



**Meeting of Mackie Academy Parent Council**  
**Wednesday 12 June 2019**

**PRESENT:** Dawn Black, Morag Coull, Paula Durward, Lorna Findlay, Andrea Forster, Rhona Grant (Clerk), Dawn Milroy, Kim Milton, Louise Moir (Head Teacher), Karen McClymont, Karen Perks, Fiona Ritchie; Cllr Dennis Robertson

**APOLOGIES:** Sonia Cooper, Cllr Sarah Dickinson, Fiona Harris, Fiona Hogg, Chris Ann Holt, Carol Howie, Elaine Mitchell, Marion Montgomery, Karen MacAngus, Lisa Macaulay, Michelle McGill, Allison McIntyre, Aileen McKellar, Marc Nunn

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Fiona Stark (Depute Head); Stuart Axten (Principal Teacher); Innes Cronshaw (Parent)

**1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Kim Milton (Vice Chair) chaired the meeting. Kim welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies for absence were noted.

**2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the previous meeting, held on 24 April, were approved.

**3. MATTERS ARISING**

All matters arising were covered in the agenda.

**4. JOHNHAVEN BUS ISSUES**

Mr Innes Cronshaw attended the meeting to voice his concerns about the provision of school transport for those living in Johnshaven. He explained that previously a dedicated bus service has not been provided, meaning that pupils have to use the public bus service to travel to and from school. As well as the time factor involved, students have on occasion also had to face inappropriate and threatening behaviour from other passengers.

However, it has now been decided to provide a dedicated bus service to/from Johnshaven with effect from the start of the new school year. Mr Cronshaw pointed out that, whilst this is very welcome, there is still the issue of reliability, with buses breaking down regularly and pupils waiting at the side of the road either for a replacement bus, or to be picked up by parents. Mr Cronshaw underlined how dangerous this is, thus he has complained on every occasion the bus has broken down, which seems to be every other week.

Mr Cronshaw wondered if the transport contract was due for renewal, and if so could reliability be included in negotiations with penalties factored in as appropriate. Fiona Stark explained that, while her remit includes transport, Aberdeenshire Council's Transport Unit has responsibility for transport tenders and contracts but it is very likely that there could only be one bidder, given there is very little competition locally.

Andrea Forster agreed that reliability of the service is very poor. She advised that students who live between Inverbervie and Stonehaven have to use a service bus and are picked up at the roadside, which again raises safety issues. Dawn (Black) queried why this was and it was explained that the dedicated bus is full. Dawn B pointed out that clearly there is a need for the provision of a dedicated service that includes all students in the locality.

Cllr Robertson indicated that safety is crucial when a bus breaks down and he undertook to ascertain the current policy and arrangements in the event of a break-down.

Mr Cronshaw stressed also that pupils are not wearing seatbelts which, as well as being dangerous, is breaking the law. Kim suggested that this is something that the community policeman could perhaps address. Fiona S said that road safety and bus safety are covered in PSE lessons so that pupils are made aware of potential dangers. Fiona S explained that staff try to attend at the bus bays every day but the time factor makes it impossible to go round every bus therefore they have to prioritise.

Paula Durward asked if any contact has been made with Stagecoach personnel. Kim advised that there had been dialogue with Stagecoach staff on several occasions previously, and they could be contacted again. Paula pointed out that Stagecoach's behaviour is irresponsible and action should be taken before there is an incident. Kim explained that contact should be made with the Transport Unit in the first instance.

Andrea reiterated her concerns about pupils waiting at the roadside for a service bus, which sometimes drives past them. Cllr Robertson agreed that it is a concern, and he would raise it as well as enquiring about Stagecoach's policies, and risk assessments.

Kim undertook to write to the Transport Unit, listing the various concerns, and asking how they will be addressed. Andrea pointed out that problems with transport have been ongoing for a number of years.

Kim said that she would ask if adherence to the contract details is monitored, and account is taken of how often buses break down. Mr Cronshaw thought that if penalties were incurred for a breakdown the buses would become more reliable.

Dawn (Milroy) cautioned that the lack of competition should be remembered, but Mr Cronshaw thought the Transport Unit should be able to negotiate to some extent. Kim pointed out that Aberdeenshire Council should be addressing the transport issues as a priority since it seems to be an Aberdeenshire-wide problem.

Cllr Robertson wondered if the Procurement Dept could look at contracts so that local companies could be given the opportunity to provide some level of service, and he offered to ascertain the likelihood of that being a possibility.

## **5. DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD UPDATE**

Stuart Axten (Faculty Head) reported that 40 students had participated in the Duke of Edinburgh Award with 38 completing the Award. Stuart advised that it was intended to organise a presentation evening in August. As well as recognising the students' achievement, it could be used to raise awareness among pupils of what is involved and perhaps encourage parental volunteering. Stuart stressed that, for sustainability, parental involvement in volunteering is crucial.

Stuart said that consideration is being given to the possibility of offering the opportunity to participate in a Silver or Gold Award as an elective option in S5 although the significant leap from Bronze to Gold is recognised.

Stuart explained that there had been several changes of personnel in PE, and new staff had to take the lead in delivering the curriculum element of the award whilst not having had the same level of experience as previous staff members, but they had risen to the challenge. A programme has been built up including team building activities, communication skills and volunteering opportunities. The office staff have been extremely helpful in relation to the paperwork; and all in all it has been a successful start to Mackie delivering a Duke of Edinburgh Award opportunity.

Dawn B asked about the possibility of enrolling volunteers from, for instance, the local hillwalking group. Stuart said that ideally a parent network will be built up, but the possibility of recruiting volunteers from other sources could be given consideration at some point.

Stuart said that the certificates are either posted to the student or to the school for collection at reception but Mackie felt that the students' achievements should be given a higher profile. As well as celebrating their achievement, the event can also be used to provide insight of what is involved in participating in the award to the new intake and their parents. Google classrooms will also be set up so that parents can be kept fully informed on an ongoing basis.

Cllr Robertson asked if local youth groups were involved. Stuart explained that the programme is still in the development stage but there might be scope to involve community groups in future. Morag Coull advised that several local youth groups are currently struggling to attract leaders. Stuart pointed out that Stonehaven Sports Hub is not being used to its capacity and smaller clubs could benefit from becoming involved in it.

Kim reminded everyone that Mackie had taken on responsibility for delivering the Award at short notice and had worked it into the curriculum, therefore it is commendable that 38 students completed the Award and it reflects well on staff, students and volunteers.

Louise advised that a positive meeting had been held recently with the volunteers group. Stuart agreed and added that the scheme has to be inclusive and without barriers, therefore transport and all equipment are provided to the participants.

## **6. SCHOOL BUSINESS**

### **Staffing**

Louise provided a detailed update on staffing movement and levels, and said that the only vacancy currently is a teacher of physics which post has been advertised.

### **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

Louise reported that events will be organised throughout the year, and the anniversary will be highlighted in the local papers. Former pupils are being encouraged to bring in any items they may have from their time at Mackie and a display will be created. An Open Day is scheduled for 30 August and it is hoped to organise a whole school photograph if the logistics can be worked out. There will also be a new logo for each of the Houses and the year will end with the 50<sup>th</sup> Prize-giving.

## **8. PARENT COUNCIL BUSINESS**

### **PVG checks**

Louise explained that Parent Council members do not require to be PVG checked, since the role does not involve any one-to-one direct contact with students.

### **Aberdeenshire Council Support to Schools and Parent Councils**

Kim summarised the letter received from Aberdeenshire Council which explained that because of budget cuts, the number of Quality Improvement Managers (QIMs) and Quality Improvement Officers

(QIOs) is being cut, leading to less support being available to Head Teachers and Parent Councils. Louise advised that she did not anticipate any changes to Mackie's current practices, because of the structures that are in place, but she was aware that she could seek advice from Mackie's QIO as and when needed; therefore she was content for other schools to receive an additional layer of support where it was needed. Cllr Robertson offered an assurance that support would be available in the event of it being required.

### **Parents as Partners**

Louise explained the reasoning behind the leaflet which is being issued by Aberdeenshire Council to parents, and which reiterates the expected relationship between the school and parents, so that due process can be followed at all times.

### **AGM**

The Parent Council AGM was scheduled for Wednesday 4 September 2019.

### **Office-Bearers**

Kim voiced the opinion that having a rolling Chairperson had not worked as well as had been hoped. Although it had provided the opportunity for more people to become involved, there had not always been a volunteer to chair the meetings. The situation had also resulted in more work for Louise on behalf of the Parent Council, yet that is not her role. Kim thought it made sense, therefore, to aim for appointing a Chairperson next year. A Vice Chair will also be required and someone to take on responsibility for the email account, since Kim and Dawn (Milroy) have both served for four years and will be stepping down.

Karen Perks suggested that having a rolling Chair could perhaps discourage new members from joining the Parent Council, in case they were expected to chair a meeting. Kim agreed and said that Mackie had always enjoyed a relatively high level of parent members participating in the Parent Council, with a wide range across the school years, and it would be disappointing to lose that.

Louise said that it might be worthwhile to put out details of the Parent Council, and explaining what is involved in the roles of Chair and Vice Chair. It could be issued prior to the holidays and followed up at the start of the new session. Cllr Robertson suggested that details could also be provided at the prize-giving.

Kim undertook to draft an email to be issued to the parent body before the holidays.

## **12. AOB**

### **Young People's Survey**

Cllr Robertson referred to the recently completed Young People's Survey. Louise advised that a GIRFEC Group meeting was scheduled for the following week, and the survey would be discussed then but it was apparent that the return had been very limited. Cllr Robertson agreed but pointed out that the worrying issues identified by the young people, eg, drugs, bullying and alcohol misuse, have to be addressed.

Louise said that the school had had no prior knowledge of the survey, but was aware that the return in Stonehaven had been only 8% therefore it cannot be considered as representative. The GIRFEC Group will be debating whether it would be worthwhile to carry out the survey again on a larger scale. Louise stressed that Mackie tries to be aware of the key issues affecting its students and tries to be pro-active in addressing them.

### **Thanks**

Louise thanked everyone for their efforts on behalf of the Parent Council, and support of the school, over the school year.

Kim too thanked everyone, and encouraged parent members to consider the possibility of volunteering for the role of Chair or Vice-Chair, even if it meant leaving their comfort zone.

Kim thanked all present for their attendance and closed the meeting.