

Parent Council

ZOOM PANDEMIC MEETING

TUESDAY 19 January 2021

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, Mark Peart, Angela Watson, Marianne Sandison, Cllr Mark Brown, Sarah Montgomery, Hilary Brown, Gillian Napier, Kate MacPhie

1. Welcome/Apologies. Meeting commenced at 7pm. Lorraine welcomed everyone. Apologies – Douglas Tully, Donna Dennis, Sharon Robertson, Sann Hamilton, Ginger Cutt

2. Action points from last meeting:

- ES to send LK forms for changing bank account signatories from CS to LK - outstanding
- **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 to check with Curriculum Leads to see why there are difficulties providing work for those self-isolating. Conversations did take place but superseded by recent events where everyone is learning online
- SR and Cllr Brown to have separate meeting re PVG delays. Matters now resolved and Teachers have taken up posts – still on average 7 week delay

3. Discussion about how everyone is finding the recent online learning

LK asked everyone how they were finding the online learning this time around. General consensus that it was so different and so much better than last time around. The young people are enjoying the live sessions with teachers and being set plenty of work. Couldn't ask for anything more from the teachers. The other benefit for the young people is it is giving experience of what it would be like working from home in a working business environment, building relationships. Still concerns over S6 because it is their final year, however the teachers are doing everything they can. Asked whether feedback would be possible and SR explained although this may benefit parents, if in school would not be giving feedback but school are raising concerns with parents individually if there appears to be an issue. So no news is good news. Pupil Support staff are there to help if parents have any concerns.

The children are also engaging with each other in Teams and face-timing each other for support. SR and teachers thanked for their hard work.

4. Head Teachers Update/

SR said he was very pleased with the feedback. The staff have been planning for the unknown and there was some trepidation about the live classes. They have learned lessons over the last week and are adjusting plans. He felt the 2 weekly timetable was beneficial as it may not have gone so well if full timetable implemented – would have created a very busy day for both staff and students. There had been some discussions at Council and Union level undermining this decision.

There had been a buzz on the first day and worries about the online classes – some IT issues and concerns about protocol. They have been monitoring this closely and have discovered some glitches they have taken up with Microsoft that no-one else seems to have noticed. The teachers, although nervous at first agree the F2F classes have saved a lot of time, rather than making videos but are still overwhelmed by how busy the day is and relying on self & peer assessment in some instances. Agreed this is a great opportunity to develop business skills and impressed of the willingness of staff to upskill themselves and collaborate. There is a Teams call for staff where ideas and suggestions are being shared and discussed and communicated. The staff are showing a lot of creativity.

Feedback is being given on assessments and markings. There is a survey being prepared on Forms on Teams. The staff appreciate the feedback they have received on what is going well but also want honest feedback about what improvements could be made.

For S3 reports due out shortly, these can only be done in school due to the system they use (EDICT) as this is not web-based, and as Government guidelines stipulate if you can work from home you should do so. They cannot force staff to come into the school. S4, S5 and S6 – looking at other ways to get information online. The staff can look at what is being done/said but don't have the information from prelims to draw on. They can look at strengths/weaknesses but more difficult to predict because of the level of data they are working with. The S4, S5 and S6 will be full reports and will still have a working grade and aspirational grade. They will support students but need to watch what they are committing to as trying to avoid disappointment.

SQA will need to change deadline dates however they will need to watch because these can't extend beyond the academic year and there is therefore limited flexibility.

Parents nights – still having issues with IT network at school, however if concerns they can contact pupil support for feedback. The impact on practical subjects is more significant and they are more disadvantaged. The SQA will need to make allowances due to the impact of lockdown and should take into consideration if this had been a normal year, how would students have performed. There are no practical classes for those attending colleges either, however they are working with the colleges to get accreditation for the work done – need to try and find a solution.

No prelims were held in December like with other schools. The school chose to focus on validation and assessment. Could have been an advantage if goods scores however quite early in the course so could have been disadvantaged if poor scores. As we don't yet know then the students can go back into schools, it is difficult to say when the formal assessment will take place. This will impact more on S4, S5 and S6. Dates can stretch and there is contingency planning going on – for example if the schools don't go back, looking at what universities etc are doing.

Suggestion by parent they could maybe look at adding time onto everyone's year for examples another 6 months of schooling, however this would have a knock-on effect for staff, accommodation capacity. This is having an impact on everyone – next years S1s are P7s now and looking at other options as the transition to online learning may be more difficult for them.

5. PC workstream

Raising Teens with confidence workshop. More information received on this and it is a longer term commitment than initially thought. The course runs for 6 weeks from 11 February from 9.30 to 11 am each week on Thursdays. This will be difficult for parents who are working. If anyone wants to volunteer to let LK know and she will forward on the details. Several PC members have already attended the workshop when it was in-person and said it is a very useful course that helped them understand that they weren't necessarily doing anything wrong, it was common amongst teens to react and behave in certain ways. It helped understanding how to help their children.

Discussed whether it would be worthwhile sharing with the wider PC community and agreed communications could go out from the school as well as PC to try and cover all angles and increase engagement. LK will forward the details to KMacP and issue comms to parents via email from PC email address.

Connect are running sessions on 23 February about ways for PC to communicate with parents, social media platforms etc, looking at pros and cons. Some felt we were way behind what other schools were doing on Facebook etc, however this could be a huge time commitment monitoring posts etc. CS and AW to attend. LK to send info. Discussed the likes of WhatsApp but again these kinds of forums can run out of control and would need to be moderated. Everyone could be a moderator.

5. Accounts/Financial

Emma reported that the balance of the account was still £2,986.49. Cheque to be sent to the school for the 2 agreed funding applications:

- 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

LK and SR joined the Connect Parental Involvement webinar run by a professor. A bit disappointing. Broken into 3 areas:

- Young person perception of engagement – Attendance at parent's night, going into school to help with trips and spending time in class – mostly appeared to relate to primary school parents
- Parent perception – helping with homework, tracking course work, kids abiding by the rules
- Teenage perception – Moral Support, support with work, showing an interest in school work, talking to the young person about what they need

Good engagement with primary schools and transition. What platform to use and what level of support required. Try to target key areas like going back from holidays and the exam journey.

The school is already busy, can the PC help by providing links, signposting parents etc. We have all been forced into working in new ways with technology.

Staff congratulated on TikTok video – a great way to end the year. SR confirmed this was driven by the staff who knew the students needed a pick me up.

Are Council looking at sharing best practice for technology – e.g for parent's night – looking for solution. Forrester doesn't use Glow and are locked into EDICT. Suggestion made that schools within the region could discuss what is working for them and share best practice. Forrester is working with CGI.

LK to attend meeting tomorrow and will ask about different systems being used by different schools.

If 1-2-1 support needed by students this can be done but likely to be through pupil support rather than with teacher.

S3 course choices – information will be provided but at the moment Mr Ennis working on communications around whether this will be working towards Nat 4 or Nat 5. Evidence collected from this year can be banked and used for next year for choices from S2 to S3. Choices from S3 to S4 will be clear and Highers will be reliant on previous levels.

No other business and meeting closed early at 20:45.

Action points

- LK to circulate the link to the free online Parenting Course to PC and KMacP which helps parents and carers understand their teenager's brain development, support them emotionally and improve relationships
- LK to circulate link to wider parent community via PC email
- ES to send LK forms for changing bank account signatories from CS to LK
- LK to send details of Connect Communication and Social Media Sessions to CS and AW (completed 21 Jan)

- CS and AW to feedback to PC re above connect session
- ES to send cheque to school for previous bids

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)