

## Minutes of Kirknewton Parent Council Meeting – Monday 30th January 2023

**Present:** Pip Shiels, Kirsten Patience, Fiona Wright, Kara Payne, Turid Engstrom, Becki Stewart, Emma Marshall, Fiona Cain, Victoria Guthrie, Barbara Dunlop, Pamela Berry, Amanda Blainey, Julie Thynne, Angela Herkes, Geraldine Lucas, Sarah McNee, Lyndsey Robertson

**Apologies:** Leslie Dicker

1. **Welcome and Apologies (PS)**
2. **Approval of previous minutes: agreed**
3. **Head teacher update (KP)**

a. Staffing update

Ruth Ansah has left the nursery staff. Angela Duffy is now working in nursery (she was originally in p1-3 - she is staying there for approx. 1 hour per day, while also working in the nursery). Angela Ritchie will return to work in the nursery soon. Rebecca Walkingshaw will return to work in the school soon. Adele Murphy will return part time to her Principal Teacher role from the 20th March, Monday-Wednesday. Therefore Barbara Dunlop will also continue to be acting principal teacher for the foreseeable future.

b. Update on outdoor spaces

Next big dig will be on the 13th May. It has to be that far away as the school is struggling with orders at the moment - things are taking 6-8 weeks to arrive. The plan for the big dig is to build teepees, a potting shed; painting the fence in the seating area; digging in some more tyres; finishing off the pyramid - all following work started at last Big Dig.

c. Cost of the School Day

The school is very aware of the costs, especially given the cost of living crisis. We're always very mindful of what we ask from parents/carers. We have now decided ways to do things in the future: making sure there are two paydays before every trip; offering parents/carers opportunities to save up for trips throughout school year. School now has a Poverty Proofing Statement, so this can last in the long term.

iPay impact: Two new categories have been added into iPay - a space for parents to save for trips; school will encourage parents/carers to start to save for trips from start of school year up until October holiday.

Dress down day - at the start of school term parents can put in money for the entire year, and you can take from it during the school year for dress down day.

The idea is to create different ways for parents/carers to pay for things - it can be used to save in advance for trips or different things. If a child moves school during the term, the school can give the money back.

Use of money from dress down days (which is not very high amounts): currently split between PSA and charities the school supports. We can look at this again and see what the best use of the money will be.

d. P7 camp

Letters have gone out for this recently. The plan is for children to go away in September, for 3 nights/4 full days. We have chosen to do that to keep costs down, given rising costs. This way the children are given the chance to have those 3 nights/full days, leaving on the Thursday, to get home at 8pm, so that the children get a full day but keep the cost down. A one day outdoor learning opportunity will also be planned for the P7s later on in their P7 year.

#### **4. Responses to questions raised by parents (PS/KP)**

From nursery:

Q1: Has Mrs Ritchie left?

A: No, Mrs Ritchie is still with us and hopes to return to work soon on a phased return. We appreciate that she has been absent for some time. When she is about to return, we will update the community on this.

Q2: Will the nursery plan any further stay and plays as they have been greatly appreciated by the parents?

A: Yes, Mr Connelly and I have been discussing this recently and there are more planned. The dates will be shared soon.

Q3: I know it isn't at all a school issue but, I was wondering if the school would be able to support the parents in some way shape or form that are picking up their nursery children at 11.54pm and then having to around the school grounds or in our cars until 12.30 to pick up their siblings from school. I'm not sure what I'm hoping... it's just annoying and seems like a complete lack of oversight from government/people placement?

A: Unfortunately, we would be unable to do anything as all of the staff will be in meetings/training. The best option for parents/carers would be to bring this up in future consultations from WLC.

Other:

A number of questions were received in relation to one particular class - this feedback has been passed on and discussed with the class teacher and those sending those questions will receive responses to their concerns.

Q4: Can you please ask if start/finish times will go back to pre Covid or will they stay staggered?

A: Following consultation with the community and staff last session, we feel that the current start and finish times work well and so these will continue. It means the younger children do not have to navigate older children at the end of day. It also allows parents of P1 – P3 children to be around the front of the school in time for their P4 – P7 leaving the school.

Q5: Breakfast club: why do they not have games/paper/pens/small activities etc like they had pre-covid? Will this be reintroduced?

A: Yes, we have started introducing music at this time and will shortly be consulting with children about what other things they would like to see during breakfast club. We have started with the lunch hall experience.

## **5. Updates from Focus Groups (KP)**

### **Languages group**

This is the only group that hasn't quite worked as planned this year. Still working with colleagues in France, the p6/7 children have been involved in that. We had hoped to do something during languages week but haven't managed to this year. However language ambassadors and staff leading that are working on some exciting work with a focus on languages.

PS: The links with the school in France was meant to be part of a whole village twinning project, but it looks like there aren't currently enough people in the Kirknewton community who can take that forward.

### **Website group**

We have had a meeting to discuss the website, the parent representative is seeking parent feedback, and the group is looking at what works well and what could be improved. West Lothian Council been consulted about the website, as much of the functionality lies with them. The information we gather will go back to West Lothian Council.

Within the Sway, KP will signpost parents/carers to the website and keep it as relevant and up to date as possible.

### **Outdoor learning group**

The group has been really successful, with the success of the Big Dig. Recent call has been put out for loose parts for play to contribute to the work of the group. KP encouraged community members to bring things from nature that could be part of the play resources for use by the children. Also leftover material would be useful (e.g. old scarves, curtains).

### **Health and wellbeing group**

Barbara Dunlop: The first meeting with parents was held last term. Started work on Health Week - looking to widen it out to different representatives from different sports that children may not have had much exposure to. Also looking to capture skills our children already have, and support peer to peer learning. Health and Wellbeing champions in school are in support of plan for peer learning workshops, which children will be able to sign up to. The Health and Wellbeing focus group would like to offer the opportunity out to parents as well to come in and share a skill or passion they have within the school. Large cohort of children are focused on football, which can lead to arguments - we are looking to widen out the kinds of playground games our children might enjoy playing. After the summer holidays the active sports coordinator will come into the school to teach the P6/7 children some other games that they can then teach to the other year groups in the school.

Give Racism the Red card is on the group's radar, but they are very expensive and have a long waiting list for this year.

The group is also looking to focus on healthier snack selection. Children will be making posters about healthier snacks.

### **Curriculum group**

The group has a very successful meeting, lots of information from partners and parents in October, about skills and knowledge the children are learning and why. At Christmas the Senior Leadership Team created a Twelve Days of Christmas challenge to play about with the skills and begin to develop them. Varied success levels and staff have been able to

identify skills that are not so well developed yet. Children enjoyed the activities and felt they were valuable. Staff are looking to pull those skills into classroom learning, to be done consistently across the school. It has been a really beneficial activity and we'll be feeding our plans back to the people that were part of that group. The curriculum document is now on the school website. A consultation with the children and with the parents/carers will be going out soon. An invitation for the second curriculum cafe will go out soon. These efforts were recognised in the West Lothian Leadership Head Teachers meeting recently, mentioned by the education officer.

Barbara Dunlop advised looking at school twitter feed for updates from the children's learning in these areas.

## **6. Wee updates (KP):**

### **a. Pipe band lessons**

Pipe band is going well. There are currently 8 children learning chanter and 6 children learning drums.

### **b. QR code check-in/The Den**

The QR code check-in system is going well. We did it for p4-7 at the beginning, the teachers have been keeping an eye on it so we're not getting too many requests for the Den or 1-1 conversations with adults. The children who have used it so far have done so for appropriate reasons, and it's enabled conversations with those children. Some QR codes have been sent home with the children in a few cases, so that children have them in the house, if we feel a child is requiring that. There hasn't been use of the QR codes in the community. KP thinks it's important to keep them in the community, as you never know when a child will feel the need to use it. KP receives an email every time a child uses it. We can see some data in terms of getting it right for every child.

Mrs Dunlop has consulted with the children about the den space - children have contributed ideas about that.

### **c. Finance**

KP gave budget update, with breakdown of use of School Fund. Income from donations, fundraising, and carry over from last year. Good use was made of the system of costs for the pantomime being flexible according to different families' circumstances.

## **7. PSA update - Fiona Cain**

Christmas fundraising was very successful. The Christmas Fair, the Christmas cards, and selling bags in the community. Raised just over £2000 altogether. Today received confirmation of £200 contribution from the council towards school trips. PSA will shortly look at funds and see how they can support the school.

FC encouraged others to think about joining the PSA, especially as some parents' children are moving on to high school soon. Thanks to everyone involved in supporting the events this year so far.

Date of next PSA meeting will be shared via school email soon.

## **8. AOB**

PS - proposal of support group for parents of care-experienced children or children with additional support needs is being taken forward. First meeting will take place Thursday 9th Feb at 7.30 in the Green Room. It will be an opportunity for parents to come together to share experiences and offer help and support to each other.

The hope is that this support group will feed into a focus group for the next academic year that will look into needs of neurodivergent children and how well supported they are in school and how that can be improved.

KP: It would be good to be able to advertise events and groups like this on the school website - we will look to get a parent council tab on the website where this kind of thing can be posted.

## **9. Date for next meeting:**

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March at 8pm (note change of date – was previously to be 29<sup>th</sup> March)

Zoom link & details for meeting:

<https://us05web.zoom.us/j/85824484062?pwd=d0FJeEhIRmdZbEZqSVYvRlFnM0hodz09>

Meeting ID: 858 2448 4062

Passcode: r8bMLp