

# Blackhall Primary School Parent Council

## Meeting Minutes

**17 November 2021**

Present:	Fran McIntyre (chair), Kirsty Martin, Debra Collard, Michael Duncan, Felicity Jeffries, Colin Chisholm, Gail Middlemiss, Fiona Wilson, Hal Osler, Nyssa Pinkerton, Neil Campbell, Sadia Arshad, Russell Bain, Loukia Lili
Apologies:	Ginny Heriot, Sine Munro
Next meeting:	19 January 2022 (online)

### **1. Introductions & welcome - new members & school management**

- Fran McIntyre (FM) introduced the members of the Council and their roles and ran through the items to be covered in the meeting.

### **2. Responsibilities & Remit of Parent Council / Ways of working**

- Michael Duncan (MD) noted that the constitution had been agreed at the previous AGM. He introduced a discussion on how the Council and Forum wanted to work in practice with parents – this was based on a document circulated setting out the principles for operation. The intention was to ensure effective operation of the Parent Council. The document is attached to these minutes for information and reference.
- Kirsty Martin (KM) noted the discussion that was ongoing with the school on the operation of the principles.
- Fiona Wilson (FW) asked to ensure that ASN reps were included along with class reps on the principles.
- The Council was content with the approach outlined.

### **3. Update from Headteacher - Observations / early priorities**

- Staffing. KM ran through recent and forthcoming changes.
  - Vicky Smith (Acting principal teacher) had recently departed for a new role.
  - Lizzie Townie resigned from the NQT probationer scheme and has left – have secured an excellent supply teacher (Paul Young) who will be here until at least Christmas.
  - Debra Collard leaving – appointed DHT at Craigentenny. Will be at Blackhall until Christmas.
  - Not going to take on a second DHT but will take on a principal teacher. Allows the school to stay within agreed leadership structure / budget.

- FW asked about PSAs and recruitment of new PSAs – have any been recruited this year? Also keen to understand the Business Manager role.
  - KM explained that the school had recruited a PSA who withdrew the working day before being due to start. An advert is now out for a new recruit.
  - FM – will bring back the issue of senior team roles to a future Council meeting.
- Covid-19
  - Have a lot of staff absence at present but have secured teachers to put in front of classes.
  - Local authority has said that schools will remain open.
  - PSA staff have also been impacted by absences.
  - Colin Chisholm (CC) – asked what a “tipping point” might be for closure?
    - KM – have been able to avert crisis but there is no real number. Have been working incredibly hard to keep things running in the face of enormous challenges. Very last resort is not closing school but there could come a time when a class is sent home.
  - FM – what can the Council do to support the school management team in these challenging times?
    - KM grateful for offer of support. Can discuss further in due course.
  - Numbers going up across the community. This was the week that it had been intended to stop staggered starts. Unfortunate coincidence with rise in cases. Maintaining separation and distancing, ventilation etc. Mitigations still in place in school. Lunch hall being open – children still sitting in class groups and being brought in in stages. Had to open lunch hall as not enough staff to monitor individual class lunch groups.
  - Nyssa Pinkerton (NP) – is there a level with case numbers (in pupils) where the school would be closed?
    - KM – no, that is not going to happen this year. Davidsons Mains closure was a “circuit breaker” situation but no Edinburgh school will be closed in that way this year.

#### **4. Discussion on what Parent Council priorities should be 2021/22**

- FM / KM met to discuss. 3 key priorities:
  - Website / communication
  - School grounds
  - Inclusivity / diversity.

#### **5. Comments or questions around draft bullying policy**

- FM – draft policy has been up on website.
- Gail Middlemiss (GM) – Pupil and staff equalities groups would like to get views of parents. Want to personalise it for Blackhall. Pupil group wants to make it more child-friendly. Requested that Parent Council get a diverse group together from the parent focum to gather views and progress this work.
- Sadia Arshad (SA) volunteered to take forward small consultation group on behalf of Parent Council.
- MD asked whether this should it be titled “Anti-bullying and anti-discrimination” policy?
- FW – opportunity to input some external supports will be important.
- SA – Scottish Child Law Centre to be added?
- FM – how do we manage process to ensure that the process is as positive as possible, i.e. getting away from bullying towards relationship / respect.
- CC - What is the data that we need to use to help support the process?
- Hal Osler (HO) suggested that we could look at what other schools have produced by way of examples.
- Loukia Lili – why did the draft policy come up in June 2021 and not before? Trying to combine two things – if it is an anti-bullying policy then needs to be clear that is purpose. Language that is used is important and may have legal meaning.

#### **6. AOB**

- Loukia Lili – how the school is addressing messages to parents / carers where English is an additional language.
- KM – have taken that on-board and it is on the to-do list. Please encourage parents to get in touch with the school if they have any issues