



MACKIE ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

NOTE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 26 AUGUST 2020

Present : 16 Parents
Head Teacher – Louise Moir
Teaching Staff Representative – Karen McClymont
Cllr Sarah Dickinson
Clerk – Rhona Grant

1. Welcome

Paula Durward, Chairperson, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were noted.

3. Previous Year's AGM

The note of the previous year's AGM was agreed.

4. Chairperson's Report

Paula provided a summary of the year's activities as follows:

For the benefit of observers, Paula advised that, despite Covid-19, we have managed to hold monthly meetings during term time. We held our first virtual meeting in April and have been doing so ever since. Our meetings have been very well attended by our members with great support from the staff at the school and from Cllrs Robertson and Dickinson. Paula extended thanks to everyone for their ongoing support.

- The main issue flagged last year was around problems with school transport. A meeting was arranged with Aberdeenshire Council and the Transport Unit to discuss the concerns. Questions were collated from parents and shared prior to the meeting. All issues were discussed and addressed and an FAQ was issued to parents following the meeting. Paula voiced the opinion that it was a very positive outcome to a very contentious issue at the time.
- Kat Thoires, Depute Head, consulted the Parent Council over several meetings in relation to the framework for reporting within The Broad General Education with a view to ensuring that the document is parent friendly going forward. Feedback was
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sought on what format would work best for parents and documents revised accordingly.

- Louise had shared the Insight tool which provides the school with data on four key measures – Literacy and Numeracy; Improving Attainment; Positive Destinations and Closing the Gap.
- The Duke of Edinburgh Award Programme was also discussed at a number of meetings, particularly around the sustainability of the scheme being part of the curriculum given the decision made by the Duke of Edinburgh organisation to devolve Licensed Centre responsibility to the school and the cost implications of such a move. There was also the issue of the level of support required from members of staff on a voluntary basis. It was agreed that those students working towards the Bronze Award at the time would be supported through to gaining their qualification but that the scheme could no longer be part of the curriculum going forward.
- Gretchen Perk and Ryan Hewitt shared the model used for offering Enhanced Provision and Additional Support for Learning to students with 2019 being the first year that a dedicated space was made available for enhanced provision. Cllr Robertson had commended the school for the efforts made to ensure that all students are given the opportunity to access education.
- The consultation on the Parental Involvement Act was covered at another meeting with input given by all attendees, and a collective response submitted to the consultation.
- Louise provided regular updates on property and staffing matters.
- The Council heard from Lucy Angel about how the school is addressing gender equality within STEM subjects. This is clearly an issue for all schools and there was positive discussion around how the school could work with employers on virtual STEM activities given the restrictions imposed due to Covid-19.
- Latterly, our virtual meetings had focused on the school's Covid-19 recovery plans and the school had used the Council as a sounding board for a number of decisions.
- In summary, Paula said, it had been a busy but productive year.



An observer voiced her concerns about the small number of parent attendees at the AGM and suggested that it could have been advertised more widely. She queried also if parents had contacted the Parent Council to register their concerns about the SQA results situation. Paula advised that there had been no representations to the Parent Council about the results and the school had answered all queries direct with parents and students.

Louise Moir, Head Teacher, confirmed that the school had addressed all issues in respect of SQA results and explained that there had not been a large number of queries since there had not been a significant variation between teachers' predictions and what was awarded. Following revision of the process, some students had seen their grades go up which the SQA co-ordinator had handled as necessary, and only two appeals are being processed under the revised appeals process. Louise stressed that this is a reflection on the sterling efforts by teaching staff and the accuracy of the estimates submitted by Mackie.

Louise pointed out that Parent Council information is posted on the school's website, including details of the AGM. The information is updated regularly and is readily available to all parents.

5. Funding

The Clerk provided a summary of the current financial position.

6. Appointment of Office Bearers

Carol Howie proposed that Paula Durward continue in the role of Chairperson. This was seconded by Richard Sharp and agreed unanimously by participants.

Paula proposed that Patricia Bruce continue to act in the role of Vice Chairperson. Marion Montgomery seconded the proposal and again it was agreed unanimously.

Rhona Grant agreed to continue to act as Clerk to the Parent Council.

In respect of parent representatives on the Parent Council, an observer referred to the amended Constitution and queried if the maximum four years' service for parents is being observed. Louise explained that the membership is updated following the AGM, and those parents who have served for four years stand down but they are welcome to continue to attend meetings as observers. Also, attendance at meetings is noted and where this has dropped off, the parent in question is deemed to have resigned from the Parent Council.



7. School Update

Louise began her annual report by indicating that this year's report is very different to preceding reports, and this year is one that will never be forgotten.

Louise reminded attendees that the year had begun with plans for celebrating the 50th anniversary of Mackie Academy in its current location. Louise stressed that, whilst, Covid-19 had dominated everything latterly, there had been six months of "normal" school when progress had been made on updating the Improvement Plan, making it more user friendly and ensuring it focused on the key issues. Preparations for inspection were also ongoing, in anticipation that it will happen at some point; therefore it is important to ensure the school is as ready as possible, especially in respect of HGIYS4 measures.

Louise thanked Paula and Patricia for organising Parent Council meetings so that there was more participation from school staff and other Education professionals.

Louise stressed that, despite Covid-19 restrictions, the year has been productive and those pieces of work which had been shelved during lockdown will be picked up again, and progress will continue to be made. Lockdown had of course dominated the year, changing the academic calendar with a move to home learning and the removal of formal exams.

Louise emphasised that the student body have mostly been very positive throughout lockdown and including the return to school and it has been a delight to have them back in school. However, it is recognised that some young people have found lockdown difficult, and the effects could manifest themselves at some point, but support will be available as and when necessary.

Louise said that it has been challenging to try and return to cohesive units of learning since the students have all had differing experiences of home learning. For some, it has worked well but others have struggled and therefore it is necessary to assess where each student is in their learning, before moving forward.

Some of the affected students had found it upsetting to be working towards exams which then did not take place and help to process that has been provided. Staff had worked tirelessly to ensure decisions were founded on a strong evidence base of work generated throughout the year, but there was a "wake-up call" for those who like to leave all the hard work until the last minute, and the steady workers have benefited this year.

Louise stated that she was delighted with Mackie's results, but she was unable to provide even a basic analysis since the revised results had only been confirmed at the end of the previous week and the background data on the various components does not exist this year. Comparative analysis would be difficult in any event given the methodology is completely different this year but, broadly, S4 were significantly stronger than the previous year and S5 results were not so strong as previous years.



It was unfortunate that S6 students could not enjoy the usual send-off, or their prom, but they did leave behind them a stunning set of S6 results.

Louise summarised that whilst it had been a difficult year there had been positive factors, such as the team spirit among staff which had been very evident.

Louise thanked the members of the Parent Council. She said that the online meetings had been very useful and had also provided the opportunity to “bounce ideas” off parents and move plans forward.

Paula agreed that the virtual meetings had worked very well and had been worthwhile.

8. AOB

Patricia advised that she had been asked to voice concerns about what had occurred during a recent very stormy day, when pupils had been outside during heavy rain; and ascertain what measures were being adopted to prevent a re-occurrence.

Louise said that she had anticipated the query given the reaction from some parents via email and social media. Louise emphasised that the school is learning and adapting as situations arise, and there will be times when wrong decisions are made initially, but there seems to be a real lack of understanding of the parameters that the school is working within. The Scottish Government has decreed that there should be no mass gatherings indoors. Mackie’s corridors are not wide, catering arrangements have required additional space and, furthermore, indoor space is needed for PE as an SQA option therefore there is no flexibility of space.

Union guidance also has to be factored in and a 40 minutes lunchbreak for staff is the minimum, meaning that it is not possible for pupils to go to their next class or to stagger lunchtimes because of the lack of supervision. There are 1160 students and 100+ staff and a large number of pupils travel by bus which does not allow for flexibility. The Senior Leadership Team take responsibility for lunchtime supervision which they do willingly although they could insist on taking their lunchbreak.

Louise emphasised, however that, the team has been working on wet weather protocol, which has been issued to staff members for consultation, but parents must play their part by sending their children to school adequately dressed for the weather with a waterproof jacket/coat.

Louise provided full details of the proposed plans.



Louise advised that she had received some nasty emails on the subject, which she had not answered. Attendees agreed this was unacceptable.

Patricia expressed appreciation for the comprehensive answer and said that she too had received nasty messages. She agreed that there appears to be a lack of understanding of the extra work involved in accommodating the current restrictions. She emphasised that every parent is welcome to attend Parent Council meetings and learn first-hand about the realities of the current circumstances. Patricia underlined that parents have responsibilities too and voiced the opinion that the school is doing an amazing job in very difficult circumstances.

Louise confirmed that the students have been very positive. They understand the situation and are fully supportive of the measures which have been, and are being, introduced.

On the subject of face masks, Louise highlighted that the Scottish Government has decreed that “face masks are obligatory but not mandatory” therefore it is not possible to enforce mask-wearing, but staff cannot be within two metres of a pupil who is not wearing a mask. Louise stressed the collective responsibility to do everything necessary to maintain being back at school.

Richard Sharp pointed out that it is evident that the school has a great grasp of changing circumstances and agreed that staff are doing an excellent job, evidenced by the fact that lessons had quickly been learned, the situation turned around and an action plan for bad weather is being developed. Staff have also to be commended for the SQA results.

Louise advised that it was intended to launch the School App the following week which will make communication faster and easier.

Paula informed parent members that Alan Tullock has requested feedback in respect of the draft Learning Technologies Policy. The documents will be emailed to members and a response was requested by 4 September.

Details of the free online training offered by Aberdeenshire Council for parent members of the Parent Council will also be circulated.

The observer recommended that there is future discussion on how to increase parent participation in the Parent Council.

Paula pointed out that, in her experience, the membership is at a similar level to previous years. The observer reiterated that she had expected more parents to participate in the AGM. Paula suggested that perhaps the information and communication from school is so good that parents do not feel the need to utilise the Parent Council for this purpose, but in any event parent body engagement continues to be an ongoing topic at meetings.



Patricia confirmed that participation is encouraged but pointed out that most parents are not interested or do not feel the need to become involved in the Parent Council.

Paula suggested that it would be worthwhile to continue with online meetings currently. Dawn Black agreed and pointed out that attendance, online, has been much greater.

Paula said that perhaps in future it will be possible to have a mix of virtual and actual meetings and blended meetings too thereby making attendance as flexible as possible.

9. Date of next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 22 September at 7 pm. A list of future meeting dates will be circulated with the note of the AGM.

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