



## Meeting of Mackie Academy Parent Council

**Wednesday 26 February 2020**

**PRESENT:** Dawn Black, Cllr Sarah Dickinson, Paula Durward (Chair), Rhona Grant (Clerk), Chris Ann Holt, Elaine Mitchell, Louise Moir (Head Teacher), Karen McClymont, Fiona Ritchie, Richard Sharp

**APOLOGIES:** Patricia Bruce, Morag Coull, Andrea Forster, Lorna Findlay, Fiona Hogg, Carol Howie, Chris Ann Holt, Dawn Milroy, Kim Milton, Marion Montgomery, Lisa Macaulay, Aileen McKellar, Cllr Dennis Robertson

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Kat Thoires (Depute Head Teacher)

### 1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIES

The Chair, Paula Durward, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were noted.

### 2. UPDATE RE REPORTING WITHIN THE BGE

Kat Thoires (Depute Head Teacher) delivered a comprehensive presentation on the updated version of the proposed format for reporting within the BGE. A hard copy of the document was tabled and Kat explained the desire to ensure that the changes are being clearly explained to parents.

Paula highlighted the amount of time and effort being spent on producing the document, and commended staff for their commitment. Karen explained that it has been a worthwhile process in developing a document that is relevant to each faculty, recognising that "one size doesn't fit all". Kat advised that pupils are also being included in the process.

Kat thanked members of the Parent Council for feedback provided thus far and said that further feedback will be welcome. It was agreed that an electronic copy of the document would be circulated with the minutes, with the request that any feedback is provided within a week from the date of the email.

### 3. DESTINY PARTNERSHIP

Paula advised that, due to unforeseen circumstances, Scott Russell was unable to attend the meeting but planned to attend the next one. Paula explained that Fiona Stark had recommended the organisation which supplies first aid training; with parents being trained as trainers so that they can then train the students.



#### **4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the previous meeting (held on 16 January 2020) were approved.

#### **5. MATTERS ARISING**

##### **Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme**

Louise advised that a successful awards ceremony had been held recently, when previous participants had been presented with their certificates.

She reported, however, that she had been informed by Aberdeenshire Council of the intention to devolve the Licensed Centre responsibility. She explained that the letter had seemed to imply that this decision was being taken by the Council but, having met with the Co-ordinator for North East Scotland, it transpired that the decision had in fact come from the Duke of Edinburgh Organisation. This means that if the school wishes to continue to offer a Duke of Edinburgh Award, it would have to become the Licensed Centre with the inherent cost implications; which are quite substantial.

Louise said that a costs/benefits analysis would be required but, furthermore, there is also the management of the volunteers which involves a significant commitment, time-wise. Also, there is not the capacity within school for someone to take on the Team Leader role. Paula observed that commitment of time would be an important issue.

Louise explained that currently they are trying to ascertain the licence position for the current bronze group, to ensure that they can complete the award, and the option has been removed from next year's curriculum.

Louise wondered if it is something that could be discussed at a local level, with a view to collaborating and establishing a Stonehaven group. She pointed out that there must be similar models in existence, and Mackie could provide some input, for instance with administration. Louise suggested that such a group would be more cost-efficient and sustainable. Louise said also that she had discovered that some of the open groups continue to exist.

Elaine asked if merging with Mearns and Portlethen Academies could be an option. Louise said that perhaps it could be given consideration for Silver and Gold awards, but there is limited time available to consider the possibilities before 31 March, given the exam preparation period, but it will be looked at again during the summer term, although currently it is thought that a scheme would be better placed within the community rather than with the school. However, the priority is to ensure that the current Bronze cohort can continue under the Aberdeenshire licence. Dawn asked if Aberdeenshire would provide additional funding to cover the additional costs, if Mackie became a Licensed Centre. Louise explained that the Council will retain a licence to cover Looked After Children, for whom Aberdeenshire Council has a responsibility, but who are not on a school roll in Aberdeenshire, so there could possibly be an off-set but there has been no indication of that.



## **6. CONSULTATION RE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ACT**

Louise provided a brief background in respect of the current consultation in relation to the Parental Involvement Act, and tabled a document which summarised the salient points. It was agreed that it would be worthwhile to look at the questionnaire together, so that a collective response could be sent. Accordingly, there was a brief discussion on each question, the answer was agreed upon and submitted.

The questions that related to Parent Council were debated in more detail, and Cllr Dickinson advised that some schools feel that the term "Parent Council" can be off-putting to parents and therefore some parent councils have changed their name eg to Parent Connect or Parent Voice.

## **7. SCHOOL BUSINESS**

### **Staffing**

Louise said that probationers throughout Aberdeenshire are currently being interviewed for permanent posts and Mackie's intention is to retain its probationers which will help to provide cover for staff members moving on. One PE teacher is going on maternity leave which will require some reorganisation but another PE teacher will be returning from maternity leave in due course, which will relieve the pressure.

An RMPS staff member is moving to a new post but a new member of staff has been recruited. They will take up post after the Easter break which can be accommodated since it has been possible to source RMPS-specific cover.

A further member of staff in History will also be going on maternity leave, but it is hoped that a probationer will be allocated to cover that.

### **Property**

Louise reported that they are waiting until the end of the financial year, before making any decisions property-wise.

She reminded members that refurbishment of the PE area has been deferred until the summer of 2021 but other areas within the school will be looked at, for example the toilets.

Louise advised that the school had suffered a break-in over the previous weekend. Fortunately there had been little damage and the CCTV had captured images which hopefully will lead to charges being made.

Louise reported that the cleaning budget has been cut, which means that there will be no cleaning within the school during holidays or in-service days. This means that the school will not be cleaned for 6 ½ weeks during the summer holidays. Mackie is used extensively by



the community and the intention is to ascertain if some of the income from that source could be used to arrange deep cleaning prior to the new school year. Paula pointed out that cutting back on cleaning is a false economy. Louise agreed and indicated that environment does have an impact on the ability to learn.

Chris Ann asked if the Corona Virus could be cited as a valid argument for deep cleaning. Cllr Dickinson said potentially it could be considered, and undertook to ascertain the position in relation to utilising letting income for deep cleaning. Louise advised that it might become necessary to employ measures such as closing down spaces so that they are not used during holiday periods.

Cllr Dickinson highlighted the fact that millions of pounds-worth of savings have to be found in the forthcoming Budget.

Louise said that generally the school is stable at present, and it is hoped to maintain that balance. However, another challenge is that teaching staff will be acting as exam markers for the SQA. It is a worthwhile initiative for teachers, but entails time outwith school and the absences have to be managed; processing the cover situation is time consuming in itself and needs knowledge of logistics and mechanics.

Karen pointed out the positive situation at present in that she had received 12 applications for a recent vacancy. Louise agreed, and suggested that the location of Mackie makes it an attractive option, especially since the arrival of the AWPR.

## **8. AOB**

Richard asked if theft within school is a significant issue. Louise explained that most thefts occur within the PE changing rooms, which will be resolved by the refurbishment. She said that students are advised to take nothing of value into PE, leaving items in their locker or the small lockers available for that purpose.

Louise said that, generally, theft seems to go in spates, and where there is a lot of movement (S3 and S4 year groups) it can be difficult to contain, but it is managed as effectively as it can be. Also, if it is later in the day when the loss is noted, it is more difficult to pin down exactly where and when the item was lost.

Dawn requested that it is borne in mind that not all parents are familiar with the Scottish education system, and said it would be helpful to have more detailed information available for those who require it. Dawn thought a curriculum evening for S2 parents, perhaps just before the Christmas holidays would be very helpful. Louise suggested that it could be used to explain each step of the pathways, and how it all links together.



Dawn also advised that the booking system for parents evenings does not allow for twins. Louise acknowledged that and explained that it has been necessary to disable the wizard to take account of anomalies.

### **9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 22 April (and not as previously notified).

Paula suggested Diversity and Gender balance within Subjects as a discussion item for the next meeting.

Louise undertook to ascertain if Lucy Angel (Developing Young Workforce) is available to share what Mackie is doing to challenge stereotypes. Louise offered also to ask each Faculty Head of relevant subjects to prepare a short presentation on how they address gender imbalance; to tie in with Lucy's presentation. Karen will liaise with staff to progress this, and bring back to the next meeting.

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