

Online Parent Council Minutes 7th November 2020

Present:

Parent Council Members:

Douglas Archibald, Neil Bennett, Jane Boyce, Lynn Bryce, Wand-Jane Field, James Heron, Pauline Heron, Katy Master, Emma McDevitt, Val Redpath, Helena Richards, Diane Sinclair, Sebastian Szulc, Dougie Turner, Anna White

School:

Bruce Robertson

Apologies:

Morag Mazzoni

1. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

Minutes approved from the last meeting in October.

Matters arising:

All matters arising covered in Rector's Report.

2. Chair's Report

Douglas thanked those that contributed towards the Pupil Equity Fund letter that was drafted last month but not sent. Secondary Headteachers have now written a joint letter to the Region.

3. Treasurer's Report

The account currently stands at £4,363.48.

4. 200 Club

1st Prize - £22.80 Eunice Brown

2nd Prize - £11.40 Kenneth Morton

3rd Prize - £5.70 Lisa Scott

Discussed ways of promoting and circulating details of 200 Club. Anna will produce flyer/detail for school website and the weekly Heads Up.

5. Rector's Report

The school calendar has been sent out to parents.

We have taken steps to address the issue of students smoking on the boardwalk. This has included patrols by the Rector and Depute Rectors, community police involvement, and contacting the parents of relevant students.

We have made good progress with the development of Praise Postcards, which should be ready to go in the next few weeks.

The issue of careers advice has been raised with the Senior Leadership Team. Peter Macklin (Depute Rector) is in the process of reviewing the structure and remits of our Integrated Student Support Team. Careers advice will form a part of this review. Colin Gracey (Principal Teacher of the Vocational Curriculum & Partnerships) is in the process of planning a Business Partnership event.

Students who completed Duke of Edinburgh last year have now been presented with their award. We are in discussions with the national governing body about how Duke of Edinburgh can proceed this year.

We are waiting to hear back from The Vine Trust about Tanzania 2021.

STAFFING

The start date of Clare Farmery (who is replacing Alice Caldock in our English department), is being held-up by a PVG delay. We are chasing this up on an almost daily basis. As soon as the PVG comes through, Ms Farmery can start with us. Classes continue to be covered by Beth Thomson, who is a qualified English Teacher.

We have an advert out for a temporary English Teacher. This is to back-fill the vacancy created by the appointment of Sarah Hughes and Derek Huffman to temporary middle leadership positions.

Moira Thompson (Languages) remains on personal leave. Her classes are being covered by Gail Scott. Ms Thompson is involved in setting and correcting work for classes, in partnership with other members of the Languages department.

Eric Aina (Maths) has left our school. We don't currently have plans to replace him.

Our head janitor, David Turnbull, is retiring on 30th October. David's successor is Roy Maxwell, who has already started with us.

We have appointed a new Science Technician, Marina McMillan, who replaces Caroline Butler. Ms McMillan is due to start with us within the next month.

We have a number of Student Teachers joining us this term:

- Anna Thompson (PE)
- Peter Mowat (English)
- Anita Malinovskja (Biology)
- Maria Waszyrowska (Music)

TIMETABLE

The move to double periods has been smooth. Students and staff are taking this in their stride. Some even report that they welcome this change.

NEW WEBSITE

This was launched on 21st October and has been receiving very positive feedback.

DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHING PRACTICE

We have put in place a comprehensive professional development programme for teaching staff and school leaders. This includes a Professional Reading Group, which has around 20 members. Fortnightly

Monday afternoon staff meetings are used for professional development, focusing on teaching practice.

We have developed what we call a Lesson Evaluation Toolkit (attached) for our school. This is designed to support self-evaluation, professional learning, improvement planning and quality assurance of teaching practice. I will discuss this with the Parent Council at our meeting. To support their professional development, every teacher has been developing a Professional Learning Plan (template attached). Again, I will discuss this at the meeting.

Once a week, the Rector, Depute Rector (Karen Thomson) and a Principal Teacher are observing a lesson together. We meet after this to discuss it in detail, before meeting with the teacher to discuss it. The process is designed to help develop a shared understanding of what high-quality teaching looks like in the Extended Leadership Team, and to support teachers to develop their practice.

Next week, we begin a programme of Faculty Reviews, starting with Technologies. This will take place over three days and include lesson observations and student focus groups. Following this, the faculty will develop an action plan to support their continuous improvement.

CURRICULUM REVIEW

We are in the process of reviewing our curriculum at three strategic levels:

- Macro: the subjects we offer, and the number of periods allocated to these
- Meso: the topics and themes within subjects
- Micro: the specific content of subjects To date, our review has been covering the macro-curriculum. Once proposals have been agreed, we will move into the meso- and micro-curriculum. I will present macrocurriculum proposals at our meeting, for discussion.

LEARNING LOGS

Informal feedback from parents are students continues to be positive. In particular, Learning Logs seem to be initiating more discussions about learning and progress at home.

Taking on board feedback from the last Parent Council meeting, teachers have been asked to make it clear in Satchel One where parents can access Learning Logs. This will usually be via the iPad, including OneNote and the Photos folder.

Also in response to feedback from the last Parent Council meeting, teachers have been asked to check that parents are signing Learning Logs and adding comments.

STUDENT VOICE

We are making good progress towards establishing a Student Council and in setting up various student committees. Ms Hughes is leading this work.

As of this month, Depute Rectors are meeting with a focus group of five or six students once a week. They are asking them questions designed to give the Senior Leadership Team information about teaching and learning in lessons, homework, use of iPads, the support they are getting, school ethos, things which are going especially well, and things they think could be better. This is discussed at weekly Senior Leadership Team meetings.

BUDGET MATTERS

Secondary Headteachers have written a joint-letter to the Service Director regarding our Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) carry forward. On the back of this, we are due to meet with the Service Director next week.

SQA

A letter went out to parents on 30th October explaining where we are with things. We await further information from the SQA.

PARENTS' EVENINGS

In the same letter, parents were notified that, for the moment, Parents' Evenings are on hold.

6. Matters Raised from Rector's Report

Some ex S6 pupils who completed Duke of Edinburgh have not received certificates. Could school clarify the position on Duke of Edinburgh, Jen Adie, Head of Science is the lead for this, schools view of nothing currently possible is contradicted by DofE website.

The position of Clare Farmery, ready to take up post but awaiting PVG. Committee enquired whether she would be permitted to start within the school, without teaching until PVG is confirmed? Would SBC allow this.

As reported by the Rector, parents confirmed that most children had adapted well to the double period timetable, however, some senior pupils were not enjoying the triple period sessions. Reports in the press and evidence of shorter periods being safer for children in the current climate were discussed. The Rector stated that classes would return to 1 and 2 period lessons when permitted.

7. Curriculum Review

The Rector gave a presentation on the Curriculum. This covered the work that has been carried out over the last 10 weeks reviewing the current curriculum and the proposed radical transformation. This includes pupil choice at the end of S1, personalisation in S2, work for N4/N5 commencing in S3, an increase in the number of N5 that pupils can sit in S4 and a move from 5 periods a week to 6 periods a week for Higher subjects.

The Rector highlighted the scope for more vocational qualifications to be offered and a broader range of subjects within the curriculum including global citizenship.

The Committee fully endorsed the proposals and were impressed with the speed of the work that has been done to date. The pressure on pupils of sitting additional exams was discussed and the need for studying guidelines to be issued. Moving forward there is a need to teach study skills. Senior pupils partnership with their guidance teacher is key in providing support in preparation for exams.

8. Professional Learning Budget

Within the development of teaching practice comments within the Rector's report a new professional reading group of approx. 20 staff was referred to. The region have held on to the professional learning budget which would have been used to purchase the necessary reading material. It was agreed that the Parent Council would contribute towards the next books. This would cost between £150-£200.

9. Newspaper Proposal

It was proposed that the Parent Council fund a newspaper/magazine subscription. Now that citizenship is mandatory for senior pupils, the access to newspapers would encourage interest in current affairs and debate. This was agreed in principle and the Head Team are to come back with an actual proposal.

10. Praise Postcards

The template for these has been finalised and Neil Bennett has negotiated a good deal to get them produced.

11. Reading of the 'Curriculum'

The Rector stated that there is a wealth of reading out there to help guide us and has given his own teacher's homework. The parent council are encouraged to read the publication 'The Curriculum'. An encouraging number of committee members showed interest in this.

12. Any other business

Timeframes for submission of work was discussed. Within the senior school deadlines differ from one teacher to the next and the time given to complete work. This is not helpful for pupils.

Appreciating that there will be no Christmas musical extravaganza this year would it be possible to plan an outdoor Spring event, a musical effort to bring everyone together.

An old fashioned Sports Day with parent inclusion was proposed. It is felt that the current format is a bit of a non event. Could an inclusive whole school event be planned?

13. Next Meeting 2nd December 2020 at 7pm via Microsoft Teams.