

School Improvement at Mackie Academy: Pupil Focus Groups

All four groups have participated in discussion and consultation over the course of the year about our revised Anti-Bullying policy. Their feedback, along with that of staff and parents was incorporated into the final document which will be put to final consultation with the Parent Council on Tuesday, 5th March 2019. At their last meeting on 25th February, all groups were consulted on the impact of our current merit system. The results of the consultation will be considered and relevant actions taken based on the pupils' feedback.

Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)

Have started work on their self-evaluation of our school using the "How Good is our school?" (HGIOS4) document, focusing on the theme of 'Our Successes and Achievements'. They've also discussed the "I Can" statements from the Career Education Standard and given their views on what is currently being done in school to support them to achieve these statements which has been passed to Mrs Angel, our new PT DYW, who visited the group during their last meeting to introduce herself and hear their ideas on what pupils would like to see happening in the future around DYW. Their next steps when they meet again in June will be to take forward the evidence gathering activities to find out what other pupils in school feel about wider achievement and skills for work at Mackie Academy. Mrs Angel will continue to link with this group to support the work she is doing as we move forward into the next academic year.

Health & Wellbeing (HWB)

This team have been liaising with Mrs Stark to support the school's HWB strategy since August. In an attempt to tackle exam stress, the group had discussions with Community Learning and Development and have supported a proposal to pilot sessions with Therapets in school prior to the Maths and English exams in May 2019 in a bid to reduce anxiety in pupils from S4-6. Information from the school's Health and Wellbeing audit has been shared with the group and they have put forward their views and suggestions on why pupils may feel this way and what the school might be able to do to support pupils' wellbeing. Some members of the group have carried out research on the nutritional value of some of the drinks and snacks on offer in the school canteen and have presented their concerns around the sugar levels in some of these items, along with the need to consider more options for vegetarians and vegans; these points will taken forwards with the catering service over the coming months. Going forwards they will be using the 'Our Health and Wellbeing' section of 'Wee HGIOS' to evaluate aspects of our HWB provision and gather evidence to support their views.

Rights Respecting Schools (RRS)

The group have surveyed pupils on aspects of their school experience to gauge our progress towards the Silver award and drawn up an action plan to indicate our next steps. Their main aims for the remainder of this year and into next are to ensure that all pupils are kept informed about their rights and the school's progress towards Silver and to consider how pupils could be encouraged to participate more in school decision making. They are also looking at ways to incorporate a 'Rights Week' at least once a

year for junior pupils to highlight the importance of Children's Rights and the Global Goals.

Learning and Teaching

The team have spent time discussing what makes a good learner and what makes a good teacher which has been passed to staff involved in the development of the Visible Learning strategy. This is feeding into our plans to create a shared language of learning for Mackie Academy and our cluster primary schools. They have been looking at the 'Our Learning and Teaching' section of the 'Wee HGIOS' document and have planned to link with staff from the Learning and Teaching Working Party to undertake a learning walk around the school with a focus on our wall displays in order to determine what these tell us about learning and teaching and how effective our displays are at supporting learning and whether they need to be changed, updated or improved. They will then compare notes with the staff members and agree on actions going forwards.

Privacy Notices: Videos and Photographs

If your child is in S1 and under the age of 13 you will have received all correspondence about this in the post. If your child is 13 or over they will be seeing me next week in assemblies for me to discuss this in line with new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidance.

Aberdeenshire Council's Photography/Video Consent form is required for any young person who is a pupil in an Aberdeenshire school. This new photography and videography consent form for all schools will enable the school to comply with the Data Protection Act and new regulations brought forward by GDPR last year.

The [Privacy Notice](#) has been simplified and the form highlights the age of consent in Scotland is 13, which means for secondary school pupils it changes part way through S2. For all pupils currently 13 and over the decision about how photos and videography lies with them unless the school and / or parents deem that parental guidance is required. If this is the case the school will be in contact with you directly on this matter. If you have any concerns then please do not hesitate to contact your child's Pupil Support and Attainment (Guidance) team Leader.

This new form also ensures that Aberdeenshire Council are covered for photography and videography taken by the school AND/OR official photographer. This means the process of gaining consent for major events, launches or promotional campaigns will be far simpler as it will have been gained via this process in advance. The form covers all events held in the school and does not have to be issued for individual events. This is why pupils are given the option to give blanket consent for all events, consent for some use or no consent at all. The decision is entirely theirs and not the school. This will be made very clear in my presentation to pupils.

If you still have any concerns then please do not hesitate to contact the school on this matter.

Social Media and Online Activity of Pupils: Guidance for Parents

Following a number of recent high profile events in the media please find information from Aberdeenshire Council which highlights specific guidance for parents who may be concerned about their child's use of the internet, particular applications and / or social media. It can be found [here](#).

The school will always take seriously any concerns that a parent may have around these key issues but we do need to be clear that actions that take place outside of school cannot be dealt with directly by the school. In these circumstances it is the responsibility of the parent and / or the young person to decide what course of action, if any, they wish to take and the school will actively support the young person as best we can whilst they are in school. The school is also currently reviewing our Personal and Social Education programme to reflect this ever evolving area of the curriculum in order to best support our young people.

Behaviours outside of school

The school works proactively with our partner agencies, to proactively reduce anti-social behaviour in our local community. This means that we will discuss with pupils and parents information that is provided to us where this is appropriate.

Currently there are significant concerns being raised around the behaviours of groups of young people within certain locations in Stonehaven. In response to this the police are increasing patrols in these areas. If young people are found to be in situations that are breaking the law or causing undue concern then the school will receive information through official channels.

In particular we would ask parents to discuss with their child or children the importance of not causing undue stress to members of the local community through anti-social behaviours such as inappropriate language towards members of the community, knocking on people's doors, throwing items at people's houses and collecting in large groups in residential areas thus causing concern to the local residents, especially the elderly. I am sure we would all agree that this is not something we would want to happen to ourselves or any of our family members and therefore we would ask that pupils show the same consideration to all other residents of Stonehaven.

If parents have any particular concerns then please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Uniform

As it is now five years since we last reviewed our school uniform next month a short questionnaire will be provided to parents to garner your opinions on how the school should best progress. There are key areas which the school would like to review due to an increasing non-compliance by pupils. The bottom line is that the school values a school uniform for all the positive messages it allows us to send out about the school as well as enabling young people to learn about what is appropriate to wear in a work environment. The school has also worked hard to maintain a low-cost uniform so that

parents are not faced with a large bill each academic year. However, we cannot maintain this without parental support.

The questionnaire will ask your opinions on some key areas that we are struggling to maintain, with the key one being that of the school blazer. We look forward to getting your points of view on this.

Changes to the Canteen: Clean Eating

A group of pupils have been working hard to try and find ways to reduce the amount of waste that is produced by pupils in the school, specifically from the canteen and associated with takeaway containers and plastic cutlery. The challenge for the school and Aberdeenshire Council is significant given that our canteen only seats around 250 pupils at any one time and each day we serve over 700 meals. In no way do we want to reduce the number of young people who choose to eat in the canteen at Mackie Academy as we firmly believe this is far healthier than pupils going out of school.

As a starting point, as of Monday 4th March 2019, pupils will be given a plate for any hot meal unless it is a necessity for them to have it in a take away box. This is to reduce the use of these boxes, which cannot be recycled, and ensure that pupils are only using these when necessary. In addition to this we are also going to remove the use of plastic cutlery. Pupils will be provided with proper cutlery and if they do have to "take away" their lunch there will be stations around the school where they can return their cutlery. This is to stop pupils putting proper cutlery into bins! The canteen are also going to trial reusable pots for the Pasta Bar to enable pupils to take this away if necessary and, again, pupils will be able to return these to the stations around the school.

This is the first stage in a much bigger and longer plan for the school and the catering service to reduce waste. In addition to this the school is going to be piloting a new recycling bin solution in the canteen area during the exam period to see if we can encourage pupils to place waste in the right bin.

Anything that parents can do at home to encourage young people to think about their waste is always gratefully received by ourselves as it is a massive concern to us just now how little recycling we are actually able to do from the rubbish created in school. Thank you for your support on this matter.