

Kirknewton Primary School Parent Council meeting minutes
Tuesday 29th March 2022 (held via Zoom) @ 8pm

Present: Pip Shiels, Lesley Dicker, David Massey, Adele Murphy, Isla Veal, Kirsten Patience, Angela Herkes, Laura Stewart, Sarah McNee, Sara Wilczynska, Ross Blackwood, Angela Hogg, Simon Fuller, Sharon Scott, Amanda Blainey, Geraldine Lucas.

Apologies: Fiona Cain, Kara Payne, Pamela Berry.

1. Welcome and Apologies (PS) - all office bearers introduced.
2. Approval of previous minutes (PS) - agreed.
3. Head teacher update (KP):

Staffing update - Mrs Payne has now returned after absence. There have been numerous Covid absences across the school of late. Donna (lollipop lady) has also returned this week following absence. Mrs Winchester has taken on the role of Early years practitioner in order to back fill Michelle Blair who left before Christmas. This opens up another space for a Pupil Support worker. Mrs Murphy is about to go on Maternity leave - post has been advertised within the authority.

School fund balance - KP will be updating the Parent Council twice a year (advice came from audit). Current balance of the school fund is £11,992. Items to come off this balance is money for School Camp, uniform money, after school clubs, charity money, dress down day collections, excursions, etc. Fund is constantly evolving. There will be approximately £4000 as a remaining balance moving forward once all items are paid for. This is more like a holding fund for money coming in and out of the school but separate from devolved budget (staffing, etc). KP to report on this every second PC meeting to give us an overview.

Pupil Council update/Outdoor learning - KP has consulted with pupil council to develop the school grounds. First job was to gather opinions from pupils in the school and feedback to the pupil council to share ideas with all. KP shared a PowerPoint with all of this data. The link to this will be available on the school website. Some ideas are to have more outdoor learning spaces, mud kitchen, music outdoors, pergola, tyre track, reading shed, greenhouse, etc. Looking at ways to begin more fundraising. This will be an ongoing journey with an aim to be completed by 2023/24. Willow structure - growing tall and not well looked after. Children are learning how to weave the willow rods to help to maintain it. Learning how to weave for the allotment. Gardening club which existed pre-Covid - Susan Campbell who ran this club is off on a Wednesday and is keen to still be involved with the school. Will be in touch with KP. Looking to reach out to parents in the school community who could provide the school with their skills and talents. KP will look into this moving forward to allow us all to work together. New structures need to be built with agreement from WLC and to ensure safety for the school.

Plans for the Summer term - May is going to be a busy month. More information to follow for parents and carers. Introducing Spanish from a cultural perspective led by MFL leads. Three days will be spent focussing on Spain and its culture. Health week - Sports day aspect on Monday and Thursday. Hoping that parents and carers can attend this depending on Government announcements. Tennis coach coming back this year. Dance instructor is also coming in. First aid with Mrs Cockburn and Mrs Walkingshaw. Smoothie bike coming into school. Nichola Jorgenson coming in to do some orienteering with classes. Sports days as part of Health week organised by Mrs Davidoff. Judo coaching throughout the week. School trying their best to engage families in line with the Equalities programme. Miss Lewis has been in touch with inspiring individuals from the Paralympics and has been in contact with Jonathan Paterson, who is the Scottish Football coach (will be in school after the Easter break). Arranged a sponsorship opportunity through JP and his team and challenges will be set for the children to help raise funds for the school (PE equipment, outdoor materials, etc). Sponsorship forms coming home this week. The following week will be based on the Platinum Jubilee. Context for learning will be the Queen and the Queen's life, her role across the Commonwealth, Royal estate, etc. The children will also be meeting one of the Queen's horses. Showcase of learning on 2nd June to families. Hoping to host a tea party for more elderly members of our school community. Awaiting confirmation of this at the next Head teachers meeting.

Photographer options - KP has investigated and found 2 options - Wilson Photography and Colour photo. Individual and class photos. KP asked if the Parent Council could take the lead in surveying parents to see what they prefer and get a wide range of views. Other schools are using these providers successfully. Tempest is also an option but the general feeling is that they are too costly. Parent Council will put together a survey for parents/carers.

Responses to questions raised by parents (PS/KP) -

- ***When will the school crossing assistance be available? If Donna is not well, the parents need to know as my daughter asks about her daily. She wants to make a card for her to get well soon if she is not well.***

I appreciate that the children would like to know the circumstance of absences. However, this is really down to the individual member of staff if they would like this information shared. On this occasion, the staff member has not requested that this information be shared. However, I am pleased to advise that Donna returned to work today.

- ***My daughter told me if she doesn't drink milk at school, is there a way to know if my child is eating and drinking well as a part of a parent update?***

Staff try to be vigilant regarding the eating of snacks, lunch or drinking of milk. I will remind staff to keep a note of milk so that this does not happen in the future. Mrs Murphy and I keep a close eye on the eating of lunches in the hall. We ask that children take anything home that they do not eat so parents and carers are aware of what has not been eaten. We also regularly call home if we have concerns.

- ***Would it be possible for a message to go out to parents first thing in the morning when their class teacher is going to be off sick? I know logistically this may be tricky, but some children will find expecting to see their class teacher and instead being told they are off for the day and this other person is teaching them tricky.***

I absolutely appreciate that this is challenging for some children. However, when we hear of a staff absence, our priority is to organise cover for the class. This can sometimes take until after the school day has started, which often means a member of the leadership team is in class until this is organised. Not only would this be challenging organisationally, we might often be sharing information, which would change very quickly, confusing the children further. We appreciate the understanding of the parent/carer body while we deal with current staffing pressures due mainly to the ongoing Covid pandemic.

- ***Start and finish times - will they return to normal?***

Staff feel like this staggered start and finish is helpful for younger pupils as they can avoid the crowds and rush when all arriving and leaving at the same time. If any parents have further queries, please contact Parent Council class rep who will raise with PS & KP again for further consultation.

- Is it possible to raise a concern about the lack of communication from nursery again at parent council? It appears to be consistent across the board that learning journals are not being used. It would be helpful to know how often parents could expect these? There are parents talking about 'nursery natter' happening today. Several of us have not seen any sign-up sheets or been prompted to book in.

Due to staff absences in the Nursery, the Learners Journals have not been updated as often as we would like, as staff have not been able to receive the time off the floor to complete these. The minimum we would expect to see is 2 x Health and Wellbeing, 2 x Literacy and 2 x Numeracy. This was a West Lothian Council agreement. However, when staffing is at full capacity, we would expect a lot more.

The Nursery Natter was shared within the March Sway. We appreciate that parents and carers might not have seen the sign-up sheet due to not being able to enter the nursery. The staff will endeavour to ensure these things are mentioned at drop-off or collection times. We also plan to put a whiteboard outside the nursery to communicate important messages.

We plan to consult with our nursery parents and carers in the very near future about communication, as we are aware that this continues to be a concern for both staff and parent/carers.

4. **Brief updates on matters discussed at the last meeting –**

- **P7 Residential** – On behalf of the P7 parents, PS thanked KP and the school for taking the risk and planning a P7 residential this year, especially when other schools did not. This took a lot of planning but all very worth it. Children were so happy during the experience and KP thanked the staff who attended also. The P7s had an amazing time and it was such a wonderful and valuable experience for all of them. Pupils are putting together a montage of their learning from their time at Lendrick Muir and plan to upload a promotional video on the school website in order to share information with the next year group to attend and with the school community.
- **Bikeability** - Mr Buckley did this in the past with P6 but is currently absent. Mrs Davidoff will pick this up in the Summer term. P6&7 will be involved and all classes will have an opportunity to cover Bike safety. After-school club will run from P4-7. Application for this will be issued via a Google form.
- **Music provision** - This was raised at the last meeting and no update available but there may be an update at the next meeting in June.
- **Kirkie savers** - Fairly good uptake. West Lothian Credit Union accounts which children can use to save up every second week. 18 new applicants since November. 21 children in total are paying in at the moment.
- **MUGA lines** - The lines will be drawn during the Easter break weather permitting. This has been very successful and is a great learning space.

6. **Update from Focus Groups (LD and focus group leads)**

- **Communications** (SM) - P1 transition packs have been discussed (what should be included), school website update with more to follow in coming months.
- **Funding applications** (LD) - Erin White and Fiona Cain are working closely with PSA to look at funding applications for outdoor learning.
- **Sustainability** (LD) - Claire Jack is the lead working with Mrs Dunlop and Miss Hocking. Keen to recruit a new member - please let Lesley Dicker know if you are willing to join this group.
- **Health & Wellbeing** (LD) - LD and Mrs Murphy worked together and RRSA Silver award achieved. Information has been passed on to families.

7. **PSA update (AH)** - Looking for some new members so please contact class reps if you can help out. £2300 balance in the bank with £750 of this portioned off to pay for leavers hoodies and leavers events. This leaves £1500 as a remaining balance. Easter fundraiser in the Green Room on 10th April. Simon Fuller (has been treasurer for 4 years) will step down soon and is looking to recruit for the role. Excellent year for fundraising. Next meeting for PSA on 19th May in the Green Room. All are welcome.

Date for next meeting: Wednesday 1st June 2022 at 8pm