

MINUTES



Date: Monday 30th October 2023
Location: Teams
Time: 6.30pm
Subject: Parent Council Meeting

In attendance:

Staff: Lorraine Donnelly AHT	Hilary Roddick	Jill Donald
Parents: Lyndsey Saunders (Chair)	Louise Thompson (Vice-Chair)	Shirley-Anne Brightman (Clerk)
Catherine Paterson	David Munn	Diana Dundas
Emma Henderson	Heather Dickson	Jennifer Macdonald
Jill Penman	Joyce Thomson	Laura Kennedy
Nicola Scott	Lindsey McDiarmid	

Guest: Emma Donaldson

Apologies: Maureen Matheson, Joslyn Currie

1. Headteacher Update

- Learner Conversations & Outcomes

AHT communicated that learner conversations had taken place just before the October break. These take place periodically throughout the year and involve a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Learning Committee having a conversation with a group of 6 children from each class. Different children are selected each time. The focus areas for these most recent conversations were children's rights, writing and reading. The leadership team also looked at jotter work across all stages. In summary the findings under each focus were as follows:

Children's Rights – the children were very aware of their rights and class charters have been successfully linked to the children's rights this session (something previously not aligned). Rights are also a focus for assemblies with two P7 Rights Ambassadors leading a section at the beginning of assembly each week. The children expressed that they enjoyed engaging with Rocky the Rights Mascot and asked for more displays on their rights in prominent areas around the school.

Writing – overall the quality of the writing happening in class was found to be good. Almost all children are using the writing toolkit. Children talked in an animated way about Talk4Writing and how this helped them with their writing. They were also able to express their likes and dislikes regarding their writing work.

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Reading – conversations with the children showed that reading is embedded in the school day. Children said they enjoyed being read to and that they would like to be read to in assembly. SLT is looking into introducing this.

Jotter work – the content of work recorded in jotters was good but the consistency of presentation was noticeably poor. SLT are concerned that children may not be taking pride in their work and need to have the expectations for presentation reinforced. A jotter policy is going to be looked at with the staff to drive consistency on things like linking comments from teachers to the learning targets so children understand why a comment is positive or what needs to be improved. SLT will also review with staff how work is being assessed, not just being reviewed by teachers but a mixture of children self-assessing, peer assessing and staff comments would be desirable.

AHT commented that the SLT enjoyed the experience of leading the learning conversations and underlined how important it was for them to hear the pupils' voices regarding what is going well and what needs to change in school.

- Responses to parent queries (other queries raised by Parents but not covered below will be responded to directly by the appropriate Parent Council representative due to the number of queries raised):
 - a. Football issues – AHT explained high volume of issues around playing football in the playground at break times. Staff are doing their utmost to be inclusive. Mr Hannah and Mr Holmes have worked with senior pupils to devise a code of conduct aligned with standard SFA rules as frequent arguments arise over variations in rules. There have been instances of children being banned temporarily from playing but the staff would like to avoid a complete ban given the sport's popularity among a wide range of boys and girls. A member of support staff is spending 10 minutes before break on a Monday organising the P7 teams for the week ahead so they are fair and also to minimise issues that arise throughout the week within the teams.

LS commented that her son has experienced animosity over football at school and would rather staff were not spending this valuable time on resolving issues. She also commented that the arguments spill over after school hours too.

AHT said staff have been out in the playground offering and leading other games to try to reduce the monopoly football seems to have.

JMac commented that her son who plays football three times a week in a club outside of school will not play football at school due to the abusive language, shouting and generally mean and unkind behaviour during games. Her daughter, only P2, already feels the same.

AHT commented that the P7 girls play football with no issues at all. Also reported that some children have said that the competitive language and shouting is allowed in their clubs outwith school.

JMac agreed there was a need for other activities to be made more obviously available. HR reported that some P7 boys had recently asked to play basketball at lunchtime and she would like to encourage that and other sports in other stages. She will ask the children to suggest what they'd like.

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EH responded to the point about different expectations in school and in clubs saying that pupils should be able to deal with the fact that there are two sets of rules. She commented also that staff shouldn't be having to spend this amount of time dealing with it and asked the question how many children are actually affected? In a school of over 600 children, do 300 of the play football or 30?

AHT agreed that this was an important point and suggested they survey the children and bring the results to the next PC meeting in January. Agreed it was taking too much of staff's time.

LMcD commented that her two sons have experienced issues. She felt the football was creating a toxic environment and would rather see it go or at least minimised to reduce its importance at school. Suggested there could be 5 different sports on the MUGA each day e.g. basketball, hockey, tennis, football, cricket.

AHT agreed with this idea of increasing variety. Suggested that staff could use their outdoor learning time to teach other games that the children could then play during playtimes.

DM – commented that as a P1 parent he hadn't experienced issues yet, he welcomed the idea of a rotation of sports equipment and opportunity to try other things.

AHT thanked parents for their contributions and support to try to reduce the number of issues created.

- b. School drop offs/pick ups – AHT wanted to reassure parents that they should feel welcome in the grounds if they're not comfortable leaving their child at the gate, particularly the youngest ones. Reiterated that the aim was to build independence and that staff are in the grounds to supervise. She would especially like parents to be mindful of keeping back (and keeping younger siblings back) from classroom windows as knocking or looking in can disrupt learning. If adults bring bicycles into the grounds, they should not at any time be ridden but wheeled along for children's safety.

ED responded that there has not been a staff member at the front gate since the HT's departure and this makes her concerned due to the congestion in the car park too. She also commented on having seen some older children walking the external perimeter (on the rugby club side) at a couple of minutes to the bell and suspected they had come out of the grounds to do so.

JD reported too much parental proximity at P1 doors especially where children are upset at being separated, easier if there's a clear run so need parents to drop and go promptly in the morning.

HD expressed concern about her P1 getting to class. Suggested the patio is marked as a children only zone. Could there be someone on the gate so parents are reassured of the handover of responsibility

DM suggested that parents just needed to know 'the why'

JMac suggested the gates be locked until later to discourage early arrival

LS confirmed that this policy had always been in place to 'drop and go'

JMac reported that the P2 parents she liaises with were very reluctant to pick up at the gate.

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AHT responded that pick up time was not a problem but suggested parents don't arrive too early and as mentioned before, that they stand well back off the patio area so that children aren't distracted from their teacher's last messages of the day. She would like to encourage parents to then pick up and leave the grounds promptly rather than using the trim trail/MUGA which should be out of bounds at those times of day as there is no supervision. She will add a clarification to the weekly newsletter regarding these expectations.

CP asked for staff to reinforce that those areas are out of bounds because she wants to leave promptly but currently it's not clear.

JMac asked for this to be said in assembly.

AHT and HR both affirmed that there are regular messages in assembly regarding this but will continue to reinforce.

EH asked for a video message telling the children to be sent out so parents could play it to their children.

AHT agreed to provide this.

JD also commented that she'd had to speak with grandparents bringing dogs into the school grounds also.

- c. Update on progress of outdoor classroom – this was to be bought from a combination of funds raised by the PTA and social fund. A quote had been received of £17,673 from Scotplay. As this was above £16,500, EDC procurement said it had to go out to tender. Only one quote came back of £23,500 from the Wee Furniture Company, no response from Scotplay. That information has now gone back to the PTA for a decision. There is an issue with older young people using and vandalising the school grounds at the weekend and the SLT's concern is that so much hard won funding might be spent on something which is then ruined. This will be an issue for the new HT when in post.

EH and LS both wondered what else the money might be spent on if not an outdoor classroom.

NS referred back to the need for more varied sports equipment to allay the football issues.

DM suggested another pupil survey might be needed to see what else the children would like it spent on.

JMac mentioned a scheme where a temporary swimming pool is installed for a limited period to offer swimming lessons to all given there is a local issue with the availability of swimming lessons. She will provide the link for SLT to consider.

- d. Toys in playground/looking after school property - AHT said that the staff would appreciate parental support on the point of looking after school and children's own property. Staff have reported a wide range of instances of books, laptops, playground toys and other school resources not being looked after well by the children. There is also always a really large amount of lost property around the school site. Staff will be emphasising the importance of looking after property both in class and in assemblies.

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- e. Parent night booking system – there had been some issues booking parents evening appointments. AHT reported that these issues are experienced by all school and caused by the number of people trying to log on at the same time. She understands that parents with multiple children do this to try to get their appointments close together but if there is an issue, SLT will help to organise a better arrangement. AHT advised that the SLT were considering releasing the appointments for the P1-4s first and then the P5-7s separately to reduce traffic, but this would still cause issues for those with siblings at different stages.
- f. Car park issues – SLT are all out in the car park in hi-vis at both ends of the school day. There was an issue with a food delivery truck which has been addressed with the company. There are ongoing issues with people accessing the car park who should not be causing congestion and making it difficult for those blue badge holders who should be able to drive in to do so.

JMac asked if notes could be put on windscreens.

LS suggested the idea of permits being displayed for those with nursery children and entitled to come in for mobility reasons.

NS seconded idea of permits

ED said she would be happy to help out in hi-vis. Asked what the report was of EDC staff visit.

LS commented that EDC staff had been positioned up at the road so not really seeing the problem area by the school gates.

AHT commented that this was because she felt the problem could be solved by signage/measures at the junction with the main road. If people come down as far as the school gates, they can't get out again.

ED said it wasn't teachers' jobs to police the car park, also suggested that information from school to parents isn't necessarily being cascaded to other family members doing pick ups.

AHT suggested that the health committee could get involved and she would ask Lesley Gordon to consider this.

JMac asked about signage needed at the area before the school gates

LS said this had been discussed but still not forthcoming

HD said as a parent with a blue badge she has issues getting a space. Pick up is more of a problem. If she's not there by 2:35, there's no space.

JD reiterated the issue, the disabled spaces are being used irresponsibly. Parents with medical equipment are having to park elsewhere and then not able to open doors.

JMac asked if the school could designate more disabled spaces

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LS said this meant going to the council which wasn't a quick fix and asked for a November rota of volunteers to help reinforce messages to parents breaking the rules as weather gets worse as this is when the problem tends to worsen.

LT commented that the exemption for nursery parents takes a lot of spaces as parents of nursery children with older school-aged children are choosing to pick up nursery children at 3pm which isn't really end of nursery session time. Could this be reviewed perhaps.

AHT took an action to liaise with nursery staff and ask this to be put out to nursery parents. Also asked all class reps to put out an update to parents of all classes and to ask for volunteers.

- g. Social Media Police Visit – a number of issues with older children using social media and this causing arguments or upset in school. Can't be policed in school but the number of incidents has meant SLT have asked for a community police visit to speak to the P7s.

DD asked if this could be extended to P6s too.

LT agreed P6s needed this too.

AHT said she would request another visit for P6 classes as the arranged date and time won't allow for all P7 and P6 classes to be spoken with.

- h. Reading Schools – HR gave an update on reading schools and general reading initiatives in school. She said Everybody Reading In Class (ERIC) time was well embedded in school as a means of reading for pleasure. There had been a question regarding the Standards and Quality report not referring to reading but HR explained that it was a main focus in the session 21/21 and then had been moved on into reading in maths and other areas. There are various schemes including a reward for any class whose teacher reads to them 10 days in a row and almost all classes have had this, some several times.

LMPS is working towards their silver 'Reading Schools' award. An action plan has been put together and accepted by the Scottish Book Trust. There are lots of initiatives underway as part of that: ERIC, Book Week Scotland activities, P3/4 class trip to the library, paired reading, author visits coming later in the year, P2 events for the gifting of Read Write Count book bags, the Bookworms are organising an outdoor library area, staff have a book club, and more initiatives for use of the library upstairs.

HR asked who had mentioned the Foyle Foundation grant scheme and offered support.

S-AB confirmed she had offered this information and said she would email HR to support.

JMac expressed frustration that there wasn't enough notice for the Book Week Scotland invites for parent readers and the same for the P2 gifting event.

HR reassured that not all parents would be able to come but reading buddies and other adults would be available to ensure all children could participate.

JMac mentioned similar diary issue for the Nativity dates seeming to have changed.

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LS commented that the weekly updates with diary dates had been reviewed and two months notice had been given of specific nativity dates. Week commencing 11th December had been on the updates until then.

AHT confirmed specific times and dates for nativity as being 13th December at 9:45am and 14th December at 1:45pm. She also took this opportunity to say that LMPS operate an 'open door' policy for individual parental queries and that as a Parent Council, we should focus on discussing issues that affect a group of parents.

LT commented that there was a deal of repetition in the issues being raised and that a FAQs type approach was needed for things relating to things like Bug Club and toilets. Other issues like the query around the content of the RSHP curriculum were outwith the school's control and had to be taken up with Education Scotland.

LS asked that the website be updated with current PC members.

2. Homework Sub-Committee

LS explained that the homework sub-committee was hoping to move surveys forward.

LT updated that MM had shared proposed questions with SLT last week for pupil and staff surveys.

AHT confirmed they had reviewed the proposed questions and that she was happy to put them into a Glow Form to be distributed and collated with a view to bringing the results back to the next meeting in January. There were two proposed changes:

- To take out from the pupil survey 'Does homework cause any problems at home?' and replace this with 'Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about homework?'
- For the teacher survey to reword the question to allow teachers to comment on how they think homework should be delivered at different stages as they may have experience of teaching across several.

3. AOCB

Note: Date of next meeting has been changed due to PC Clerk and staff members being needed at the EDC Christmas Concert (Royal Concert Hall). Next meeting will now be 15th January 2024.