



Mackie Academy Parent Council

Meeting: Tuesday 30 June 2020 at 7 pm

Participants : Parent Council members
Head Teacher
Senior Management Team
Observers
Councillors Dickinson and Robertson

Paula Durward, Chairperson, welcomed everyone to the meeting. The minutes of the previous meeting (held on 27 May) were agreed.

Update

Louise Moir, Head Teacher, thanked parents for their responses to her recent emails. She explained that although the proposed plans might not now be needed, they will be useful in the event of a local or national outbreak, leading to restrictive measures being re-imposed.

Louise reported that there have been significant changes to the proposals since the previous meeting, and the priority has been to work on the timetable model; given that focus beforehand had been on devising a blended model based on weeks A and B. Accordingly, re-modelling has been required, involving a lot of time and effort, mostly by Alan Tullock and the Office Manager.

Louise advised that the first three days back at school, for students, has now been shaped and, whatever the circumstances at that time, the three days will look the same so that the students have space and time to settle back into school and adjust to the new regime.

A Recovery Document for staff has been prepared and something similar for parents and students is being worked on, which will set out the framework for the school re-opening. The details would be provided to pupils and parents later that week. Pupils will be allocated a day to return to school. S1 students will attend for a full day. Other year groups will attend for the morning only. Any school transport issues and siblings in different year groups requiring school transport will be taken into consideration.

Pupils will be asked to line up in their tutor groups outside school; each tutor will come out and escort their group into the school, entering by the door nearest to their classroom.

The S1 year group will occupy the main hall which can easily accommodate 70 x S1s each day even taking account of social distancing.

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On returning to school, focus initially will centre on health & wellbeing, for staff and pupils, beginning with the staff days on the Monday and Tuesday. A programme on that theme will be drawn up and tutors will be provided with as much information as possible which they can then impart to their tutor group. It is recognised that the months spent in lockdown have been exceptional and the opportunity to share feelings about the experience will be provided before starting to move forward. It is important also to ensure that each pupil feels comfortable returning to school, and there will be pupils who will find the transition back to school challenging. Smaller tutor groups and additional support will be available to these pupils.

It is expected that school uniform will be worn, and there is a plentiful supply of ties. There will be a 15 minute break, as per usual, but it is likely that it will be staggered by year group. S2-S6 students will not have access to the canteen during the first week back at school so that it is exclusively available for the S1 students. The canteen service is adapting the facilities to comply with social distancing.

School Transport provision will be as per the Scottish Government guidelines at that time, and students on part-time timetables will be provided with space within the school.

Timetables will not be issued until students return to school.

S1 and S2 students' timetable models will be similar to previous years. The S3 timetable model will follow a double period pattern.

S4 pupils will be in school full-time. Their timetable will start with a double period and then move into a block pattern, with one subject per day which will allow for more flexibility in accommodating time out of school, eg for modern apprenticeships or to attend college.

Louise advised that S5 electives have yet to be factored in, as has PSE periods for S5 and S6.

Andy Forster enquired about transport for S5 and S6 students if they are not attending at school full time. Louise said that study space will be available for students who, of necessity, arrive at school earlier than required. However, it will be ascertained if, in the circumstances, a bus pass could be used on a public bus service, thus enabling students to attend at the allotted time.

Alan Tullock, Depute Head, explained that, when drawing up timetables, they had worked on reducing the number of transitions within the school day. S5 and S6 pupils have no transitions and S4 only have one; and, as well as health benefits, there are other advantages. Students will become accustomed to being in one place for longer periods of time, which they will encounter in the workplace or in higher education. The time previously spent on transitioning will be gained. Previously when students were out of school for apprenticeships or college they lost teaching in other subjects on those days. Now

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timetables can be arranged so that teaching in other subjects is not missed whilst out of school.

Louise said that, if circumstances changed again and Plan B had to be reinstated, only S1 and S2 year groups would be affected; there would be no changes for S3-S6 students. However, there is ongoing debate as to whether over 16s will be classed as adults. If social distancing is still a requirement for adults, when school returns, this could have implications for accommodating students who come into that category.

It is recognised that there will be significant changes to become accustomed to, but students who have been consulted could see that there are benefits to education as well as to health and wellbeing.

Parents will be informed accordingly following the next update from the Scottish Government on 30 July. Pieces of work have been deferred until it is known what the next phase entails. Weekly updates will commence from 30 July but, if a full return to school is planned at that time, parents will not require detailed information.

P7/S1 Transition

Fiona Stark, Depute Head, reported that feedback in relation to the virtual P7/S1 transition has been positive and it has been decided that there are some elements which should be carried forward to future years.

Fiona explained that it is necessary to gather and share information on each student so that there is an awareness of any additional needs requirements. Staff had worked on gathering this information and compiling pupil profiles as usual, just by different means. The Pupil Support & Attainment Team had undertaken this task and had obtained information for each of the 204 students.

The extended programme had commenced in May; 24 students having been identified with additional needs. The programme had run over a four-week period continuing into the wider transition phase.

The PSE classrooms had opened up on 8 June, so that students could get to know their classmates, and staff had shared information about themselves. A pre-transition questionnaire based on Shanari and GIRFEC indicators had been compiled, which had provided helpful information for the Support Team. This had been a useful exercise and will be retained in future.

Inter-house competitions had been organised and were very popular. On 17 June classroom areas had opened up. There were no lessons, but rather it gave an idea of what



students could expect in future. Students met their teachers and took part in activities, and it was ensured that all different subject areas were included.

Feedback from students has indicated the usual concerns and anxieties about moving up to secondary school. The post-transition questionnaire however had been very positive. 99% agreed that the tasks and activities had been enjoyable and 96% said they were looking forward to attending at Mackie.

Staff had expended a lot of time and effort in developing the activities and familiarising themselves with the technology.

It had been decided against offering a virtual tour of the school since it would not provide an accurate picture of the school in real life.

Any relevant information has been shared with respective primary school staff so that it could be picked up with the pupil before they left primary school.

Paula said that she had first hand experience of the transition and voiced the opinion that it had been managed very well and the extra support, where required, had been very beneficial. Students had enjoyed the activities and competitions and it was very evident that a lot of effort had gone into developing the transition programme.

Exam Results

Elaine Davidson, SQA Co-ordinator, reported that the exam results are due on 4 August. The appeal process will begin thereafter, through the school, and a Google form has been created for that purpose. The priority will be situations where results are needed quickly and there is a significant difference between anticipated results and what is awarded; and Elaine and Louise will be in school from 4 August to process call-backs and progress any appeals along with Faculty Heads. The review process is longer than usual this year and there has to be a significant difference between the result and what was anticipated, before the appeal will be considered.

Elaine advised that guidance is awaited from SQA, in respect of their plans for next year.

Louise stressed that the school and parents are provided with exactly the same information from the SQA. All relevant information is on their website and the process is very transparent. It is recognised that timescales for appeals will be critical, but it is anticipated that there will only be a small number of significant variations.

Parents will be updated when information in relation to the exam process for 2020/21 becomes available but it is recognised now that it will be important to create a robust



evidence base for students. Those pupils who could perhaps have depended on their performance at the final exam will be encouraged to be mindful of that.

Future Plans

In respect of pupils using their own devices, there are two aspects to be considered – learning & teaching and online safety. Mackie already has a responsible use policy which denotes different zones within the school and a traffic light system for usage. There have been very few issues and mobile devices are now part of everyday life.

However, previously wifi was not included, and it is now proposed to allow filtered access to wifi, with strict filters. The process has just begun and will evolve as time goes on, and a digital learning group involving staff and senior pupils has been set up. It is recognised that a robust policy is required and it is almost finalised. When it is, it will be submitted to the Authority for approval and, once received, the wifi will be switched on.

Google Meets now feels commonplace, and it is hoped to continue to utilise it. Discussions have been ongoing with the Authority as to how best it could be used. It will be delivered via the Glow intranet and staff are keen to have this additional option. For instance, it is thought that advanced highers students could be given a university-like experience. Before use, students and parents have to give their consent. It will not be rushed out and staff will be fully briefed before use. It will not be a recorded facility; lessons and tutorials will be broadcast online.

Richard Sharp asked if the system will be ready for August. Alan explained that negotiations have been ongoing for a while, and Mackie had been a lone voice for a time but momentum is now growing in the current circumstance since, if the worst happened and restrictions are re-imposed, it would be helpful to have the ability to teach virtually.

Richard asked whether a device is classed as a phone or a laptop. Alan said it can be either. Most young people have a mobile phone but access to a chromebook would be an advantage. Lockdown has provided an opportunity for staff to envisage how technology can be utilised to deliver teaching effectively. Aileen McKellar queried if it could be used when a pupil is unwell. Alan said that it will develop as time goes on and it is likely that more aspects of teaching and learning will be recorded. The ability to rewind and re-visit teaching will be helpful too.

Louise pointed out that it will also be helpful for students who cannot get into school, for whatever reason. She clarified that, if we are in a similar position in August, pupils using their own devices will be helpful however it will not be an expectation and the school will be investing further in its IT estate.



It is likely that large gatherings will not be allowed therefore there will not be whole group assemblies. It is also highly likely that pupils will be outside for breaks regardless of the weather, with a view to minimising the risks as much as possible. Canteen queues will form outside at the bus bays via the fire door.

Lockers will not be available for use initially, and this will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. Toilet cleaning has yet to be reviewed, given that previously no cleaning has been carried out during the school day.

There will be no school lets or after-school activities because of the cleaning implications, and consideration has still to be given to how PE will be delivered.

Louise reported that a virtual prize giving event, celebrating achievements, and a virtual leavers event were scheduled for later in the week.

Staffing

Louise provided a brief summary of staff movements, including the departure of Alan Tullock; whose vacancy will not be advertised until later in the 2020/2021 school year. Currently, a post in History has been advertised since the anticipated probationer has dropped out of the probationer programme.

Paula expressed appreciation for all the helpful information provided.

Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on 26 August with the AGM arranged in September.

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