



Meeting of Mackie Academy Parent Council

Tuesday 22 September 2020

PRESENT: Morag Coull, Cllr Sarah Dickinson, Paula Durward (Chair), Colin Esslemont, Rhona Grant (Clerk), Fiona Hogg, Chris Ann Holt, Carol Howie, Elaine Mitchell, Louise Moir (Head Teacher), Marion Montgomery, Karen McClymont (Teaching Representative), Aileen McKellar, Fiona Ritchie, Richard Sharp, Lisa Williams

APOLOGIES: Patricia Bruce, Andrea Forster, Mhari Mitchell, Lisa Macaulay, Susan Purvis and Cllr Dennis Robertson

IN ATTENDANCE: Observers (Members of the Parent Forum)

Due to Covid 19 restrictions this meeting was convened virtually via Microsoft Teams. Paula Durward (Chairperson) had connectivity issues and Louise Moir (Head Teacher) chaired the meeting until Paula was able to join in.

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Louise welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially our new members Lisa Williams and Colin Esslemont, and several observers.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were noted.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the previous meeting (held on 30 June 2020) were approved. Their adoption as a true record was proposed by Dawn Black and seconded by Aileen McKellar.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Any matters arising were covered in the agenda.



5. SCHOOL BUSINESS

(a) Working Time Agreement and Parents Evenings

Louise provided a brief summary of the background to the Working Time Agreement and shared a document depicting how a teacher's working week is divided between teaching hours and collegiate activities, including the time set aside for parents evenings. Paula joined the meeting at this point.

Louise explained that 2 ½ hours are allocated for parents evenings, and in the current circumstances thought is being given to different possible methods of engaging with parents. One possibility is to utilise the Parent Booking system which has an online facility whereby teachers are met online and slots are bookable as per usual. Fewer appointments may be available and slots are strictly 5 minutes only but there are positive factors for using this system and it is one way forward being considered, and it is currently under discussion with staff.

The first Parents Evening is due in October, in relation to the Senior Phase tracking report and a one-off process for that is being proposed. The tracking report would be issued and the time secured for that parents evening would be used for staff to complete "learning interventions" which would further enhance the data in the report. These will be with parents by the end of the first week back after the October break.

Louise said that it is hoped to trial virtual meetings thereafter, beginning with the S3 parents evening in November. In light of recent further restrictions, it is not anticipated that it will be possible to convene parents evenings in school in the near future, and it is important to ensure that information is supplied to parents in a timely manner.

Louise asked parent members whose children are in the senior phase for their thoughts on the proposal.

Paula said she thought it made sense. Dawn Black and Colin Esslemont indicated their agreement to the plans. Marion Montgomery thought that it was a reasonable suggestion, and meant that appointments could be made available where they were most needed.

Louise said another factor was the expectation of an imminent announcement from the Scottish Government in respect of the plans for the exams process in 2020/2021. Obviously, there will be unknown factors immediately following the announcement and, understandably, parents will have questions that teachers will be unable to answer at that point. It is thought therefore that it might be worthwhile to arrange a "drop-in" event with ½ hour slots for questions about the decisions, once more detailed information is available.

Louise underlined that the students will be well prepared for whatever process is decided upon. Aileen asked if a date for the announcement had been provided. Louise advised that they had been told only that it will be prior to the October break so it is expected to be made shortly.



Richard Sharp sought clarification in relation to the Working Time Agreement and Louise explained that class contact and non-contact time make up a teacher's contracted 35 hours. She acknowledged that the Working Time Agreement serves a purpose but it does have a significant effect on any flexibility.

(b) Senior Leadership Team

Louise reminded/advised participants that Alan Tullock is moving on in October but Laura Larkworthy will be returning from maternity leave, and those currently in Acting Depute Head Teacher (DHT) posts will continue to do so. The opportunity has been taken to review the remit for each DHT post with a view to generating a streamlined and consistent approach to working. Louise shared a document showing the different remits for each post within the Senior Leadership Team, and advised that the details will also be shared with the Parent Forum.

Louise advised that the Scottish Government has provided funding to schools to mitigate the effects of the current restrictions and Mackie has received £80,000, to be spent in the current school year. It is intended to use some of the money to increase the part-time DHT posts to full time; recognising that in the event of the introduction of blended learning or a return to a full lockdown, the Senior Leadership Team will be required to assume greater responsibility for extra duties.

Louise said it is also hoped to create full time posts, with a view to creating a Learning Intervention Support Service for S2 and S3 students who have fallen behind somewhat during lockdown and will benefit from some extra support to help them catch up. Dawn voiced the opinion that it will be a very worthwhile initiative.

Louise said it is planned to utilise the library space, and it is also hoped it will be possible to call upon the services of S6 students who have some availability; for instance maths students could help out with numeracy skills.

(c) Contingency Planning

Louise said that while they are currently concentrating on the day to day running of the school, they are also keeping an eye on developments so that preparations are in place in event of further measures up to and including another lockdown. Different scenarios, and various models are being looked at to cover all eventualities, and decisions will have to be made on where the focus should lie, depending on what is decided in relation to the exams process. Louise pointed out that staff attendance has been outstanding thus far but we are now moving into the winter months and sick leave, and staff shortages, could become an additional issue. Louise underlined that running with weeks A and B could be implemented



at short notice, should that be required, and the transport plan is in place, although the shortage of coaches locally continues to be a factor.

6. PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Paula said that the Parent Council had been challenged on parental engagement during the recent AGM, but it is a fact that the parent body does not raise school issues with the Parent Council, and she was of the opinion that the school engages and communicates so well with the parent body therefore there is no need for liaison via the Parent Council. She invited thoughts however on whether there was a gap in our engagement with parents, for example utilising social media.

Louise advised that there has been a positive response to the launch of the School App, including teachers and students as well as parents. Carol Howie pointed out that the App can be used as an additional way of providing Parent Council information to parents.

Dawn cautioned that social media can become a forum to complain and the complaints can become personal, and therefore the App is a better route than perhaps using platforms such as Facebook. Colin agreed that the App is preferable to social media.

Paula concurred and reiterated that parents are kept well informed by the school. Colin advised that he had found the App to be very useful.

Louise advised that it is intended also to build on the Google site which had been developed during lockdown and the School App is another piece of the communication jigsaw. It will eliminate the need to send out individual emails, and information can be posted very quickly which will be very helpful in situations such as transport problems.

Dawn said that she had participated in the recent online training sessions provided by Aberdeenshire Council, and it had been apparent that Mackie compares favourably to other schools in terms of communication.

7. AOB

Dawn provided details of the Stunning Stonehaven App which has been created and is now available for download.

Morag Coull queried the plans for senior phase pupils and contact time. Louise advised that she intended to convene a focus group with S5 students to ascertain how they are managing their workload. Arrangements will be reviewed thereafter and it may be that electives will be added in to their timetable. It is important to continue to minimise movement around school



as much as possible, and it is hoped to achieve better utilisation of the “floating” period; for instance Modern Languages are convening 1-1 sessions via Google Meet. Morag said she was aware that some student are doing little during that extra period. Louise said that was one of the reasons why the focus group has been arranged, and the intention was to meet with S5 students the following week and S6 students during the week after that.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

As already notified, the next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 7 October. The dates of future meetings had been provided with the agenda, and for convenience would be appended to the minutes of the meeting.

Paula requested that any suggested agenda items are emailed to her and Louise so that they can be included in future meetings.

Louise suggested adding an SQA update to the October’s meeting agenda, since details should hopefully be available by that time.

Louise also suggested the topic of the Cost of the School Day for a future meeting. She explained that information on this subject has been updated and the hidden costs of attending school will become more of an issue in future.

Paula said that the PDFs of the Connect sessions attended by Dawn would be circulated, along with details of the sessions planned for October.

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



DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS : 2020/21

7 October

4 November

21 January

23 February

24 March

6 May

15 June