



## **Strathaven Academy Parent Council Meeting**

**Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022 @ 7.00pm**

### **Minutes**

**In Attendance:** J Campbell (Chair), J Tunney (Vice Chair), C McMorris (Secretary), J Frew, C Webber, K Kinniburgh, A Brennan, M White, A Khan.

W Huq (Headteacher), I Fleming (Depute Head Teacher), P Hamilton (Principal Teacher PE/Acting Depute Head Teacher), V Leck (Teacher)

**Remote Attendance:** J Smith, E Richardson, Cllr Frame, G McKenna

**Apologies:** C Mitchell, A Minns, A McIntosh, Cllr M Cooper, Y Vance, R MacLean

1. **Minutes of Meeting:**

Minutes of Meeting 20<sup>th</sup> September 2022 – Approved

2. **Matters Arising:**

**STEM Family Challenge** – there was very positive feedback from the evening with lots of parental engagement.

**Consultation Evenings** – It had been decided that Consultation Evenings would be conducted in two formats – face-to-face for S1 to S3 pupils whose parent/carers had not had the opportunity to visit the school building due to Covid restrictions and virtual for S4 to S6 pupils. There was positive feedback from both groups and thanks were passed to staff for their efforts.

3. **Headteacher's Report**

Ms Huq gave a full report including the following topics:

**Staffing Update:**

Miss McGinley has been appointed as Principal Teacher of pupil support.

Acting Principal Teacher Equity & Excellence Posts have been filled by Mr Collins (Art), Miss Harvey (RME), Mrs Blades (Music).

Miss Inglis (Modern Language) and Mr Simpson (Maths) will be leaving in the next couple of months.

Miss Khan is temporarily filling the Biology teacher vacancy.

An additional Newly-Qualified Teacher (NQT) has joined the Modern Languages department.

An advert for a History teacher vacancy is closing this week.

**Mr John McGarrie Commemoration:**

Pupils & staff have come up with projects to honour Mr McGarrie. Ideas include: a Games Club which is being sponsored by "Say It Gifts", a support group for young



carers and a Sign Language Club. Anyone with suggestions or support for these ideas was encouraged to contact the school office.

Pupils have been involved in a wide variety of charitable initiatives and raised considerable sums of money. Pupils will continue with initiatives over the coming weeks.

Enterprise group (elective group) – a selection of candles and fragrance diffusers were on display and can be ordered via the school office.

A short film made with the help of the company, 'Moving Films' was developed by pupils to showcase work ongoing to support pupils in their career journey. <http://youtu.be/qqwTqmlaQuQ>

**S4 winter assessment diet** takes place from Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022 – Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2022.

**Praise cards** have been designed by Mr Wellcoat for recognising success of pupils.

**Learning walks** will commence next week to improve and support self - evaluation of learning and teaching.

**Pupil Council**, led by Miss Hamilton, is now up and running. Members are being consulted on key improvement agenda items, including compiling a School Charter.

**Learning Community Improvement Plan:** a 3-year improvement plan has been developed with the Academy and its feeder schools. Key areas identified are equalities, transition and curriculum.

**Reading Schools** – there is a plan to engage with parents and partners in an effort to encourage reading at all levels. With the support of Starbooks Café – sessions will be held over lunchtime, where parent/carers can bring a book that they are reading and have a coffee and chat with pupils. Anyone wishing to volunteer time for this is encouraged to contact the school office.

4. **Consultation on Curriculum:**

As part of a general initiative, led by DHT Miss Hamilton, to engage with stakeholders on the topic of curriculum, school staff led discussions within four groups from those attending the meeting. There were a number of open-ended questions covered by each group leading to a great deal of input from parent/carers. The discussion points will be collated and taken account of as part of the consultation process.

5. **School Improvement Programme (SIP)**

Point 1. Recruit new PC members and encourage representation:

The Parent Council is at the full complement of 20 parent/carer members. Any parent/carer wishing to join the PC or contribute to its work, should contact the school office.



#### Point 2. Ensure PC meetings take a strategic focus:

Ms Huq has asked staff members of the PC to assist the group in ensuring that school-driven priorities are included in the work of the PC.

#### Point 3. Promoting Positive Behaviour:

Miss Hamilton has been leading a drive that encourages positive behaviour including the introduction of praise cards and sharing of successes.

#### Point 4. Communications

Webpage: Mr Fleming has now updated the information regarding the Structure of the School Day. All members of the Senior Leadership Team have had their photos taken to update the section of school website. Mr Fleming acknowledged that, as a free website, it is quite clunky. He has focused his attention on improving the study support section and Developing Young Workforce (DYW) sections. The school is moving towards using the News section less for sharing information and using other channels for communications including Twitter and the School App.

School App: Mr Fleming is hoping to encourage all parent/carers to download the app (currently 2218 members though not sure how many are active from current parents) – some of the pupils have it and some parents of previous students may have it. The App is used for school calendar, whole school messages and whole school news. All pupils are encouraged to use Google classrooms and encouraged to use the “to do” list.

Parent portal: This is being rolled out across South Lanarkshire schools and holds student details, reports cards etc. It is envisaged that all communication will be sent through this medium. Roll out commences January and the aspirational plan is to have the whole authority set up by June.

#### Point 5. DYW - Mentoring Programme:

This has commenced - see agenda item for more detail

#### Point 6. Reading for Pleasure:

The school has attained the Gold Award.

#### 6. **Communications Sub-group:**

This group is being led by J Tunney and with the assistance of Mr Fleming, will be taking PC communications forward.

#### 7. **Mentoring Sub-group:**

A Brennan reported that emails had gone out from Disclosure Scotland to all prospective mentors. All mentors are required to return details within 7 days. Initial meetings have gone ahead with added safeguards while the Disclosure process continues.

#### 8. **SIP Sub-group:**



This sub-group, comprising Ms Huq, Miss Hamilton, J Tunney, R MacLean and J Campbell has been established with the purpose of moving forward on some of the items that the full PC has not managed progress.

This first meeting took place last month and covered the following topics:

**Awards night** – Ms Huq is to lead a consultation with pupils and staff on how best to celebrate the full range of pupil achievements.

**School Charter** – The suggestion of a School Charter, which would cover the rules and workings of the school from the points of view of parent/carers, staff and pupils, is being considered. This is in part a response to the situation where not all pupils and parent/carers are aware of the detailed workings of the school. In addition, the Charter would aim to set out the expectations on parent/carers, pupils and staff from the points of view of the other groups. J Campbell and P Hamilton have begun an information gathering exercise with P Hamilton having already sought input from pupils.

**Holiday wind down** – General feeling from the PC that the length of time prior to major holiday breaks where there appeared to be a “wind down” of learning and teaching in class had become excessive. It had been reported that pupils were not attending class in the days leading up to holidays which led to teachers not pushing on with new work since this would have to be repeated when classes were full – this, in turn, was giving pupils reason not to attend since no new work was being delivered. Ms Huq agreed took note of the concern and committed to communicating to staff, pupils and parent/carers that, notwithstanding celebrations like Christmas trips/events, learning will be expected to continue right up to holiday breaks.

**Communication with parents / carers and pupils following incidents-** Following a recent incident, reported in an alarming way by a national tabloid newspaper, in which members of school staff calmly dealt with an individual who was trespassing in school, concerns were raised that the school was not putting out information to parent/carers in a timely manner.

A meeting with Mr Dickson from the Operations section of South Lanarkshire Education Services and J Campbell representing the PC. The Council policy on these matters is that key communication is shared in conjunction with Headquarters. Concerns were relayed to the Local Authority and a positive way forward was sought to ensure all stakeholders are fully informed in a timely manner. Ms Huq and her staff had been working hard to establish trust through good communication and the absence of timely, accurate responses would hinder this process. Mr Dickson agreed to take this feedback to HQ with a view to refining the policy.

9. **AOCB**

i. **Toilet Access:** Jack asked for an update on the previously reported problems with abuse of the school toilets. Ms Huq reported that recent vandalism had resulted in substantial cost to the school and that school staff had now been



required to increase supervision in toilets. There remains some concern about some young people regularly using toilets as a social gathering area and reports of a few pupils vaping. Staff will continue to monitor this.

ii **S5 Report Card Grades:** Some concerns had been raised regarding misunderstandings around grades allocated on recently issued S5 report cards. The report cards recorded estimates of grades that would be attained by students had they taken the final exam on that day i.e., part-way through the course – on completion of the course, expected grades would be higher. This misunderstanding had resulted in some distressed and confused students & parent/carers. It was explained by Mrs Leck, that there is a difference between a target grade and a working grade. It was suggested that extra context and explanation about the grades would be useful.

iii **Registration Period:** Some concerns were raised around there being inconsistent provision of information from different registration periods. All teachers have the same information to give out. It was acknowledged that there can be a considerable amount of information to be shared by the registration teachers. Ms Huq agreed that the school should look at ways of formatting the information to ensure all pupils receive all necessary information.

iv **Pupil's personal information:** A question was raised regarding the consistency of application by teachers of the personal information associated with individual pupils during each period of the school day – there were concerns that information such as short-term medical requirements or reasons for raised anxiety, were not always being taken account of. It was agreed that this information be put into a more accessible format for all teachers.

v. **Virtual attendance:** Those PC members attending virtually wished to express their gratitude to Jo Tunney and Mr Fleming for facilitating this initiative.

10. **Date of next meetings:**

Tuesday 31 January 2023 @ 7pm

Tuesday 21 March 2023 @ 7pm

Tuesday 6 June 2023 @ 7pm