

# Meeting of Mackie Academy Parent Council

**Wednesday 10 October 2018**

**PRESENT:** Dawn Black, Cllr Sarah Dickinson, Andy Forster, Rhona Grant (Clerk), Fiona Harris, Fiona Hogg, Chris Ann Holt, Carol Howie, Dawn Milroy, Kim Milton, Elaine Mitchell, Louise Moir (Head Teacher), Karen Perks

**APOLOGIES:** Katie Bannister, Sonia Cooper, Morag Coull, Paula Durward, Lorna Findlay, Marion Montgomery, Karen Macangus, Lisa Macaulay, Allison McIntyre, Aileen McKellar, Teresa Mugford, Marc Nunn, Fiona Ritchie, Margaret Sweetnam

Ms Kim Milton, Vice Chair, advised that Rachel Shanks had stepped down as Chair, having taken on the role for one year only. Kim had therefore agreed to chair the meeting for the first two items on the agenda.

## **1. WELCOME**

Kim welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the new session. Apologies for absence were noted.

## **2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR, VICE-CHAIR AND CLERK**

Kim explained that traditionally the Chairperson had carried out the role for a 2-year stint, however as already noted, Rachel had agreed to do so for one year only. Kim and Louise had discussed taking a flexible approach, and had looked at possible options such as 2 people taking on the role jointly, or alternatively having a rolling chair with a different person chairing each meeting.

Louise emphasised that the position should not be seen as burdensome. The role is mostly a point of contact to raise or respond to any issues affecting the parent body, which is not an onerous job now that effective methods of communication have been set up. Monthly emails are issued to parents routinely, and any other items can be sent out on an ad hoc basis. Occasionally, there will be invitations from Aberdeenshire Council and other agencies to attend meetings and events but attendance is not compulsory and they are open for a representative of the Parent Council to attend, not necessarily the Chairperson.

Louise pointed out that each Parent Council meeting needs someone to chair it which could either be the same person, or a different one, each time. The important factor is to ensure that there is an effective Parent Council. Kim indicated that someone would be required to look after the email account and be that point of contact.

Fiona Harris commended the idea of a rolling Chair, and the others indicated their agreement.

Louise suggested that the year's meeting dates could be scheduled in advance, with everyone having the opportunity to chair one of the meetings.

Dawn Milroy volunteered to be the point of contact and take on responsibility for the email account.

Kim said that she was willing to stay on as Vice Chair but cautioned that this is her fourth year on the Parent Council and therefore someone will be required to take on the position next year. Louise voiced the opinion that a flexible model could work out well.

It was agreed that Rhona would continue in the position of Clerk, with responsibility for the treasurer duties.

### **3. MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 June were agreed.

### **4. MATTERS ARISING**

Louise undertook to discuss with the Art Team whether a new Parent Council logo could be taken on as a future class project.

All other matters arising were covered in the agenda.

### **5. SCHOOL BUSINESS**

#### **Insight**

Louise explained that "Insight" is the tracking tool used by the Scottish Government to measure attainment in the Senior Phase from a number of perspectives, and the data is also used for the purposes of the virtual comparator.

There is a parent zone dashboard on Insight's website and Louise suggested that the link is issued prior to the next meeting, so that an informed question and answer session, with information relevant to Mackie, could take place. Louise advised too that the data is also utilised by HM Inspectors during a school's inspection. She clarified that, whilst the data is updated in September, not all areas are updated. For instance work is ongoing to ascertain if a former student's destination has been sustained and there is a further update in February. Louise stated that the information being provided can be fascinating to look at and the school is happy with what they are seeing for Mackie.

Insight is into its fourth year of existence therefore it is now possible to see emerging trends and it is proving to be a worthwhile tool.

#### **Staffing**

Louise reported that staffing movements this term had made life quite challenging, and provided a comprehensive update for each faculty.

She explained that, when cover is required, it is only possible to use in-school staff to cover an absence for a specific period of time and then external options have to be sourced which can be difficult given the limited availability of supply staff. The knock-on effect of this has meant that some members of staff have on occasion been unable to participate in out-of-school events. Furthermore, sorting it all out can be time consuming and the costs come out of the devolved budget. Stuart Gray has the difficult task of weighing up the options, for example remembering the associated maternity leave costs, and Louise has to ensure that the right teacher for the subject is sourced.

Louise advised that a new post is being advertised for a Principal Teacher – Developing Young Workforce. She explained that the staff member who was carrying out the role on a secondment basis has returned to their substantive post, and the person now being sought will not be attached to a teaching team so that they will have the space to cover other items such as enterprise work, which will be very helpful for areas of development.

### **Property Update**

Louise reported that senior staff are quite demoralised by the length of time being taken by contractors to carry out work around the school; for instance the water fountains upgrade had been logged in November 2017. The contractors had been on site to ascertain the work required and nothing had been done since. Key pieces are outstanding around the school and they are holding up other jobs requiring to be done. Unfortunately there is no flexibility in the appointed contractors, and trying to get anything moved forward becomes very time consuming.

Cllr Dickinson advised that she had received similar information from other schools in Aberdeenshire. Louise pointed out that she had the luxury of a team around her who could undertake trying to resolve some of the issues, otherwise it would become even more time-consuming.

Fiona pointed out that the contractor must be tied in to KPIs. Cllr Dickinson said that she does inform Property of the feedback from schools. Kim queried the length of the contract. Cllr Dickinson said that the contract is for 4 years with a review at the end of year 2, and the contract is currently in its second year. She was aware that there had been numerous complaints and the contractor had been told to make positive changes to the service they are providing.

Louise reported that there have been ongoing issues with a leaking roof since January. The leaks are quite significant and are affecting 5 classrooms on the top floor. The contractors have stated that they will carry out a full survey but there has been no contact from them in connection with this, since September. Chris Ann Holt asked if temporary repairs could be carried out but Louise explained that the survey is required to assess where the rain is coming in. Cllr Dickinson undertook to make enquiries. Dawn M. suggested that pressure is exerted upon FES.

Louise said she was aware that FES had money had been withheld and some smaller jobs have been carried out but there seems to be a hold up somewhere between the Property Dept and FES. Dawn M. said that if money had been withheld, it is legally acceptable to use another contractor so there might be an opportunity to bypass FES. Cllr Dickinson advised that Aberdeenshire have very strict procedures around procurement. Dawn M thought it was worth checking out and Cllr Dickinson agreed to ascertain the situation and feedback the response.

Kim pointed out that whilst the delay with upgrading the water fountains is annoying, a leaking roof is very serious and needs to be fixed forthwith. Chris Ann pointed out the obvious health and safety element.

## **6. AOB**

Louise advised that the PTA had decided that funds they have raised would be used to sponsor the school's tennis team. They have also undertaken to organise a community café in the front reception area once per month, with a different theme each month.

Fiona Harris asked about changes to the Higher syllabus. Louise advised that there are various changes to percentages in coursework/assignments and to the length of some exams. The school is in the process of collating the updated information, and the details will be made available for each Higher course at an early date.

Fiona Harris asked if a Pupil Support replacement for Jo Tolhurst had been appointed. Louise advised that Gretchen Perk has been in post for a year and information should have gone out at that time, but the details could be provided again.

Karen Perks said that she was happy to continue with the Parent Council Twitter account although she felt that she had not been sufficiently pro-active with it. Fiona Hogg said that she might be willing to take it on if she knew what was involved. Karen and Fiona agreed to liaise.

Kim noted that it had been intended to include a tour of the school at the next meeting. Louise agreed that this could be arranged and all decided it would be worthwhile.

Louise explained that a tour of the school is organised as part of the Open Day in April during the school day, but she recognised that the timing was not convenient for those at work and therefore consideration will be given to repeating it one evening, for those parents who cannot attend in the daytime.

Louise advised that Depute Head Teachers Fiona Stark and Laura Larkworthy have been reviewing the school's anti-bullying material and would welcome the opportunity to attend the next meeting. It was agreed this would be worthwhile.

## **7. DATES OF MEETINGS**

The following dates were agreed:

Tuesday 27 November  
Wednesday 16 January  
Tuesday 5 March  
Wednesday 17 April  
Tuesday 11 June

Karen volunteered to chair the meeting on 27 November.

Kim thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.