

Parent Council

ZOOM PANDEMIC MEETING

TUESDAY 1 December 2020

Forrester High School

Present; Lorraine Kneebone (Chair), Stephen Rafferty, Carol Swan, Jackie Barn, Irene McGinnis, Amanda Walter, Emma Spence, Sandra Donaldson (Secretary), Gillian Murray, Julie Scott, Donna Dennis, Mark Peart, Douglas Tully, Angela Watson, Marianne Sandison, Cllr Mark Brown

1. Welcome/Apologies. Meeting commenced at 7pm. Lorraine welcomed everyone. Apologies – Hilary Brown, Gill Napier, Kate MacPhie, Sharon Robertson, Sarah Montgomery

2. Action points from last meeting:

- LK to send a copy of the Parent Council communication that was sent to S1 Parents – sent 23/11/20
- **ES to circulate the link to the free online Parenting Course which helps parents and carers understand their teenager's brain development, support them emotionally and improve relationships - OUTSTANDING**
- SR/KMacP/IMcG to meet to discuss potential requests for Parent Council Financial support, and then to advise Parent Council via Email what they might be for consideration – request received, see below
- All to email KMacP and email if they would be happy to sit on the (virtual) judging panel for the school's annual Young Philanthropist Initiative (YPI) - complete
- All to send names of and local Charities they are aware of to KMacP (linked to YPI) - Complete
- LK to circulate minutes from the last Edinburgh Council CCWP meeting, once available – still not available
- ES to send LK forms for changing bank account signatories from CS to LK - outstanding
- SR to follow up when S6 ties might become available – Now available – message sent 02/12/20
- SR to share with PC and wider Parent Forum, fuller details of assessment process for senior school SQA ongoing assessment process, once final details are available – this has subsequently changed and regular comms have been issued as information becomes available

3. Head Teachers Update/

SR gave update on level of cases of COVID – 2 periods where self-isolation required. First 36 cases, second 17 cases. No-one has reported any symptoms. It has been a challenge to identify who needs to self-isolate as they have had to look at the seating plans in each class etc. They then pass this onto Health & Protect who decide who should be contacted and then it's back to the school to issue the comms. Takes a lot of energy and time.

Further steps implemented to reduce risk is asking pupils with no timetabled subject to come in later, leave earlier etc so that they are at home for free/study periods. This is no doubt having an impact on the young people – it's a different learning experience.

Staffing – reductions were 4 at summertime, 8 at height and 3 staff were provided by the “closing the gap” team, allowing the school to stay open and avoid partial closure. Difficulties with timetable/course choice/attainment as Mr Ennis was off. The demand for support has outweighed the resource 0 lack of programmes available. Guidance teachers have been doubling up, working hard and contacting parents. Still down 1 teacher in English, had to re-advertise. One temp vacancy for English enhanced support base. Drama – have new teacher, appointed 4 weeks ago but there is a lag in the system (PVG) of up to 9 weeks. PE & Dance – acting curriculum lead Ross Tarkness – trying to organise a start date (nominal 5 January depending on PVG). Stephen Rafferty to meet separately with Mark Brown re delays. Lorraine will take to next meeting. Dance teachers – 2 teachers – 1 school per day to support Nat 5 students. Has been well received by pupils.

Senior students normally have an excellent experience and final year is a celebration, however there are worries about their experiences and opportunities that have been lost. They would normally provide leadership to younger people, but this cannot happen in the current climate. Looking for alternatives to first year Christmas party etc. Staff are doing Tik-Tok for Christmas. Normally at this time of year school would host a coffee morning for 95 pensioners, however this cannot go ahead this year, however a virtual coffee morning is being organised and gifts to be delivered to the homes by staff. Carol Swan said her employer is making deliveries on 18 December and to let her know if they can help.

SQA – no prelims for Nat 5, there will be prelims for Highers. May not be exams for Highers/Advanced Highers – need to put plans in place. Meeting virtually with curriculum leaders on Thursday. Decision will be made in February. Pointing towards assessment material, don't want a big assessment that accounts for everything. This presents different issues for different curriculums. No dates yes and looking into exam leave, have asked for guidance.

Several parents had concerns that all schools seem to be doing different things and just want decisions to be made. There also appears to be confusion from pupils as to whether tests they are doing are formal assessments. SR confirmed most information is held from SQA but still waiting on dates for assessments/prelims.

Parents thanked the school for their perseverance during this difficult time. S4-S6 tracking reports received good feedback from parents.

4 PC workstream

Concern raised about those self-isolating, agree good comms about going into isolation, but no check-in during this period or before going back to school. No work set during this period. Other parent forums saying there were pre-made packages and videos ready to go but this didn't happen, they said no child should be without work. SR to go back to curriculum leads to see why. This could present difficulties for S1s as they have not been provided with Ipads. Teachers are finding it to prepare for blended learning at the same time as physically teaching. The Council has provided more "busy work" and want to move forwards.

Double periods – Pupils finding it challenging with no end in sight. SR confirmed will continue until reduction in numbers of COVID cases. What is the prep work – strong advice from Council – SAGE research – risks were not as described by First Minister. The difficulty going back to 6 periods is movement around the school and coming into contact with more people, which increases the risk of having to self-isolate. Waiting to hear if whole classes should be self-isolating. Ventilation is essential to reduce the risks.

Everyone asked for young people to keep their distance in the run up to Christmas to the end of term. There has been no comms around blended learning after the holidays or 22/23 December. More planning is being done for blended learning in case. Cllr Brown said there had been discussions about this happening after 11 December but they are waiting on an announcement from the Education Secretary. Being discussed in Holyrood today and with other Parent Councils.

Switching on cameras – couple of days lag as this needs to go to Microsoft to allow the software for 2 way. The council seem to be risk averse. There are lots of things it could be used for and need to consider the risks and benefits of 2 way cameras. Some lessons could be one-way, for example some science lessons, but it would be up to the teacher to decide what is most beneficial. Comments that this is up and running in some other regions in Scotland.

Parent's night, 6-8 schools have hit a brick wall with functionality after trials and have decided not to go with it. The contingency is extra reports for S4-S6 but aware this is not a 2-way conversation. Parents will have the opportunity to comment on the reports contents and are encouraged to provide feedback. Concerns raised about content – for example issues should have been raised with parents before report issued, should not be a surprise. Subtle differences between amber and yellow and differences unclear and some ambiguity. Teachers mark aspirational grade and this can change during the year. A comms will go out with the next report explaining. Knowing the teacher helps – for example do they tend to mark pupils more harshly than other teachers. Said it would be easy to identify if pupils results dropped drastically within they year, but really for S4-S6. SR confirmed that he can ask teachers to make a call home however this is not mandatory due to other pressures the teachers are facing, such as their time.

Raising Teens with Confidence – Gillian Murray is a facilitator and had a call with Jen Middleton. They are doing a Teams Pilot and Forrester have been selected, very exciting opportunity and hope this will be around the end of January.

CCWP (Connect) – meeting on 8 December and 9 December with Dr Janet Goodall and would encourage other parents to attend – Amanda will join.

5. Accounts/Financial

Emma reported that the balance of the account was still £2,986.49. 2 proposals received for funding:

- Breakfasts – request for £1500 + VAT – discussed and agreed funding but not a long-term solution. Carol thinks there may be grounds to apply for additional funding. Poverty is a big underlying cause
- Badge maker £225.76 for equalities group – approved

Forms still to be completed to transfer signatories.

6. Any Other Business

NWLPG & CCWP – discussed that school football still suspended but that external sports being held in schools. No minutes held yet and might be sent out with next agenda.

5G phone mast – Douglas said this is just radio waves and is not dangerous. Cllr Brown said planning 18/06 and decision 08/07 that this was a permitted development. This was a benefit and not contentious to the community.

Flu vaccine for staff – Some schools have funded this and some parent councils have – estimated £300-£400 cost, could PC fund? Agreed this was an issue for the School. Many employers funding vaccines for staff so this should fall to the Council as the employer. The school has never been involved in vaccine programmes in the past and hasn't had an impact on the school. Staff and pupils can catch other things. Contentious that public money going to private companies. Concerns that the combination of Flu and Covid this year could be bad. LK to take forward to next locality meeting and will share letter.

Action points

- ES to circulate the link to the free online Parenting Course which helps parents and carers understand their teenager's brain development, support them emotionally and improve relationships
- LK to circulate minutes from the last Edinburgh Council CCWP meeting, once available
- ES to send LK forms for changing bank account signatories from CS to LK
- SR to check with Curriculum Leads to see why there are difficulties providing work for those self-isolating
- SR and Cllr Brown to have separate meeting re PVG delays

Dates of PC meetings:

8 September 2020

27 October 2020

1 December 2020

19 January 2021

2 March 2021

27 April 2021

15 June 2021 (AGM)