



MINUTES

Avoch Primary School Parent Council

6th September 2021 | 7.00PM

In Attendance by Zoom

Ruth Edmonds (Chair), Phoebe McDaid, Claire Weaver, Fiona Whyte, Kirsty Cameron, Maru Fraser, Debbie du Preez, Ingrid Robertson, Stef Rankine

Lynsey Third, Wanda Clark

Apologies

Julie Mackay, Jacqui Dingwall, Asia Kucharczyk

1 Review of last meeting's minutes, update & discussion on actions

Actions from last minute:

Breakfast and After School Clubs

The problem with staffing the Breakfast Club and After School Club remains. Breakfast Club has been followed up with UHI and with wider groups to try to get people on the supply list, as required by the council. Wanda notes that an email is sent out weekly and people do get added to the supply list frequently across the council area. Ruth raised the issue with HPCP and it will be discussed at the meeting later this week. Ruth has submitted questions that will be sent directly to Nicky Grant and her team for a response. Lynsey is also frustrated by this issue and has spent a lot of time with Wanda trying to resolve it. There is no current estimate about when the Breakfast Club might restart. No PSAs in school can pick this work up. It is preferable to be able to secure the right candidate, not supply staff who may be unable to commit in the longer term.

The process of recruitment begins with an Authority to Recruit (ATR) form which then goes through a Recruitment Committee and is then advertised on MyJobScotland and the school can make sure it is shared locally on APC page and the school page (on Facebook, etc.). Interviews for the ASC post will take place this week (after two closing dates) and the Breakfast club post will be mentioned at that time in case a candidate is willing to take on both positions. The successful candidate will still need to be vetted before they can start.

Wanda notes that the teachers use this service too and it's just as frustrating for them; it is not a school issue, but a council one. Ruth has had parents emailing with difficult stories in the absence of the clubs and hopes to raise the issue at the next HPCP meeting.

School Roll

A document regarding the roll and the HC forecasting has been put together by members of the Parent Council, led by Ingrid, and submitted to Brian Porter at the HC by Cllr Gordon Adam. This notes that the methodology used by the HC for forecasting is inaccurate. It includes revised forecasting taking account of new housing developments and the post-Covid desirability resulting in population influx to the catchment area. It asks that the council is pro-active, not reactive, in terms of the excess roll. The document looks at the options available to maximise the school's facilities and the space available at Avoch. Ingrid has been told that, as a community, we haven't been heard before and we need to be more vocal to push for a new

school to get on the HC priority list. The PC can be an independent voice to push for this for future generations. Ruth thanks Ingrid for the overview and agrees that this will be revisited in more detail at a later meeting. Ingrid is also looking at forecasting for Fortrose Academy, which is also not currently a priority for investment. Ruth confirms that we have Councillor support on this issue. Gordon Adam has been in touch with Black Isle Parent Councils noting the need to come together as a forum and will arrange a meeting about this. He suggests that we feed in as one voice to the HC Education Committee. We are currently waiting on a response to our document from Brian Porter of HC.

Public Bus Stop in School Layby

The concerns of the PC were laid out in a document submitted to Dafydd Jones, HC Head of Planning and Environment. Ruth has sent an official complaint to note that no response has been received yet. We look forward to receiving a response soon.

2 Report from the School, Lynsey Third

School update Monday 6th September

The first 3 weeks of this session have flown by. The children have settled into their new classes very well, there is a lovely atmosphere around the school. I have
Return to School/Covid restrictions - currently have no positive cases in the school. We keep a spreadsheet of staff and families that are waiting for PCR results. We need to continue with the same RA that we had before. The only difference at the moment is that in the staggered breaks we currently are allowing children to mix in the playground, rather than having zones, and on the buses the children may be sitting next to someone in a different class. I keep a list of the bus buddies in the event that we may need to identify close contacts. If the First Minister changes our level or if the advice for education changes we may need to revert back to the 'bubbles' we had before.

School Improvement Plan priorities - share the summary Google slides

Nursery building work still on track for 16th November. Regular contact with Colin the site manager.

Breakfast Club/OOSC - unfortunate position that we were unable to secure staff prior to the summer holidays. We have been contacting the supply non teaching supply list, we have asked all the current staff if they would like the additional hours, however, we haven't had much luck. Wanda and myself have both been chasing the ATR that went in for the Breakfast club hours and we are just waiting on a response from Business Support on where this is at.
OOSC post

Homework - I am at the final stages of preparing a homework survey to share with parents. With various research around the impact of homework, I am keen to gauge the opinion of moving towards more family learning based homework rather than the traditional out on a Monday and back on a Friday. The family learning approach allows for more flexibility for families to plan when homework will be completed. An example of what this may look like - Julie from Cromarty Primary shared an example of what they used. The grids would be shared at the beginning of the term, there would be a family learning jotter where activities could be completed (if necessary - they don't all need written responses) or ideally photos could be shared using a digital platform. Specific activities may still be set on a weekly basis, such as spelling, reading. This is the current thought process around this, however I will wait until I see the outcome of the parent survey. We will also look at surveying the pupils on this matter as well.

Ongoing reporting to parents - we are currently reviewing how we can give parents an insight into what your children get up to at nursery and school. We currently use Wordpress for the school website and have school blogs set up through this. However, there is a cost involved in this and the process of uploading things to the website/blog can be time consuming. Google suite has become a big part of our way of working, I have been reassured that this is going to be around for a long time, therefore on the Inset we are going to be looking at setting up Google sites for each class. This will be used for sharing photos, etc. As with the permissions for photos on the blog, etc, we will review the permissions we already have and decide whether we need to issue a further permission slip. We hope to have these up and running after the 2 inset days next week - with the first post being a 'meet the teacher' post.

Debbie asked for clarification on homework and Phoebe asked if there was a timescale for homework starting again. It is important to help communicate with children about what is happening in class and to consolidate class learning. Debbie agreed that while homework may only be consolidating learning, the process and the routine is really important, especially for the older children who will be moving on to the academy soon. LT confirms that reading remains a core element and that a staff meeting tomorrow will discuss sending home reading books. LT thinks there will be a new homework policy in place soon. LT notes that House Captains have been reviewing the house point system already and this will be linked up to homework to help with motivation.

Claire asked about the Nursery build and completion date. LT confirms we are still on track for the completion date, and she is now starting to order the furniture, etc. There is a new site manager for Morgan Sindall, who is fantastic. Lynsey is pushing for this to stay on track for opening on 16th November. The Nursery is now available from 8am to 4.30pm.

Ruth comments on celebrating success in the school and hopes that the school can pay attention to successes that are not purely academic. LT says that the pupil council are already looking into this and that she is looking for parents/carers to submit other achievements from outwith the school and there may be a Google form created to facilitate this.

Treasurer's Report and Fundraising, **Claire Weaver**

We have just under £400 of income from the lottery. Our closing balance is £20,687, with £13k ringfenced for the play equipment fund and £800 for the outdoor fund.

Fundraising – There are no fundraisers planned at the moment, but we have c.£6870 usable income in the bank. It is hoped that we can have another successful raffle this year. Claire asked if we could consider a disco yet and asks the school to let us know when this may be. LT is looking at a Dates for the Diary release and is hopeful that a Disco could be included.

Although there can be no school Christmas Fair yet, Ingrid asked if we could do a school-based fair outwith the school, for example at Rosemarkie Beach Café which could be a great focus for the community. LT confirms that the school still couldn't endorse a large gathering like this, even if off the school grounds. Ruth says this may be an option for the Parent Council though and will be picked up at another meeting.

Ruth hoped to discuss the options for the installation of the play equipment at a future meeting and whether sticking with the design as planned remains the best use of these funds. The installation costs continue to rise during the ongoing delay before we can confirm an installation date. Ruth had hoped to discuss this with the Pupil Council (if agreed with LT) to see if this was still what was wanted for the playground. There was some debate over the timeline for the Play Equipment Project, with Phoebe noting that it was much more recent than had been thought.

Actions:

We are still keen for the school to give us a wish list of what we could help with. The money is there to benefit the children and Ruth will be discussing this with LT in more depth soon.

Item on agenda at future meeting to discuss the possibility of a PC Fair outwith the school grounds.

Item on agenda at future meeting to confirm the way forward for the Playground Equipment Project.

'Bikeability for P6 & P7 (possibilities & plans) – Fiona Whyte

Our original intention was to run this every year, though we have only managed one year so far due to Lockdowns. Fiona has emailed LT and WC already and it looks like it would be best to run this in Term 3. We need to be sure that parent/carers/volunteers would be allowed on to the school premises in the first instance. This timing is not ideal in terms of weather, but it means we can get a good run of seven consecutive weeks. The plan is to include P6 and P7 this year (as the P7s missed out last year) which means a total of 87 children to get the training. The groups are limited to 15, which means 6 groups, running for 2 full days a week with each session at 1.5 hours long. This is a big undertaking and we would need to recruit more parent/carer volunteers. Fiona has had an offer of help from Velocity already, though this has not yet been confirmed. As it is likely that we would need to borrow some bikes it is hoped that Velocity could supply some bikes as well as funding. Velocity could also do associated activities like *Doctor Bike* sessions, etc. Velocity may also have additional helpers/volunteers available and this would be useful for Level 2, when the training would be outwith the playground and on the roads. Fiona will look at logistics and hope restrictions ease by Term 3 to allow us into school grounds. It is noted that Cycling Scotland have run courses throughout lockdown and so there is a precedent for this already even if it can't be run on school premises. LT remains positive and says the school is committed to help to make the Bikeability programme work.

Actions

Fiona to get in touch with Velocity to confirm what help they can offer.

Email asking for volunteers to go out immediately after the October holiday.

Class Representatives Discussion - Debbie

There has been a low uptake on this so far. Debbie has received six responses for confirmed Reps already (though two of them are Debbie and her husband). There is already an informal p3 WhatsApp group that works really well and this is how we want the Class reps to work too. The idea needs to be promoted a bit more. We need at least to fill all the positions and then get agreement for other parents/carers to be added to the WhatsApp groups.

Wanda notes that communication has been fairly low all round at the moment and so not to be put off by a slow response. It is still a great idea and the staff are keen to see it happen so it needs to be encouraged. Debbie asked if the teachers could ask directly for a Rep on the new website or in a letter home as that would probably work well. Debbie agreed to draft an email and then seek input from the teachers. The final email could be sent out from the school.

Action

Debbie to draft an email for agreement with LT and distribution by the school.

Parent Engagement

Due to the meeting over-running, this item was moved to the next meeting when it is hoped that Sarah Byham could join us in the discussion.

AOB

Wanda is leading on a Travel Survey put out by the council, which is part of a broader Safer Routes to Schools initiative. It is hoped that this will lead to some funding and Wanda has been working with stakeholders in the community to make a start on this. She has completed an audit/walk around the school and the village looking at signage, etc. and has now verbally agreed areas that can be improved. This project will eventually include parents/carers as part of a larger group of stakeholders and will be looking for input after the October holiday. It is hoped that some of the signs can be designed by the children themselves, so they are included in improving their home/learning environment. Fiona asks that as part of this, the bus drivers are clear not to sit with their engines idling as this will impact on air quality around the school. Wanda confirmed that our bus drivers are usually good in that regard, but it can certainly be included. Ruth confirmed that APC would like to be involved and suggested that the community council are also included. Fiona will be leading on this for APC.

Our lollipop man, David Mackenzie (Ginge), is retiring at the end of the week after 21 years of service. Wanda is organising a gift for him and asked if the PC wanted to donate something towards it. The committee agreed to a donation and Ruth will be in touch with Claire and Wanda to arrange this.

Ruth asked for everyone to seek out new members for the committee and for nominations for office bearers. Our next meeting is the AGM and we need to get the word out. Debbie suggests that a vice-chair would be useful too and that this is usual for other PCs she has been on. It would be great if we have the numbers to support this too.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is via Google Meet on 5th October and will be the AGM at 7-7.30pm followed by the meeting at 7.30-9pm