

Parent Council

ZOOM MEETING

TUESDAY 8th September 2020

Forrester High School

Present; Lorraine Kneebone (Chair), Stephen Rafferty, Carol Swan, Douglas Tully, Mark Piert, Jackie Barn, Angela Watson, Hilary Brown, Irene McGinnis, Amanda Walter, Emma Spence, Marianne Sandison, Gill Napier, Sandra Donaldson (Secretary), Gillian Murray, Sharon Robertson, Kate MacPhie

1. Welcome. Meeting commenced at 7pm. Lorraine welcomed everyone.

2. Apologies – Donna Dennis, Joland Dennis, Sarah Montgomery, Julie Scott

3. Actions - No Actions from previous meeting. A few actions from earlier meetings that are now no longer relevant due to circumstances.

4 Head Teachers Update -

SR thanked everyone for their good wishes and said it was good to be back in school. It has been a successful return on 10th August for staff and 12th August for pupils. Senior managers have been working hard to ensure the rules and regulations (which are constantly shifting) are being adhered to. These are being constantly reviewed such as the staggered start/finish times and breaks.

The school is trying to keep the “bubbles” of children together and social distancing in classrooms. Also trying to keep classrooms well ventilated and have “face forward” in class. They are trying to restrict movement around the school as much as possible but it has been challenging communicating some of the changes.

Concerned raised about what ventilation required – some children sitting in classrooms with jackets on and only going to get colder. Stephen confirmed they are seeking more clarity on the Council’s position on what ventilation is required.

Double periods are helping to restrict movement. People in the office are trying to help everyone the current processes. The Health & Safety Committee have been working hard, doing risk assessment and risk control measures.

Online transition was put in place for new S1 students. A small group of vulnerable learners came to visit in June. They were not the only ones that were going through transition though, for example those transitioning to the senior phase.

There has been lots of focus on wellbeing & resilience during lockdown. Outside services are restricted at the moment. Wester Hailes Youth agency are now back providing limited support – workers are limited to 2 contacts within the school per visit.

Online learning will be key moving forwards. Some individuals are still self-isolating due to their own or family member's health conditions. It is also likely that going forward young people will require to isolate with increased tracking and tracing, potential for a whole class to isolate, or even worst case, a whole school. So having contingency online learning available is a key priority, and a lot of effort is going on in this area.

Another 60 Ipads have just been given to S2s. It is really pleasing how quickly Ipads have been issued this year. And it is hoped that S1s will also have ipads before too long.

Equalities and equities policy and process is a high priority for Edinburgh Council, linked to recent Black Lives Matter movement, and also some complaints about how racism was being managed at St Augustine. Forrester are confident that they have always treated these matters with importance, and that there are good processes in place, and there are not thought to be any significant issues within the school in term of diversity or bullying. However, there is always room for improvement and it is good practice to have this reviewed. Jackie Forbes is leading this work. There is an equalities group, and student group and working on reviewing policy and process. The PC will also be asked to input their feedback. School is currently waiting on direction from Edinburgh Council on method for reporting incidents. LK suggested that Jackie is invited to the next PC meeting to provide an update on the work underway.

The new website was making good progress before lockdown. Mr Ennis is working on this. Thinking about Hutchison Grammar School website as a model if PC want to go in and have a look and feed back. A preferred web developer has been identified, however council policy is that 3 quotes need to be obtained as part of the supplier purchasing process. Further update will come at next PC meeting.

SR was asked how big an impact it was felt Lockdown has had on young pupils learning. SR said that there was now a bigger range of abilities in each class. Some pupils managed remote learning fairly well, others not so well. It was a challenge for sure, but teachers were doing all they could to help everyone catch up that needs to. Once there is clarity on course content this will help to.

SR also confirmed that;

- Mental & Physical wellbeing will continue to be a priority area
- 3 new linguists and 2 in Maths department (one permanent one temp), 3 new probationer teachers (maths, English, RE)
- School has received confirmation cooking can start (hospitality etc).
- Music is difficult, as currently no singing allowed, or instrument activity.
- Clarity is still being awaited from SQA in terms of subject content for this year, and what will be assessed in exams next year – update on this expected in next week or so.
- Coming to school in PE kit – some might have PE several days, most compliant with school uniform
- Budget deficit and not allow carry forward to next financial year for some planned projects, becoming increasingly difficult to support things like Ipads, masks, hand sanitiser and other additional covid costs. General discussion

surrounding how to support school and worries for future years (potential for parents /PC to write to MPs/Edinburgh Council if this issue escalate, some other PCs are now fundraising). An area to watch carefully.

5 PC workstreams

LK explained that in previous years, the PC has at this time of year identified and agreed areas of focus for the forthcoming school year. She asked the views of the PC in terms of what members thought the priorities needed to be.

Some discussion took place, the outcome of which was that these were very different and extreme times at the moment. The school's normal cyclical improvement planning activity (to which the PC normally aligns itself) has almost entirely been overtaken with adjusting and adapting to the current pandemic situation and requirements. The situation is very fluid, with priorities changing frequently.

All schools have been set priorities from Edinburgh Council to include:

1. Supporting Health & Wellbeing
2. Equality & Equity
3. Teaching, Learning and Assessment (which includes contingency learning, digital learning, and improving regular and ongoing teacher assessment, in case exams are impacted again next year)

It was agreed that rather than set specific priorities at this time, the PC will just look to support the school as and where appropriate and required. SR said that PC input in a consultation perspective, with areas such as testing the new digital process for pupil reporting, providing feedback on the policy and process being developed around Equality, and going forward providing input on areas such as web site development all add value.

The PC planned to be more visible this school year, attending school events such as parents night, Induction days/evenings etc, to interact with parents, and gather parental feedback on identified areas of priority. However, with parents not allowed to visit school at the moment, this will have to go on hold for the time being.

LK will still look at appropriate communications that PC can send out – with the initial one likely being to update S1 parents on the role of PC, and to invite them to attend the next meeting if they want to know more/get involved.

6 Any other Business

Parent nights - It would have been the P7 open afternoon on 25 September. Departments are making short videos instead. Parents Nights will not be possible in the usual form. School currently looking into digital alternative, such as possibility of TEAMS meetings with Parents. More to follow on this.

St Augustine's press report – Was covered in SR's update above – and SR again confirmed there were not any trends or concerns in FHS around bullying or racism – if the odd occasional situation occurs, it is managed well.

NPFS Q&A with John Swinney - There is a zoom call 10 September for Q & A and through chat function LK is attending, more information is on NPFS website if anyone else wants to join. The last John Swinney session was interesting – and firey!

AW asked if PC could help with any business continuity plans, or delivery of food parcels, delivery of Ipads etc. There are boundaries & confidentiality, however SR welcomed the offer and will advise if there is anything PC can help with at any time.

KMcP confirmed they are aware some families and young people are struggling – but not more broadly speaking. how can we find out how parents are feeling? PC may wish to consider a parent survey at some point. A well being survey for young people will be coming out centrally too.

JB raised the issue around the SQA results fiasco, and how disappointing it was that FHS pupils' results were downgraded to such an extent. SR confirmed that c.38% had had results downgraded. Everyone agreed it was welcome that this was completed overturned, and pupils received the marks as recommended by the school. JB said the whole situation had been demoralising and upsetting for pupils and parents alike, and this was acknowledged by all. It is only hoped that lessons have been learnt by SQA, and that such a situation won't happen again.

Geography trip 2021 – not planning to push back at the moment, but things might change, especially if exam dates are pushed back.

GN was having some technology issues, however, put forward some potential options for funding of IPADs if school budgets cannot reach all children at school. GN will provide more information on this to Kate MacPhie for consideration.

7. Accounts/Financial

Emma reported that the balance of the account was still £2144.91 with another approx. £850 becoming due in October. Discussions and potential plans for how PC was to use this money had been put on hold due to the current circumstances. Suggestions such as investing in Equalities Group are an area the school would find of value, and will let us know if this is something they would like to progress with.

CS raised the point that she was signatory on the bank account, but no longer an official of PC. ES will take forward steps to have CS removed and LK added as a signatory.

Action points

- SD to add Equalities and Equity to Agenda for next PC meeting, and SR to invite to Jackie Forbes
- GN share her ideas on possible at community funding opportunities with the school

- LK will progress PC communications to S1 parents
- ES to progress updating bank account signatory
- SD and LK to send out Dates of PC meetings for remainder of school year

Date of Next Meeting to be confirmed