



# MINUTES

## Avoch Primary School Parent Council

6<sup>th</sup> September 2017 | 7.15PM

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### In Attendance

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Inga Ballantyne, Phoebe Barton, Julie Dinwoodie, Ruth Edmonds, Maru Fraser, Joanna Kucharczyk, Wendy Lambie, Julie Mackay, Iona McMillan, Carrie Mudge, Katie Munro, Kate Lackie, Stefanie Rankine, Rebecca Rawlinson, Maureen Stewart, Lucy Tonkin

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### Apologies

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Gail Paterson, Jane Reid, Julie Rutter, Lorna Sim.

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### Minutes of last meeting

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Due to the length of the Agenda we decided to move this item to the end and concentrate on the new items. However, we ran out of time and didn't get to review the minutes.

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### Head Teacher's Report

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#### **New school year**

We have recently welcomed 51 new P1 children, 7 additional children to other classes, two new early years practitioners, a new PSA and 4 new teachers. This is in addition to the all the new children now attending the nursery. The whole school roll is sitting at 311 but this is not expected to rise next year.

#### **Improving the School Environment**

The two new classrooms are well on their way now. The contractors have had to overcome some unforeseen challenges but are working hard to have them all ready over the next few weeks. It will be well worth the disruption to have more space and a GP room for the first time in 5 years.

Through savings from the schools' own capital budget, the infant open area has had a spruce up with a new sink area and new flooring, and two classes have new carpets. We are pleased that some of the classes have new tables and chairs paid for from a Highland central budget.

#### **School grounds**

We are grateful to parents who cut down the dead trees recently and to Miss Munro's father who made a bench and mud kitchen for the nursery. We hope to work in partnership with the parent council over the next few years on furthering the enhancement of the playground for the children.

**The School Improvement Plan** we have written is, as always, ambitious. It is based on self-evaluation and takes account of Scottish Government directives.

Our three main improvement projects are:

- Looking at the journey of the learner, including building further on the work we did last year in increasing parental involvement in their child's learning.
- Continuing to raise attainment in maths and literacy. This will always be a priority in all schools.
- Health and Well-being and how good well-being, including resilience, impacts on learning.

**The School charity**, chosen by the pupil council from a list generated by parents, is the Avoch amenities project for the rejuvenation of the community amenities. This is important to the children as the school will have use of them.

Finally on that last note, the staff and I are very much looking forward to continuing to promote opportunities for parents to become further involved in supporting their child's learning over the next 12 months.

Mrs L Sim Sept 2017

During discussions, Mrs Dinwoodie informed the PC that Derek Martin, the Highland Council's Area Care and Learning Manager will be visiting all Black Isle schools over the coming weeks.

**Action: Let Parent Council know when he's coming (Mrs Sim/Mrs Dinwoodie to inform Iona who will let PC members know)**

**Action: Add to future agenda when there's an update. (Iona)**

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### Treasurer's Report

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See Minutes from AGM.

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### Fundraiser's Update

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No changes have taken place since the June meeting so nothing to report.

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### Buses

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Parents at the meeting raised a number of concerns about the school buses which are run by D&E coaches.

The main concerns involved:

- Safety
  - P3s travelling on the upper floor of the double decker
  - Children not waiting until bus has stopped before getting out of their seats.
  - Children getting on the wrong bus and off at the wrong stop.
- Overcrowding
  - The yellow bus is almost full by the second stop but more kids get on than there are seats. Some kids are using the yellow bus when they are supposed to be on a different bus. There are still spaces on the blue bus which could be used instead. This would also help with the issue of P3s being on the top deck.
- Lack of flexibility
  - Buses are at capacity, so very difficult/impossible to arrange school bus transport for children who have different arrangements on different days due to child care. There's

no wraparound care offered at the school so child minders are essential but the lack of flexibility in the bus transport is making things difficult for parents.

- D&E commented to a parent that they had no obligation to offer any support. However, some children seem to have been given places on multiple buses, while others have not.

- Late arrival

- The buses seem to be consistently late in arriving at the school in the mornings. Some of the children are upset by arriving after the bell has gone.

## **School involvement**

Mrs Dinwoodie and Miss Munro outlined the actions that the school takes to ensure the health, safety and comfort of the children, including the arrangement of bus buddies, the assignment of monitors who report back to teachers about any issues (culprits lose golden time), their insistence on the colour coding of the buses etc.

One parent asked that the P1s be introduced to their bus buddy/buddies earlier so that they know who they are.

Everyone agreed that the school far exceeds their responsibilities when it comes to the buses and the PC thanked them for all their efforts.

**Action: Introduce bus buddy as part of transition for P1s (Julie)**

**Action: Write to D&E coaches expressing the concerns (Kate)**

**Action: Potentially invite Glynis Leggett, Local Transport Assistant at the Highland Council and D&E Coaches to a future meeting, depending on response to letter (Kate)**

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## **Composite classes**

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Questions were again raised about composite classes. Parents shared their experiences of composite classes and expressed a variety of opinions.

Mrs Dinwoodie explained the criteria and selection process for how the classes are determined. An explanation can be found in the May newsletter on the school website [using this link](#).

The Parent Council reiterated their support of the school's use of composite classes and how they are selected/managed.

Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the class teacher to raise any individual concerns.

The Highland Council's Quality Improvement Manager, Stephanie Wood, is also happy to be contacted to discuss individual circumstances if anyone has any concerns.

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## **Multiple Class Teachers**

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A question was asked about why there are so many classes that have two teachers.

In Avoch Primary, there is a high percentage of teachers who cannot work with a class five days a week. This might be because the teacher works part-time or it may be that a teacher has a management role which has to be performed within their working hours but outwith teaching a class. The result of this is that some classes have two teachers.

As this can't be avoided, the school plans for two teachers as a permanent solution in some classes each year. This gives more stability than having one permanent, part-time, teacher with supply teachers covering the other days.

One of the P1 Parents commented that they didn't know their child was having two teachers and, therefore didn't know both their names. This was confusing for both parents and children.

Another Parent commented that it would be good to know what the classes are this year and who the teachers are for each.

**Action: Mrs Dinwoodie and Miss Munro agreed that a communication could be sent out to all parents to tell them who all the teachers and support staff are.**

**Action: Add an item to the transition process to let Parents know, in the first week of school, who each P1's teacher(s) will be.**

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## Homework Policy

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The Parent Council was asked about the school's homework policy and whether there were any plans to review this.

At the last Parent Council meeting it was agreed that the homework policy will be reviewed in the 2017/18 school year.

Suggestions for changes included:

- Handing homework in on a different day, allowing it to be completed at weekends
- Replacing the standard numeracy/literacy tasks with social and activity based tasks
- Giving more homework but also given longer to complete it (a few weeks).
- Homework clubs.

A question was raised as to why two children in the same year, but different classes, had different homework. Mrs Dinwoodie explained that this was due to different teacher's styles and differences in what the classes are learning at that time. Homework consolidates and reinforces the learning from the individual class and, whilst the two classes are likely to be learning many of the same topics, these may be learnt at different times of the year.

**Action - Arrange a focus group (including parents) to discuss options and compile a survey for sending out to gather opinions (Mrs Dinwoodie/Miss Munro)**

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## Communication between PC and school

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Mrs Dinwoodie passed on Mrs Sims request for the Parent Council Agendas to be given out a week in advance of the meeting so that there was time to prepare. This had been discussed with the PC Secretary in advance of this meeting, was implemented and seemed to work well.

The Parent Council then asked if it would be possible for advance sight of the Head Teacher's report for the same reasons.

Stef asked if we can have a PC meeting /communication without school involvement to discuss any issues and decide if they need to be discussed with the school. No action was taken but PC members can suggest ideas as to how they think this could work.

**Action: prepare Agendas at least a week in advance of meetings (Iona)**

**Action: forward Head Teacher's report at least a week in advance of meetings (Mrs Sim)**

**Action: send improvement suggestions to Iona at [AvochprimaryPC@gmail.com](mailto:AvochprimaryPC@gmail.com) (committee members)**

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## Playground project

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Fundraising for playground equipment needs some focus if we are to raise enough money to replace or add to the equipment. Now that more people have volunteered to join the committee it would be good if someone could take the lead in fundraising for this.

Mrs Dinwoodie asked the PC if they would fund a new goal post as there is only one at the moment. The PC supported the request but would need to see costs first.

Mrs Dinwoodie also informed the PC that areas of the Woodland Trail are almost unusable due to vandalism that has taken place over the summer. She asked if the PC would help pay for decking wood if the school enlisted volunteers to help install it.

The PC again asked to see costs before agreeing to fund this.

It was also suggested that a plea be put out on Facebook to ask if anyone has any spare decking wood that they would be kind enough to donate.

*Post meeting update – Following the Facebook request for spare decking wood, the school has been given a good quantity of boards and have an extremely generous offer from Chris from 'Arc 'n' Saw Building Services Ltd' in Inverness to donate and fix the trail free of charge! Thank you so much to everyone for coming to the rescue!*

**Action: Send round request for fundraising sub-committee helpers outlining the kind of roles required. (Stef)**

**Action: Ask for help from parents with identifying and procuring new equipment. (Stef)**

**Action: Obtain quote(s) for a new goal post. (Mrs Dinwoodie/Miss Munro)**

**Action: Post on Facebook to ask the wider school community for any spare decking wood (Mrs Dinwoodie/Miss Munro)**

**Action: Obtain costs for any addition materials still required once donations have been received (Mrs Dinwoodie/Miss Munro)**

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## Stalls at fairs

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Mrs Dinwoodie asked the Parent Council which stalls we would like to do for the Christmas Fair. Parent Council agreed to do the Jar stall (fill a jar with paper clips, hair bands, sweets, etc. – the kids love the jars!), Raffle (donations would be much appreciated), refreshments and home baking.

Stalls for the Summer fair will be discussed at the next meeting.

Social event to be arranged for term 4. All other terms have school events on. Date and event to be decided at a later meeting.

**Action: Add to Agendas for future meetings (Iona)**

**Action: Add Facebook post about jar stall as people may wish to start saving their empty jars (Iona)**

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## Sports Kit

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Mrs Dinwoodie showed off the new sports strips bought by the Parent Council. They look fantastic and the pupils will show them off proudly at sporting events. Time was getting tight at this point but

details will be passed out on how to buy shorts if anyone does not want to wear the communal ones (an issue raised by the older girls).

**Action: Find out details and send out with minutes (Iona)**

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### Dates for the Diary

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Disco – Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October

Christmas Fair – Friday 8<sup>th</sup> December

Summer Fair - tbc

PC dates – 2018 meetings tbc

**Action: Add to Agenda for October meeting (Iona)**

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### Next Meetings

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Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> Oct, 7pm, Avoch Primary School.

Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> Nov, 7pm, Avoch Primary school