



Meeting of Mackie Academy Parent Council

Tuesday 24 April 2019

PRESENT: Cllr Sarah Dickinson, Rhona Grant (Clerk), Chris Ann Holt, Carol Howie, Dawn Milroy, Kim Milton, Louise Moir (Head Teacher), Marion Montgomery, Fiona Ritchie

APOLOGIES: Dawn Black, Sonia Cooper, Morag Coull, Paula Durward, Lorna Findlay, Andrea Forster, Fiona Harris, Fiona Hogg, Elaine Mitchell, Karen MacAngus, Lisa Macaulay, Karen McClymont, Michelle McGill, Allison McIntyre, Aileen McKellar, Marc Nunn, Karen Perks, Margaret Sweetnam

IN ATTENDANCE: Lucy Angel (Principal Teacher), Fiona Stark (Depute Head)

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Kim Milton had agreed to chair the meeting. Kim welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies for absence were noted.

2. DEVELOPING THE YOUNG WORKFORCE AND LEARNER PATHWAYS

Louise Moir introduced Lucy Angel (Principal Teacher – Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) and provided a broad outline of her remit.

Lucy presented a detailed summary of her responsibilities and tabled two documents showing some of the different aspects that she covers. She highlighted that the intention is that all students will have a positive destination when they leave school and, with that in mind, all teaching staff are expected to engage and consider the different pathways so that the programme is fully integrated with the curriculum.

Lucy said that she is building up links, contacts and partnerships so that students and parents have access to all available information and resources. Sources of information include Education Scotland and the DYW North East Group. It is also hoped to set up an accessible hub that everyone will be able to link into, and to embed careers education throughout the school.

Dawn Milroy asked about links with parents. She cited the example of where students are unsuccessful in their application for a college course, and parents are unsure how best to advise their young person what action to take next.

Louise explained that this scenario would fall under the responsibility of Skills Development Scotland (SDS), who would consult the school and meet with the pupil to advise what action to take next. Louise said that relevant information should have been passed on to the students and their parents. SDS also have a 16+ Partnership Programme, and organise various workshops on items such as writing a CV.

Louise emphasised that SDS have a legal obligation around the destinations work they do which is directly commissioned by the Scottish Government, and the system is as robust as it can be. The students are kept informed about programmes and workshops, and interviews with each pupil should have been carried out. Louise said that she would want to know the reasons why, if an interview had not taken place. She underlined that the number of S4 leavers is not large, and significant work takes place to ensure that each has a positive destination when they leave school.

Dawn M said that she was aware that there had been several discussions with guidance staff, in the situation she had in mind. Fiona Stark pointed out that there is usually a back-up plan, and a student can also return to school.

Kim thought that it might be helpful if all the relevant information was available on the school's website.

Dawn M said that she was aware of several students who were worried about the success of their college application. Louise said that colleges are currently conducting interviews because of the increased numbers applying to college. She explained that students will usually have several different options for courses at college and should therefore have lots of choice, but sometimes it can prove difficult to advise a young person and point them in a suitable direction. Dawn M said that parents need access to all the information too, so that they can support their young person and offer advice from an informed position.

Lucy said that as well as college there is also the possibility of modern apprenticeships. Louise underlined the importance of talking about pathways so that students realise that there are many different routes which could be followed. Dawn M agreed that it can be difficult to get young people to listen to the advice that they are being given. Fiona Ritchie said that the Hub will become helpful at the point where it becomes relevant.

Cllr Dickinson advised that foundation apprenticeship opportunities have recently become available in Aberdeenshire.

Louise pointed out that careers education is a work in progress for teachers as they do not an up to date working knowledge of the workplace and naturally they have a bias towards their own subject. Lucy will work with faculties to encourage teaching staff to think in terms of pathways as opposed to individual subjects.

Carol Howie asked if there is support within school to write a CV. Fiona Stark said that they use the resource "My World of Work" in PSE, beginning in S1, which produces a good-looking and comprehensive CV. By S3 a student will be able to populate the document; updating and editing entries. In S4 and S5, interview skills and completing application forms are studied, as well as looking at UCAS personal statements.

Louise said that thought is being given as to whether it would be more helpful to group PSE classes by pathways rather than by House, so that the students can discuss similar interests with their peers. Cllr Dickinson reiterated that parents need to have access to information too, so that they can pass on relevant and accurate advice.

Fiona R asked about work experience. Lucy said that employers are now more willing to engage in work experience, so long as they are supported. Mackie's work experience takes place during the third week in June and there is quite a large uptake this year. Students are encouraged to find their own placement, however the Aberdeenshire database can be used to source a placement, if need be.

Louise explained that the Senior Phase event had moved to September in response to pupils pointing out that their exam results could mean that they have to re-think their subject choices, if those chosen are no longer relevant. In the meantime, the new S4 students will be getting to grips with their courses, and the event can be tailored to the needs of each year group; for example UCAS information is more useful to S5 and S6 pupils.

Fiona R asked about the timing of UCAS submissions. Fiona Stark advised that work begins in June when students are registered so that they are in the system. Draft documents will be completed by the October holidays with a view to submitting the completed document in November.

Louise said that it is intended to set up a focus group from a cross section of the Parent Forum across the year groups, with a view to determining what information would be most useful to parents and their young people. It is also intended to begin to talk about pathways at the P7/S1 evening so that it becomes a familiar subject. The focus group will be established prior to the holidays and the findings will be brought to the first meeting of the new Parent Council.

Dawn requested that relevant information is emailed to the pupils leaving school this year, and their parents.

Louise said that it is anticipated that if parents and students begin to be informed from S1, it means that at the appropriate time they will know where to go, to seek answers and solutions. By the time the student enters the Senior Phase, both they and their parents will be confident in sourcing relevant information. Louise underlined that the UCAS online tool includes a wealth of information for parents but they are often unaware of its existence.

3. PERSONAL AND SOCIAL EDUCATION (PSE)

Fiona Stark (Depute Head Teacher) advised that PSE falls under her remit, which includes updating information, evaluation etc. She explained that each class is grouped by tutor group for one period a week and it can also be helpful for keeping in touch with the students. The same four categories are used each year : mental health, substance use, relationships and planning for choices and changes.

The same topics are discussed each year so pupils do have the perception that it is repetitive but by S3 they are beginning to realise that discussions become more complex and in-depth as they move up the school.

There is input from various external agencies and each talk is tailored to the different age groups.

Teaching staff also try to be pro-active and re-active to issues that are affecting the students. It has also been decided to deliver a new SQA at Level 5 on the subject of Mental Health and 90+ students have opted for that course in S4. It is also intended to work on raising awareness of what is covered by the GIRFEC agenda and the Shanarri indicators, which the PSAT team will pick up on.

Louise said that it can be challenging to fit everything in, in the time allocated, given that it is difficult to quantify the level of discussion generated by differing needs. Also students have to be comfortable with the teacher to be comfortable engaging with the process. Fiona Stark said that the Philanthropy Challenge is also offered to S5 students, and takes half of the school year.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Plastic Use Reduction

Louise said that good progress continues to be made, and the trial of recycling bins will begin shortly, with clear displays on the bins of what should be put in each receptacle.

Anti-Bullying Policy

Louise reported that the updated Anti-bullying Policy is now available on the website.

6. SCHOOL BUSINESS

Staffing

Louise advised that a request for probationers for Modern Languages and PE has been submitted. Interviews for the vacancy in PE were scheduled for the following week and it was hoped also to fill two posts in Geography. These were the main areas of change.

50th Anniversary

Louise said that, as suggested at the previous meeting, she had made contact with Stonehaven Heritage Society in connection with celebrating the 50th anniversary of Mackie being situated on the current site.

It is intended, as previously mentioned, to set aside a designated day when former pupils can bring in mementoes from their time at Mackie. These items will be catalogued and a display will be organised. An open day is also planned.

7. AOB

Carol Howie asked about measures to discourage the seagulls nesting on the school roofs. Cllr Dickinson acknowledged that the seagulls are a significant issue, locally, but explained that the most effective measures are very expensive, however there will be a programme of removing the nests from Council buildings.

Fiona R asked about progress in relation to the hole in the Mineralwell Park wall. Louise advised that an architectural plan has been drawn up and submitted to the Property Dept.

Carol queried when the new timetable would take effect. Louise said that it would occur on 27 May. She explained that it usually happens around the same time each year, but the actual date varies depending on various factors such as timetabling. She added that S5 and S6 would return to school on 3 June, thus allowing four weeks of term remaining before the summer holidays.

Dawn M advised that she has now participated in the Parent Council for 4 years, meaning that in future she will become an observer and would accordingly be required to relinquish the email account. Anyone willing to take on this responsibility was requested to inform Louise or Rhona.

8. CHAIR OF NEXT MEETING

A volunteer is required to chair the next meeting, scheduled for 12 June.

Louise requested that parents give thought to any subjects and topics, relating to different aspects of school life, that they thought would be useful to discuss at future meetings.

Kim thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution to discussions and closed the meeting.