

# Parent Council Meeting Minutes

09 June 2015

## 1. Minutes from previous meeting

It was agreed that minutes should be distributed within 2 or 3 weeks of the meeting.

## 2. School update

### a. Events

- The P7 trip to Ben More was a success. The staff Miss MacIntyre and Mrs MacLeod commented on how children were very kind and helpful to one another. Thanks are addressed to Mrs MacLeod and Miss MacIntyre for giving up their time to look after the children over that week.
- On 13th of May the P5 graduated as Edinburgh Castle guides. They presented a story of Mary Queen of Scots to schools across the country during Gaelic school week. It was a challenging piece of work but provided good context to develop skills such as drama in the Gaelic language and teamwork. Thanks go to Ann Patterson and Historic Scotland
- The P4 are now just over halfway through their "sgoil na coille" or forest school session, led by volunteer Lucy Power. Lucy is one of the parents and she's completing her full training, this session being her last placement. The children have been completing a range of tasks in the woodland area of the park. They've been learning about keeping themselves and others safe by following key rules, a central part of the forest school philosophy, and have been developing their social and emotional skills. The session has been very successful
- The P6 and P7 led by Mrs McLuskey and Miss MacKinnon took part in the Edinburgh Glee event On Wednesday 3rd June. They won the award for best behaviour and attitude. the winners of the event were Clermiston primary.
- P1/2 and 4 went on a trip to Lauriston Castle as part of their work on castles
- P6 visited the Scottish Parliament as part of their work on democracy.
- P6 and P7 went to Meadowbank for an athletics event prior to the interscholastics. One of the P7 boys broke a long jump world record at the Interscholastics. The school also now has their own t-shirts for the event with the number 99 on it.

### b. Development Plan for next session

- Still draft targets but the plan for the following session is to focus on:
  - Consolidating progress made with key programs and courses across the curriculum.
  - Progression on maths, technology, sciences and Gaelic language skills
- Devise approaches on how to better engage learners in planning, evidencing and communicating progress in learning. This is looking at the personal learning planning

and looking at the way the school reports to parents and how the staff takes that forward in the school. This is somewhere parents will have a strong voice as discussions progress.

- Plan to continue work started this session on emotional well-being and positive behaviour management, to update behaviour management approaches and to begin the journey of becoming a rights-respecting school. This involves looking at the European Convention on Human Rights and use it as part of the ongoing work at the school and as a vehicle for making decisions about rules and practices across the whole school.
- Develop Outdoor Education Approaches at all stages to include the playground development, eco schools, sustainability, forest school and residential experiences. Hoping that Ann Paterson as the Gaelic Development officers will be able to work with the staff with regards to these residential experiences.

### c. Staffing

- Appointed Laura Young, currently a mum but also a one-day a week teacher at the school, on a permanent 3-day per week contract to deliver support for learning in English from P4 to P7 and to take a leading role in delivering English literacy.
- Mrs Grafton, the school business manager, has taken up her post at Council HQ and April Gerrard was appointed as her successor. She will start in August. April has experience with working as a school business manager at Dean and comes with a breadth of experience. Fiona Killen helped Anne with interviews for that post and thanks are expressed for giving up a whole day for what was a challenging job.
- PSAs: Several successful applicants from our community (via advertising through the newsletter) for supply PSA posts, these are currently being processed going through checks and so on.
- Teaching staff for next session: Thanks to Angus MacDonald for helping with interviews.
  - One candidate was interviewed for a post. Currently still 1 teacher short for next session. Most of that teacher is Mrs Wight's maternity leave. The post is therefore temporary and is therefore tricky to fill as Mrs Wight may be back in October but there's no definite date yet. Candidate interviewed was good but was looking for permanent post so has declined the offer. Will have to be creative to deal with days when teachers are in short supply.
  - Newly appointed teacher next session: Anna MacKenzie, from Lewis, will join the school in August to take up a year's contract.
  - Mrs McLuskey, music teacher and choir conductor will be leaving at the end of this term to take a sabbatical
  - Fiona MacIntosh, one of the PSOs has a place at Murray House to do teacher training
- Regarding conversation by email about retaining staff at Taobh na Pairce, discussions took place and the reasons identified for teachers moving on last session were: 1 teacher got married and moved up north, another moved away to be with her partner, one applied for a job but wasn't successful and one newly qualified teacher didn't apply for a post so nothing sinister. This session the school is losing 2

members of staff, one is moving to another part of the country, another is moving back to Ireland for family reasons. The reality with younger members of staff is that they are not necessarily going to stay here and this is something that the school has to manage.

d. Classing

- As it stands, the distribution of pupils for next session is as follows:
  - Clas 1A: 25 pupils
  - Clas 1B: 25 Pupils
  - Clas 1/2: 11 + 11 pupils
  - Clas 2A: 26 pupils
  - Clas 2B: 26 pupils
  - Clas 3A: 28 pupils
  - Clas 3B: 30 pupils
  - Clas 4: 33 pupils
  - Clas 5: 25 pupils
  - Clas 6: 30 pupils
  - Clas 7: 25 pupils
- Although nursery won't be at capacity in August, it will be by January.
- The full capacity of the building is 420
- Transition day for current P1-6 will be on Thursday 18 June
- P7 will be involved in a range of transition events Monday to Thursday

e. Community News

- Ann Paterson, the Gaelic Communication officer, has been busy taking forward the community's priorities and is setting up the Cheese and Wine party where about 80 people said they would attend.
- Deirdre Brock, a member of our community and a parent of 2 children was elected Member of Parliament for Edinburgh North and Leith. She was one of 5 new MPs to deliver their swear-in and oath in Gaelic.
- The school faire held on the 29th of May was a great success. Thanks are expressed to all those who contributed to the success of the event.
- Saturday 30 May there was the Gaelic community choir, Prasgan, performing along with Gilly at the church on Pirlig St. Almost £800 was raised for the Leith charity Home start.
- Congratulations to our football coach Martin Gaughin who got married last week.

f. Playground update

- The school is liaising with possible contractors, looking at 3 or 4 to deliver. No decision has been made yet.
- Still some technical issues about the boundary wall
- Need for preparatory work if contracts are agreed.
- Main work not to begin until the start of the next school year.

- plans are broadly based as they were before, main changes are:
  - scaled back tyre border
  - cone pit to put in a water feature
  - addition of a willow structure
  - more planting
- looking at ways to manage the different surfaces, sand etc to ensure they don't make it into the school, providing a transition space where children can brush off and change shoes before coming back in.

### 3. Eco-schools

Nothing to report at this stage

### 4. Working Groups

#### a. Events

- Jenny and Caroline send their apologies.
- The school faire was a huge success, making £2440 in profit. Over 60 parents volunteered. They went out of their way to not use ParentMail, relying instead on Facebook for the majority of communications. Use of Google docs for volunteers to sign up via a shared spreadsheet. Many children also said they had a really good time. Thanks to all who contributed to the success of the event, and special thanks to the event team - Caroline Hargreaves, Jenny O'Hara and Kirsten Donnelly for the huge amount of effort they put in to make the day such a success'

#### b. Finance

- Statement sent over from Fiona Cameron:
  - The current bank balance stands at £6795.81. From the balance there are cheques issued but not yet debited of £848.76, We banked a staggering £2886.85 from the Spring fair , well done events team a HUGE success. (last years event saw £2556.00 banked) (just need to check with the events team if this total includes the sale of tea towels and Bagg Beag or other items as they have been a separate fundraiser item, (on our spreadsheet)). Once all bills /receipts etc for any expenses for Spring Fair have been received and refunded we can pass the funds onto the school. Recently we have paid Super logo for C1 sweatshirts £487.50 and also recently paid hosting fees for our website. With regard to our website a Paypal account was opened and it is active.
  - Reminder for people to register and use <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk>. The current balance at the time of typing these notes is £264.09 (and counting) with 49 people registered to donate.

#### c. Freecycle initiative

- Mike Sutherland advises that the service is up and running on the Parent Council website under "Fundraising". The start of it has been slow due to not wanting to conflict with the school faire. The service is voluntary and people can donate whatever they don't need by sending an email which will then be turned into an advert on the website. There's a paypal button which people can use to make a donation to the school if they wish. Items stay on until someone wants to claim them.

## 5. Out of Catchment

Around November 2014, a notification was sent which stated should numbers continue to expand the catchment would revert back to being limited to Edinburgh only, though it always was Edinburgh only, and the priority for children to have a place at the school would be

- Edinburgh Residents
- Exceptions
- Out of catchment with siblings at the school
- Out of catchment with no sibling

This affects a number of families and about 8 weeks prior the parent council started canvassing opinions in terms of what we should do about it. A suggestion from Norma was to see if we could get parity for the out of catchment siblings with in-catchment siblings.

- This isn't a very big issue, it's estimated only 17 families are affected by this which amounts to 7 pre-school children with siblings at the school.
- Unlike other catchment issues, there is no other place for these children to go and receive GME.
- When GME was established at Tollcross it wasn't clear that the catchment limits were only the city of Edinburgh, the assumption was that it covered Edinburgh + Lothians.
- If families have to send their other children to a different school there would be logistical issues.

The Parent Council put all of this together in a letter along with some of the Parents' voices and some research and put it out for consultation to the Parent body. A variety of views came back and the consensus was to not send the letter to the council but to take a more informal approach. Also contacted Bord na Gaidhlig to see if they could help and Mary McMillan wanted to get the views of the parents affected. A meeting was arranged between Mary and the parents and although ultimately Mary could not make the meeting, she sent a representative and a round table discussion around the issues took place.

A lengthy discussion took place to establish what is the best way forward with all of this. A question was raised about whether it was possible for the council to make an exception for siblings of children already at the school but living out of catchment. Norma Martin from the Edinburgh council was kind enough to join us at the meeting and raised the following points:

- Historically the catchment area was the Lothian region, when it became city of Edinburgh + East, Mid and West [Lothians] it just carried on being Edinburgh + Lothians

- No written agreement between local authorities
- GME has grown organically over the past 30 years but Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness are the only ones affected by this problem
- The school is the only option for GME in and around Edinburgh
- A question was raised about whether the local authority can provide exceptionality, and whether this is a legal or a policy issue [Editorial note: it was later discovered that one of the four options the council has proposed for Towerbank Primary includes guaranteed places for out-of-catchment siblings, so this is something it is possible for the council to do.]
- It would be helpful to get a policy on this decided at the national level.
- Comann nam Pàrant are a good body to discuss the issue at the national level.
- Use the fact that other schools are facing the same problem to our advantage, as is the case in Glasgow.
- However it is not in the local authority's benefit to refuse children places, they will do all they can to place children at the school.
- New legislation requires local authorities to report on the demand for GME and how they are meeting it. Right now the council is meeting it and they will continue to do all they can to meet that demand.
- Cosla recommends that local authorities coordinate and provide for each other.
- The law does not differentiate who can be eligible for GME, it is open to everyone.
- The council commitment for GME is purposely "wooly" to leave room for growth. The only commitment made is for development and nothing more specific than that.
- The council would work to accommodate the children into the school, even out of catchment ones, not out of altruism but because the alternative is an administrative mess.
- In Tollcross, for 4 or 5 years the numbers were way over the school limit

Anne said that the school contacted Andy Grey, head of schools, but that he said he wasn't prepared to make a decision on the subject at this stage but didn't dismiss the request altogether.

**Action:** Organise an informal discussion with Andy Grey as soon as possible, preferably before the holidays.

## 6. Staffing Issues

There was a bit of confusion regarding the email that went round regarding this issue. The Parent Council isn't trying to take any specific action or make decisions, only trying to suggest an idea to BnG on how they might help to ease the teacher shortage

## 7. AOB

Building site status:

- Anne and Andy May met with representatives of Silverfields and they looked at the traffic issues etc..

- Persimmon Homes has taken over the building site therefore the planning process has started over. Consequently the previous work done with the previous contractor will likely no longer be valid.
- Next step: planning permission goes to “development control”
- Planning officer to discuss the process going forward with Anne and other representatives to ensure that the voice of the school and parents is heard.

#### PC continuous improvement

- received a “self-valuation toolkit for parent councils” from the City Council.
- also received financial guides.
- copies of both will be available

#### Dates:

- Cheese and Wine party on Wednesday 10 June
- Ladies Night on Friday 12th of June
- Community engagement brainstorming session, Thursday 18th of June at Joseph Pierce’s

Fiona sent an email regarding after-school clubs, what is achievable and what can be done to organise some of them.