

LINLITHGOW ACADEMY

Minutes of Parent Council Meeting held on 28th April 2014



PRESENT:

David Devine (Chairperson), Elspeth Brown, Lindsay Guthrie, Kate Signorini, Kathryn Morrison, Mark Fulton, Douglas Gray, Helen Boxall, Douglas Taylor, Jennifer MacDonald (Parent Members), Rhona White (Teacher), Neil Anderson (Pupil Council member), David MacKenzie (Rector and advisor to PC), Councillor Stuart Borrowman

APOLOGIES:

Elaine Stewart, Derek Wolfe, Daniel Devine, Mhairi Sheail, Councillor Boyle

1. MEMBERSHIP

Susan Roberston had resigned as Clerk to the Parent Council. A replacement was being sought. David Mackenzie offered to ask the Academy Office staff if anyone was willing to volunteer.

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the last meeting held on 27th February 2014 were approved.

Progress was being made to produce a simple guide for parents about Curriculum for Excellence and assessment in the senior phase.

Action: Douglas Gray to send a draft to David Mackenzie for his comments.

Lindsay Guthrie had still not received a response or acknowledgement from West Lothian Council in regard to her letter on school engagement with the referendum.

Action: Councillor Borrowman agreed to follow up a response.

Anywhere Anytime Learning (AAL) had still not been successfully implemented despite being launched in October 2012. The delay was having an effect on teaching design where teachers had incorporated internet research into their lesson planning.

Action: David Devine would follow this up with John Low and Jim Cameron at West Lothian Council.

3. HMIE INSPECTION

The HMIE inspection report will be published and made publicly available on 29th April 2014. David Mackenzie and David Devine had been sent the report in advance and were able to provide the Parent Council with a summary of the findings.

Linlithgow Academy had been awarded 1 'Excellent', 3 'Very Goods' and 1 'Good' in the key assessment categories. Since August 2013 HMIE have been undertaking enhanced reviews and are looking at the impact of how Curriculum for Excellence has been implemented. Therefore it is not possible to compare the Linlithgow Academy results with any inspections prior to August 2013. Only one school in Scotland has received a higher score since August 2013, that being Kirkintilloch HS.

It was noted that the school had received particularly complimentary feedback on its autism resource.

Improvements in performance: excellent

Learners' experiences: very good

The inspectorate team saw 68 learning episodes. One or two lessons were felt to be too teacher-led and more active learning should be encouraged.

Meeting learning needs: very good

The report suggested that the school could adopt a more coherent way of celebrating success by ensuring that pupils' achievements were passed on by their teachers as a matter of course and shared with the rest of the school.

The curriculum: very good

The school was not felt to have made enough progress yet in providing interdisciplinary learning. David Mackenzie was aware that this was the case but felt that it was important to allow staff time to make the appropriate changes to their courses.

The review team also felt that more information was required by parents of pupils in the senior phase to explain the school's assessment policy.

Improvement through self-evaluation: good

The school was felt to be working in the right direction but needed to continue to increase the role of pupils, parents and staff in school improvement. The inspectorate had recorded innovative practice by the school in its use of the PROMPTS system which they wanted to share more widely. It was noted that it was West Lothian Council policy to use the SEEMIS system and that PROMPTS was not widely utilised currently.

The Chair queried why the Parent Council hadn't seen the School Improvement Plan. David Mackenzie explained that he felt the Plan to be an internal document. Going forward the PC expect to be more actively engaged in the Improvement Plan process and that the HMIE inspection detailed outcomes will help to drive PC priorities.

Councillor Borrowman offered to raise any points that the Parent Council wished to raise in relation to the HMIE report at the West Lothian Council Education Committee on 3rd June. It was further noted that the Chair of the Parent Council or his representative was entitled to attend. The Chair thanked the councillor for this information and kind offer.

Dr Alasdair Allan MSP, The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages, is to visit the school on May 8th to celebrate its excellent HMIE report.

4. HEAD TEACHER RECRUITMENT

David Devine as Chair of Parent Council had been in contact with Elaine Cook (Head of Services) at West Lothian Council regarding the delay in the recruitment process and expressed a number of concerns in relation to both the process and execution of it.

27 applications had been received for the position of Rector, ten of which had been selected for the Long Leet interview day on Monday 12th May.

Four parents can be involved in the Long Leet selection process. Parent Council members were asked to let David Devine know if they were able to participate.

All parent members of the Parent Council have been asked to attend a meeting on Tuesday 13th May with Elaine Cook to obtain feedback on the Long Leet interviews. Two Parent Council members will also be involved in the final Short Leet interviews.

Each Long Leet interview will last 30 minutes plus tasks and meetings with stakeholder groups, namely Parents, Teachers and Pupils – the candidates will have the opportunity to interact with S5 students.

The Parent Council expressed its concern at the high number of Long Leet candidates, the overloading of the schedule for the Long Leet day and the very short amount of time allowed to analyse the results.

No date had been given for the Short Leet day at the time of the meeting.

Post-meeting note: the Short Leet interviews will take place on the morning of Thursday 5/6 at the Civic Centre in Livingston.

The Parent Council expressed its disappointment that the risk of not having a new Head Teacher in place at Linlithgow Academy for the start of the academic year has increased due to delays in the recruitment process.

5. RECTOR'S REPORT

SQA examinations

The National 5s and Highers started in week commencing 28th April. The timing of Easter and the start of the examinations was not the ideal combination for preparation for pupils or staff.

Staffing

Sarah Mackay is acting Principal Teacher Curriculum (Pupil Support) following Dawn Fleming's return to Deans Community High School. Adverts have been placed for two temporary teachers of Geography, a temporary teacher of Biology and a temporary teacher for the Autism Resource. Transferees were coming to the school in Home Economics and Computing. There are two surplus staff – one in Maths and one in English – both are currently applying for jobs in West Lothian and further afield.

6. PUPIL COUNCIL REPORT

Representatives from the Pupil Council were in discussion with David MacKenzie about referendum awareness activity. There had been a request to hold a question time event with external speakers but the view from West Lothian Council was that this should be held with internal speakers only.

Pupil Council continued to provide feedback sheets in every class to engage with pupils and current issues. Neil Anderson and Daniel Devine had also been visiting the Autism resource on a regular basis to get their feedback too.

Pupil Council had suggested holding a ceilidh for S5s and S6s to raise money for the pre-ordering catering system. It was noted that LAA had funds available to put towards

the catering system and that they would be happy to supplement the pupils' fund-raising efforts.

Action: Pupil Council to contact LAA and specify how much funding was required.

Pupils had successfully organised a number of events including the S3 World Science Day and No Smoking Day.

The Pupil Council were looking into some concerns that had been expressed about the role and behaviour of the pupil lunchtime librarians.

The current Pupil Council has been disbanded now for the current academic year.

7. LAA UPDATE

The LAA Bingo Night would be held on Wednesday 30th April at the Linlithgow Rose Social Club.

The balance in the bank at the moment is approximately £2,000.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair sought clarification on the recent dismissal of all S6 pupils from the school on Thursday 24th April. David Mackenzie described the events that led up to this decision and expressed his concern about the spiralling destructive nature of 'S6 muck up day'. The members of Parent Council shared the concern of the teaching staff and discussed ways that they might be able to reach out to parents to prevent any such unfortunate and negative incidents in future years. Whilst the ultimate sanction was understandable it was still felt that the majority of well behaved S6 pupils were punished, and denied a more appropriate ending to their time at school, as a result of the actions of a minority. The school needs to be more proactive in dealing with this annual 'event' in future.

The Parent Council sanctioned the Rector's decision to dismiss a volunteer sports coach from the school based on evidence of consistently poor behaviours.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Wednesday 28th May 2014.

Action: the dates of meetings for at least the next academic year should be set at the next meeting.

A reminder of the Parent Council meeting for parent members only on Tuesday 13th May to obtain feedback from Elaine Cook, West Lothian Council on the Long Leet interviews.