



LINLITHGOW ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL MEETING, SESSION 2016-17

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 3rd October 2016

Present: Jo Smith, Elspeth Brown (Vice Chair), Rachel Reid (Pupil Council), Kathryn Morrison (LAA), Susie Hume, Jenny O'Donnell (Clerk), Catherine Devlin, Douglas Gray, May Geddes, Karen Jarvis (Head Teacher), Laurie Boles, Kate Signorini (Chair), Rhona White (Teacher), Liam McLaughlin (Teacher), Magali Redding,

1. WELCOME

Karen Jarvis chaired the beginning of the meeting and welcomed those in attendance including new member, Susie Hume.

2. APOLOGIES

Gillian McLean and Sarah-Jane Mottram.

3. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR BY MEMBERS

Kate Signorini was re-elected as Chair as proposed by Jo Smith and seconded by May Geddes. Elspeth Brown was re-elected as Vice Chair as proposed by Laurie Boles and seconded by Douglas Gray.

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE LAST BUSINESS MEETING (held 30th May 2016) AND ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM THIS MEETING OR THE AGM

The last business meeting was in May; the spelling of Catherine Devlin and Kathryn Morrison's names to be corrected.

Any corrections to the draft minutes of AGM to be received by next week before being posting on the website.

5. HEAD TEACHER'S REPORT

Staff who have left

PTC Support, Elaine Kerridge, has left.

PTC, Karen Macleod, took a position closer to home.

Staff who have returned

Janette Leach - PE

Lisa Boyle - English

Sarah Carney - back from maternity leave (English and Geography).

Allison Russell Pearson - back from maternity leave

Staff who have joined

Deputy Head Teacher - Avril Mclean

PTC Health and Wellbeing - Allison Brown

PTC Support - Diana Mason (Dundee)

NQT

English, Maths, RMPS, Chemistry, Music

Website Update

New website has been launched with items still being added. Suggestions are welcomed: e.g. a staff list and department groupings. Faculty heads still to go on. Email contacts for staff will go on when staff list is added. The 'Daily Bulletin' on the website currently needs to be downloaded to be viewed. They are archived for reference. Twitter is also used to announce achievements and alerts for material posted to the website.

Award ceremony

Keith McDevitt, from the Scottish Government's Cyber Security Resilience Unit, spoke this year. It was a successful evening. The change to the presentation policy means that S4 pupils will be included for academic awards next session. Thanks to everyone for their patience as these changes have been worked through.

Building works over the Summer

Home Economics was upgraded with new work stations. The upgrade to the foyer has been delayed.

Post Results Review

44 scripts were entered for post results service. Whilst a more rigorous check was applied than last session, some did not fully meet all of the criteria and only 4 out of the 44 were successful. Next session, the criteria will be even more rigorously adhered to. The school meets the cost.

It was suggested that it might be of value to look across the authority to see the national picture and get an idea of where other schools were and weren't successful. There were no S4s who asked for reviews, only S5s. The appeal process is just a re-mark of the paper and does not look at personal circumstances e.g. a death in family. The appeal has to be made within 10 days of the result. The result might go up or down, so if the result is on the cusp an appeal is not recommended. The school does sometimes recommend a re-mark on behalf of a pupil but would get in touch with parents first.

Update on the amended presentation policy and curriculum structure

The attainment this session was very strong. On paper the data suggested a weaker cohort, however, the school data improved on every level and managed to raise the less academic group as well.

The school is committed to 6 subjects in the senior phase and will continue to encourage pupils to keep up six subjects throughout the two years. There are indications that continuing with six subjects allows pupils to identify their strongest subjects for certification and that the breadth allows for improved attainment across the school. A small number of pupils have opted out their sixth subject. For logistical reasons these pupils must continue to attend the class they have withdrawn from either studying independently at the back of the class, or finding an alternative quiet space to work from.

The new S4 year will be presented for National 5s and then continue with their courses onto the next level. Almost all departments have a two year timeline which involves skills and in some cases content from the level above to make maximum use of the time available. There will be an opportunity for pupils to review their course choices at the end of S4 where alternative pathways can be followed as necessary.

The school aims to deliver the best outcomes for all of its learners and the new presentation model provides the flexibility to achieve that. The school will continue to review and evaluate the model.

The school will consider and monitor the impact of the Deputy First Minister's response to the workload review on curriculum and presentation policy over the coming session.

It was suggested that there was a need for clear and early communication about the 6 subject model as some parents were still under the impression that children had to sit 6 highers. The benefits of 6 subjects should be communicated 6 was too much via the FAQs on the website.

7. TEACHERS' REPORT

Phone Policy

Some pupils receive texts from their parents which they feel they must answer. This sometimes causes a lesson to be interrupted for the pupil. Phones are sometimes used by pupils in lessons but no lesson would ever be dependent on a phone for research. Pupils also use their phones to note their homework and keep their timetables on their phones

The policy is that there is no use of mobile phones unless this is permitted by the teacher. Phones used without permission can be taken away until the end of the day. West Lothian Council has adopted the 'Anytime anywhere learning' so there can be no ban them on mobile phones in school.

Some classes allowed pupils to listen to music as a study aid but this was up to individual teachers and should not be assumed as a right.

ACTION: It was agreed that the school would reiterate its phone policy and would ask parents to support the

policy as they have done with uniform issues.

Workload Review

Although the First Minister has said there would be a reduction in teachers' workload, unit assessments will have to change before they go. It was queried whether it was worth implementing changes to a system that's going to go in two years? T

8. PUPIL COUNCIL REPORT

Pupil Council Elections:

There are 2 new pupils in each year. The first meeting is on Thursday. The Pupil Council tab on the website is currently empty but there are plans to put in relevant information.

9. LINLITHGOW ACADEMY PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (LAA) UPDATE:

The LAA AGM was to take place on Thursday 6th October. It was noted that getting parents to be involved in fund-raising was a challenge; this seems to be a similar issue across the secondary school sector. It was suggested that any events organised should have pupil participation to encourage parents to attend. It is also good to publicise what we are needing the money for as an incentive.

The Centenary Club membership was up for renewal. An email would go out. Half of funds raised go to the school and half goes out as prize money.

LAA has money in the bank account. It was suggested that the website could use some further investment.

Upgrading the foyer

Although there is a planned refurbishment by West Lothian Council; some money could be spent on brightening it up at the moment such as pop up banners. The Head Teacher stated the need to advertise Skills Development Initiatives, i.e.. START. Staff will be looking at values, visions and aims. A whole generation had gone though without seeing these displayed, because in previous years we were looking at the curricular structure. The exercise will be similar to that in the past. We'll do a survey to get feedback on the visions and values we want to promote and attach these to the front door, in the foyer and around the school.

There was a plan for refurbishing the foyer: new fire doors, 2 bigger doors at the front, a bigger TV to go in the foyer to attract attention (already bought). The foyer would be painted. Posters that are value-related will be put up around the school. These can be re-used. House boards can get messy. Theme boards could go at right side of the foyer - to be changed every three months. LAA could help to create a concept corner to make the area more vibrant; led by a working group of volunteers. There must be parents who are architects, and graphic designers who could help. Pupil council could share their ideas with a focus group.

The foyer is the public face of the school. Some can't find the office. We could move doors back to make more open plan but this is not actually viable since these doors are fire doors. But two bigger and nicer ones could be installed. The pupil entrance also needs work but would not going to be upgraded any time soon.

ACTION: May Geddes volunteered to lead this working group. It was suggested that parents could be invited to join a working group via Groupcall.

10. BUSINESS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD - WORKING GROUPS

i) School Improvement Plan

ii) Course choices: Discussions parents need to have with their children.

iii) Communications: How best to get in touch with the school.

iv) Website: We need another working group to help sort through old vs. new and relevant content, and to produce newer versions of old documents. The bulletin and alerts are the same as for the previous website but there is now there is too much content, and much of it is out of date. Starting afresh would be better. Creating a list might be overwhelming. Elspeth volunteered to look at important, bulky content such as The Parent's Guide to CfE, the mobile phone policy, the Uniform Policy and the Pupil's Guide, to be written by the Pupil Council.

ACTION: Follow up on getting more people involved in working groups at Parents Evenings.

11. NATIONAL PARENT FORUM OF SCOTLAND REVIEW OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ACT

There was a survey asking people to say how they felt they'd been engaged with their Parent Forums. Parent Council members were encouraged to respond.

12. FEEDBACK FROM WEST LOTHIAN PARENT FORUM, 21st September, 2016

Elsbeth attended this meeting on behalf of the Parent Council. Attainment has been really good across West Lothian. The Council tends not to look at Linlithgow's statistics as LA has very different demographics to the rest of the Council area: the least advantaged are SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) 1s and 2s. In Linlithgow we are predominantly 9s and 10s. West Lothian has many 3s and 4s. This helps to understand the different challenges of comparator schools. Linlithgow Academy has a virtual comparator school.

The school is aware of what it needs to improve on. It will try to work with other schools who have similar attainment e.g. the Royal High. Their levels in numeracy and literacy are similar.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Recognition of Merit and Awards Ceremonies

A member reported a perception that there is some inconsistency in how merits are awarded.

The Head Teacher responded that the awarding of merits is quality assured but however good the process, there is always a degree of subjectivity. When looking at our visions and values we can look to see what is possible to improve here; looking at the merit categories for instance. We can involve the Pupil Council and refresh the criteria after a 6 year cycle.

Update on policy around home study

The school is looking at its learning and teaching policy. The current home study policy does need to be refreshed in light of 'curriculum for excellence' and the use of Edmodo should be evaluated but the school's learning and teaching policy needs to be looked at first. Avril Maclean would be working on updating the policy around home study. A survey will go out to pupils.

Some of the issues around home study include an inconsistent approach by teachers to home study; how pupils record their homework, how much homework should be given and how can parents support their children. The different approaches to homework between boys and girls was remarked upon.