

Kirknewton Primary School Parent Council AGM, Wednesday 30th August 2023

Present:

Pip Shiels, Kirsten Patience, Fiona Wright, Sarah McNee, Isla Veals, Lyndsey Robertson, Turid Engstrom, Nicola Ihmig, Amanda Blainey, Becki Stewart, Julie Thynne, Sam Winwick, Barbara Dunlop, Meenakshi [last name unknown], Adele Murphy, Victoria Guthrie, Sara Shaw, Mary Turner

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies: Laura Stewart (P6 rep)

2. Chairperson's report

There is nothing like writing an annual report to mark the passage of time. To me it seems absolutely no time since we looked back at what Parent Council were involved in in 2021/22 and here we are with another year to reflect on. This was a positive year in many ways, both for the school and for Parent Council. The subgroups which had proved a positive and effective way of joint working between the school and parents continued with 5 new groups forming for last session. Previously these had been led and managed to a greater extent by Parent Council, but last year the group topics were chosen by Mrs Patience, Headteacher, in discussion with school staff and myself, and were based on development areas identified in the school improvement plan. It worked well having the responsibility for the groups sitting with Mrs Patience, especially as we didn't have a Vice Chair last year, and it is pleasing that an idea that began with Parent Council has been adopted by the school. The 5 groups which ran last year were The Curriculum Group, The Website Group, The Health and Wellbeing Group, The Outdoor Learning Group and The Languages Group. All groups made some advances in the area they were developing, with significant successes in The Curriculum Group, The Outdoor Learning Group and The Health and Wellbeing Group. Thank you to all Parents and Carers and School Staff Members who contributed to the work of these groups, whether as group members or in joining in with aspects of the work they were doing. It really is an example of the benefits of spreading the workload and that if lots of people contribute a little then a lot can be achieved. A very clear example of this is the huge progress that was made to the outdoor learning environment with the 2 Big Digs. These involved lots of members of the school community, from tiny children upwards, joining together for 2 Saturday mornings to dig, build, shovel, wheelbarrow, paint, plant and probably many more activities to develop the much enhanced play and learning areas. A lot of fun was had and it was also really good for building community.

We ran 3 Parent Council socials last year. The first was really well attended, including a number of parents and carers who were new to the school, and often to the village. It was a great way to welcome them, for them to meet other parents and carers to chat, and also to find out more about the school and the village. The

subsequent 2 weren't as well attended, but were fun evenings nonetheless and those that came along enjoyed them. This year we plan just to run one social which is next Friday, 8th September, in order to welcome new Parents and Carers and to give an informal opportunity to ask questions about Parent Council and the subgroups – there will be no pressure to get involved though, so please don't let that put you off!

We started our support group for Parents and Carers of children who are care experienced or who have additional support needs back in February. This group met once a month on a Thursday evening and will continue this session, with the first meeting being held on Thursday 14th September. As an adopter, foster carer and parent of children with additional support needs myself I know that at times it can be a lonely journey and a combination of this and discussion with other Parents and Carers led to this group beginning. It is for anyone who thinks it would be helpful no matter where you and your child are on your journey and no matter how small or great their support needs are. It is a small informal group where we chat over tea and biscuits and also share information and resources we have found helpful. We really need to come up with a name for the group – perhaps we'll come up with one when we next meet. It is really exciting that one of the subgroups for this year aims to develop understanding of neurodiversity and support for neurodivergent children and parents/carers and the support group will be able to feed into this.

We will shortly go on to discuss the subgroups for this coming year, but before we do this I want to finish with a few thank yous:

- thank you to Fiona Wright for all her hard work as our secretary this year and for writing such thorough minutes for us and getting them sent out so quickly.
- thank you to Kirsten Patience and the school staff for all that they do for our children and for us as families. Kirsten, you have developed the school in so many ways since you became headteacher and it is a pleasure working with you on some of these developments.
- I also want to acknowledge the huge way that 2 of the parents of the p7s that left in June have contributed to the school. Neither are here tonight, but I still feel it's really important to acknowledge them. Fiona Cain and Debbie Douglas have been parents of children in the school since their eldest children started nursery in 2010 and 2011 respectively. They have both been very involved in many ways over that time but particularly with the PSA. They have both contributed hugely to fundraising over the years and our children benefit from much of what that money was spent on and we are grateful – thank you ladies for all your hard work. They are both an excellent example of how we as parents and carers can get involved in the life of our school – in small ways or bigger ways – and how by working together we can make somewhere great even better!

3. Proposed Sub Groups for 2023/24 (in line with the school improvement plan) & volunteers:

Getting It Right for Every Child – Turid Engstrom, Victoria Guthrie, Isla Veal

- Aim is to help promote Getting It Right for Every Child; and the values of: safe, nurtured, responsible, achieving; and health week; children told us about this and parents' concerns were gathered through ethos survey.

Outdoor Learning – Turid Engstrom

- Aim is to maintain great work done last year

Equality for Everyone – Turid Engstrom

- Aim is to develop understanding in the wider school community of what neurodiversity means and provide support for parents/carers and neurodiverse parents and young people

After School Clubs

- Aim is to establish possibility for after school activities drawing on wider community skills and resources

100 years of Kirknewton Primary School – Sara Shaw, Meenakshi [last name unknown]

4. Election of office bearers

- Chair – Pip Shiels (nominated Amanda Blainey, seconded Turid Engstrom)
- Vice Chair – Amanda Blainey, from the new year; Victoria Guthrie, in the interim (nominated Pip Shiels, seconded Turid Engstrom)
- Secretary – Fiona Wright (nominated Pip Shiels, seconded Victoria Guthrie)

5. Election of Class reps

- Nursery – Ashley Mackenzie
- P1B – Victoria Guthrie
- P1M – Turid Engstrom
- P2 – Samantha Winwick
- P3 - Amanda Blainey
- P4 - Sara Shaw
- P5 - Sarah McNee
- P6 - Laura Stewart
- P7 – Julie Thynne

6. PSA

Numbers of parents in PSA has been decreasing, and there is currently no chair/secretary. There is still a treasurer. Previously it was discussed that the PSA could amalgamate into the PC, but there hasn't been capacity to do that work. There is now a lack of volunteers for the PSA such that it is no longer viable. We need at least 5 volunteers who would take on those roles. If we don't have enough volunteers by mid-September we will dissolve PSA, and the school will continue to

function without a parent fundraising group for the time being. Funds will be kept and ringfenced by the school for aims it was raised for. Information to be sent out to community within the next week.

7. Proposed dates for future meetings (to be held via Zoom until further notice):

- Thursday 2nd November 2023
- Tuesday 23rd January 2024
- Wednesday 20th March 2024
- Tuesday 4th June

Social: Friday 8th September

8. Thanks and Conclusion of AGM

Parent Council meeting, following AGM

1. Approval of last minutes

Approved.

2. HT Update (Kirsten Patience)

Staffing: Miss Buchan (P3) will not continue with her probationary year; Miss Morgan has been recruited to replace her.

The school has had a really settled start to 2023-2024 session. School is busy and happy since the start of term. Thanks to parents and carers for help with this.

Potting Shed: At back gates of the school there will be a potting shed to go in the playground. Construction company will be coming to build it, to be ready by the October holidays. It will be a space for outdoor learning.

School will be going through a Validated Self Evaluation with WLC. Due for the last Monday/Tuesday in January. We would be happy if some parents/carers can attend a parents session as part of this. This is our opportunity as a community to share the progress of our school, talk about what is going well and what we want to work on.

KP provided an update on the School fund.

3. Answers to questions/points raised in advance

P1:

Some of the parents asked if there was any chance of a feedback mechanism for this year's nursery to P1 transition.

KP: Once all of the children are settled, we will be gathering information from parents, carers and children.

P5:

I just wondered if there was a reason why the Learning Showcase event is on a Tuesday mid-morning in November as opposed to these events normally being on a Friday? I appreciate there is no ideal day for working parents but I wonder if this will mean a lot of parents will be unable to attend.

KP: These were changed due to feedback from some members of the community. We thought we would try alternating it to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to attend. If this leads to lower numbers, we will change back.

I also noticed that the day and date don't match up - the 27th is actually a Monday so could you clarify if it's Monday 27th or Tuesday 28th.

KP: I apologise, this should say Tuesday 28th. We will make sure we correct this with all parents and carers.

P6:

Can we provide warm food ie soup in a flask for packed lunches in the colder months? And any update on free meals for P6 n P7 children?

KP: There is no update regarding P6 & P7 meals yet. As soon as we know, we will make you aware. Children are welcome to bring warm food in a flask, but it can't scolding hot.

Digital agreement is putting pressure on children without device or those that do have one but prefer them not to take to school. Is it necessary to use mobiles with in class setting for learning activities?

KP: This is a West Lothian Schools initiative which is active in many school, from P4 on. We understand that some parents and carers would prefer not to send their child with a device, which is entirely their choice. Children will always have access to school devices, which is why we can't give them home to children. We chose to roll this back a year as we were aware that many of our P5s have been bringing devices to school over the last two years. We can only ensure we keep them safe if we are aware that they have IT with in school and support them to use it safely.

The email outlining Sex Ed and the topics was good but would be good to know dates of when these will be discussed if possible to support us parents.

KP: The topics should run across the year which is why no dates were added. However, more delicate subjects happen after Christmas to ensure sound relationships between adults and children. The only exclusion to this would be when topics arise during the course of the school week, which might require discussion with key children. Parents/carers would be informed of this if a discussion had taken place.

4. Support Group (first one this session – Thursday 14th September at 7.30)

Everyone welcome to come along. Conversation starter at this meeting will be 'transitions'.

5. Wee updates:

Walking Bus

This has been a great success, thank you to the parents/carers who have been the driving force behind this. It would be lovely to have more families joining the walking bus.

Kirkie Savers

This will be running once a month this year. We would encourage all families to begin using that if they can, whatever small amount can be put aside on a regular basis can help towards costs such as camp.

School Website

Mrs Turnbull has been working hard to update the website. There is lots of information for parents on the website now, which should be a first port of call for

parents seeking important school information. We will try to send less emails and collate these for a Thursday update to make the amount of communications more manageable.

6. PSA update

As in AGM minutes.

7. Significant dates in the next half-term

These have been sent out by email to parents/carers. A SWAY will be sent out over the next couple of days flagging any further important dates.

8. AOB

Kirsten Patience thanked Pip Shiels and the PC for the acknowledgement of the work that the school staff do – the staff love working with the children and it is a privilege to be part of a community that acknowledges their work.

Next Parent Council Meeting:

Thursday 2nd November 2023, 8pm, on Zoom, details sent in separate Group Call