

# Parent Council

## ZOOM PANDEMIC MEETING

### TUESDAY 27 October 2020

#### Forrester High School

**Present;** Lorraine Kneebone (Chair), Stephen Rafferty, Carol Swan, Jackie Barn, Hilary Brown, Irene McGinnis, Amanda Walter, Emma Spence, Gill Napier, Sandra Donaldson (Secretary), Gillian Murray, Kate MacPhie, Julie Scott, Jackie Forbes, Donna Dennis, Sarah Montgomery

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

**2. Apologies** – Douglas Tully, Marianne Sandison, Angela Watson

**3. Jackie Forbes gave Equalities and Equities update:**

- In school there are Lead Roles and Deputies
- Recording methods in place for incidents
- Logo/posters
- S6s involved
- Young Carers last month
- Black History this month

Future activities:

- Tutor time next month Men's health/Dyslexia
- Tutor time December HIV
- February 21 LGBT
- May 21 Mental Health

Stephen said it was hard getting the messages across at the moment due to COVID as there are no assemblies etc but the team have been working hard to raise profiles. When asked whether there was a shift in the young people's attitudes, said that in the past there was a wall of silence as the schools weren't sure what they were and weren't allowed to do. They are definitely more accepting now that they have been given tools and knowledge.

Suggestion made about watching dramatization "Anthony" in I-player. School hopes to get in more speakers post-COVID.

Discussed funding for some of the projects they are working on from PC Treasury – said to let us know what funding would be required and what it would be used for.

**4. Actions** – LK/GN to discuss what community funding opportunities there were – discussion took place. Also dates for PC meetings to be sent out (issued by LK). Invite to be sent to Jackie Forbes – sent by LK.

#### **5. Head Teachers Update/**

SR gave update on level of cases of COVID at beginning of term compared to now and said it was optimistic then but staff are facing challenges now. They want to keep both staff and pupils safe but also want to minimise disruption. There are a large number of cases in West Lothian schools. Staff are working longer hours and there is more difficulty planning due to double periods etc and the prep work required. The school are reinforcing the messages on face coverings/one-way systems/reasons why processes in place and going around doing mini in-class assemblies in year groups. It's getting to the point, however, they will need to give exempt young people something like a lanyard to show they are exempt so that those who are not and have not got a face covering can be sent to the office to get one. Consultation taking place with parents of those affected.

It's been slow to get work underway with partnership agencies due to current restrictions on numbers. Moving online with these agencies doesn't replace the 1-2-1 support children benefit most from. Looking at practical solutions. Study support is not available at the moment.

The school can now risk assess excursions outdoors with own staff – however cannot use public transport etc and excursion would need to be within walking distance. Waiting on practical guidance for P.E. indoors.

Depending on restrictions there may be a possible movement to blended learning however because of the additional prep work and current practical classes, it's proving difficult to free up staff to get plans in place should this be required. There are only a small number of people in the school self-isolating and work is still being done to provide sufficient work, but as stated before this is difficult because of demands on staff. Council are working to ensure that students have access to technology/WiFi etc. The school now has permission for video online lessons for higher and advanced higher.

Staffing – vacancies for English and Drama – interviews ongoing. Also in process of getting enhanced support bases – principal teacher for Pupil Support Officer. PE vacancy will be going live soon.

SQA – still don't have details about content of courses. Exams are going ahead for Higher/Advanced Higher. More information due at the end of the month. Course content cannot be different from what has started being taught. For example they may answer all questions in the paper but are only required to answer 2 sections.

Future activity planned:

- Assessment calendar for Nat 5 – should look something like SMHW and will be shared with parents
- Prelim diet for Higher and Advanced Higher
- Don't think they will be able to use the hall for mass gatherings.

The calendar should provide clarity about what assessments will be counted towards grades but staff already emphasise the importance of all classwork and assessments.

- Emailing of reports has worked well
- S1 parents night not going to work – issues with WiFi protocols, need to look at alternatives – even considered on Teams though Ipads but would be a logistical nightmare.
- Duke of Edinburgh not proceeding like other schools as Lead is off work at the moment

### **5 PC workstream**

- Lorraine thanked everyone for the quick turnaround and input from the SQA questionnaire at such short notice. – would have been better if more time given to get input from young people
- Parent view were gathered and taken forward, although it appeared some decisions had already been made
- Majority favoured exams going ahead for Higher/Advanced Higher

NW Parental engagement – question raised about finding out budget for supply teachers covering those in isolation. This was supposed to come from a central budget but in reality appears to be coming from local budgets, putting strain on schools and causing potential overspend. Forrester was one of the top schools hardest hit. Potential further issues in the future as councils don't have the money and it's not filtering down. Two separate issues:

- Supply teachers who couldn't work from March were supposed to be funded centrally, however Forrester don't normally have supply teachers from March onwards due to other things going on like exams
- Supply teachers required to cover absences now due to the virus – still using code for this element

Potential avenues of information/escalation by Parent Councils:

- FOI request
- Contact John Swinney
- Connect Forum
- Journalists

- MPs

Q There was a budget of £750,000 for 19/20 school counsellors, however these are now only being appointed – has the budget been spent elsewhere? Is new funding being given and do we have a counsellor?

A School had one for one day a week, however this has been moved centrally and are awaiting a counsellor to start almost full time from central HR pool. This is no longer in the school's hands. Before COVID there was almost a 7 month wait and for CAMS there is an 18 month wait for initial appointment. There has been great support from Wester Hailes Youth Agency who are now base in Forrester. The school also has a nurse for low impact assessment.

## **6 Any other Business**

Concern raised that in practical subjects, such as PE and Music, current restrictions will impact on assessment. There has been indication that assessment will be based on one aspect rather than 2. Adaptations will have to be made for example in rugby if to be assessed in competitive environment such as a game, but games have been cancelled.

Why are kids not allowed to change after PE? – This is based on central government advice and is not a call for the teacher. Different risks are attached to different groups. May need to stagger for changing facilities in the future if rules change.

The main hall was to be reserved for the 33%/50% model but no gatherings of over 50 allowed. Cannot use the hall for changing due to privacy issues. No indoor PE at the moment however Edinburgh Leisure opening up lets for activities (in schools).

There is a free online course – understanding the teenage brain which is very good.

Q Why does the school photographer still come in – is it well used, does it make the school money?

A – photos required for admin purposes as pictures of the young people go on their records. If the photographer didn't come in, the school would need to pay a photographer. For example some of the S1s have photos on file from P3. The school makes a small commission instead of having to pay for photos

Why are S6 school ties still not available? Initially to minimise contact with school office but now is an issue with supplier (maybe making face masks). They are looking into this.

## **7. Accounts/Financial**

Emma reported that the balance of the account was £2,986.49 as another £841.58 received 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 – See action points. Forms for signatories are now online – ES to liaise with LK to get these completed

**Action points**

- LK to send a copy of the Parent Council communication that was sent to S1 Parents
- All to look over course, and if possible promote it within their own parent networks
- 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
- 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)
- All to send names of and local Charities they are aware of to KMacP (linked to YPI)
- LK to circulate minutes from the last Edinburgh Council CCWP meeting, once available
- 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
- ES to send LK forms for changing bank account signatories from CS to LK
- SR to follow up when S6 ties might become available
- 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

**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)**