all children.

Our evaluations and parent feedback have been very, very positive and we absolutely can see that within the second lockdown our support for remote learning was more comprehensive and supportive. We can evidence this by parent emails and results of our parent evaluations which we shared at the previous meeting.

Going forward should a child/children in one family need to isolate we will offer e-Sgoil support to that family combined with google classroom. Should a whole class need to isolate then we will simply revert to the use of Google Classroom as our main support framework for that class.

Should a class teacher need to isolate, but not the class, then we will need to look at supply staff and a combination of senior management staff within school. There will be no guarantee going forward that the staff member employed to cover the class will necessary know the children previously as the supply and demand picture for supply in the authority at present is very challenging.

We now have our full quota of chrome books. We await the return of many of our chrome books from families who borrowed for remote learning. Once we have checked over and repaired the damaged ones we will be able to distribute to all P5, P6 and P7 children who have not got one as of yet from school.

Environment

The Council has been very supportive and has given a substantial amount of money to improve our learning environment in the early years both in terms of practical flooring and painting but also resources. This has been part of the play and learning project the school has been part of but it is making an impact even wider than just the early years.

In February there was a substantial amount of painting and flooring undertaken across the whole of the early stages corridor but also heading up into the middle stages corridor. It is looking marvellous and we would hope to continue as and when finance is available.

Newsletters

Since the beginning of the school session communication has been regular with HT updates going out every week in an attempt to ensure we keep connected but also to let everyone know information as soon as we have it.

With a full return to school for all the children the weekly updates will cease and we will return to a newsletter scenario. Communication will be ongoing of course when needed and appropriate.

2 INSET days

We had a very successful two days in February.

We targeted looking at equality and diversity and this will continue into next session as a school priority on our improvement plan.

We also undertook digital training with the regional collaborative which all teaching staff as well as senior management attended also.

We had a health and wellbeing session for all staff which was greatly appreciated.

Term 4

At this point in time it is quite hard to predict what we will and will not be able to achieve in terms of in particular transition work for our P1s and our P7s. There is a full online transition programme planned but we would hope to be able to try and do some in person events if at all possible.

We have also begun to have discussions in and around graduation/P7 celebration and will keep everyone up to speed with that as they develop.

We as a school are still required to send in ACEL data on attainment next term and since returning to school staff have been developing their understanding of where children are in relation to curriculum for excellence levels following the remote learning period.

Session 2021/22

Enrolment has finished for our new P1s and then the process of staffing etc. begins in the centre to allow us then to be looking at how we move forward in the creation of classes at stages across the school moving into next session. I have attached the guidelines for class composition for information as we have begun to receive calls regarding composite classes as this is often an area of concern for our parents. However it is the case that they will exist in the school and will do going forward. The policy attached sets out clearly what is done and how classes are constructed and what the teaching in classes looks like even though they are composite.

At this point we have no idea as to how learning will need to be delivered throughout next session due to this being directly related to the measures in place to reduce the transmission of Covid 19 and this is a very fluid situation as we have experienced in the last two school sessions. What we do know is if we have the need to return to remote learning our practice is well honed and we can act at any time. Of course we will continue to use many of the functionalities that have been in place this year which have proved to be of great benefit and successful such as google meets and google classroom and discussions will be had regarding school cloud for face to face parent sessions following its first trial this term.

Our school improvement plan for next session will include the continuation of some of the things that were there this year as the situation has not allowed us the chance to develop as much as we would have wished.

The staff have however continued to be involved in self-evaluation exercises throughout the year and we will have some new internal developments going forward from those. Parent body self-evaluation groups were postponed due to the fact that remote learning placed a level of pressure on families that we felt it was not wise to add extra pressure. They will resume going forward.

We are hopeful and enthusiastic as a school and we are forever thankful to the parent body for the support they have shown to us in this past year.