

# Blackhall Primary School Parent Council

## 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023

### Minutes

#### Members Present

Julia Pearson	P1 rep	Colin Chisholm	Treasurer
Kate Walker	P2 rep	Jane Browning	Secretary
Emily Orr	P3 rep	Michael Duncan	Chair
Nyssa Pinkerton	P5 rep		
Linda Rennie	P6 rep		
Ian Cameron	P7 rep and Vice Chair		

#### Other Attendees

Kirsty Martin	Head Teacher	Hal Osler	Councillor
Gail Middlemiss	Depute Head Teacher		

#### Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were received from Sine Munro (P4 rep), Jill McIntyre (PSA rep), Cllr Jule Bandel, Cllr Vicky Nicholson and Cllr Max Mitchell.

#### 1. Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes of the meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> November were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting. No amendments required.

##### 1.1 Matters arising from minutes

ASN representative for Parent Council to be found.	<p>ASN representative still being sought. Any member of the parent body interested can discussed with Chair.</p> <p>It was discussed that the rep does not need to be a parent of a child with ASN, but is required to be a link to the parent group that provide support to other parents. It is an innovative role on Blackhall Parent Council, with other schools now following. The action will stay open.</p> <p><b>Action: still open</b></p>
Update on Communication working group	<p>Feedback on school website and twitter account has been collected by Linda Rennie and Emily Orr. Feedback to be shared with Mrs Martin. Meeting to be arranged to discuss further.</p> <p><b>Action: closed</b></p>

## **2. Head Teacher Report**

The presentation is included as an attachment to the minutes. The following points provide key or additional information to the slides.

### **Slide 3**

Steven Smith has been appointed as the new Business Manager, he starts in March. Jo Palfrey is retiring at the end of the term. An email has been sent to P2P parents and carers. She is coming back as a supply teacher covering the end of the week for P2P.

The PSA allocated from the central recruitment, chose not to take up the post at Blackhall, so that vacancy remains.

### **Slide 4**

Due to pupil numbers predicted to fall below 400 next year (1 less P7 class), this will influence the school budget and will have an impact on the non-teaching time available for the Senior Leadership Team. The school are looking at home they can minimise the impact of this. It will also have an impact on the 'extras' that are paid for by the school. Due to the demographics of Blackhall, pupil equity funding is lower than some other schools – and it is often this PEF that is used to fund extras. A question was asked about how much money the drop in school role equates to. The exact amount is not known at this time, but Mrs Martin noted that £50k extra funding would be transformative and £10k would be good.

### **Slide 8**

As part of P4 topic, a farm is coming to visit the school. This is expected later in March. The farmer is also bringing sausages to illustrate the 'farm to food.'

### **Slide 9**

Attainment meetings between senior team and class teachers are reviewing pupil progress and ensuring that interventions/ changes made are having the impact on the child as intended.

### **Slide 10**

It was noted that the money for the Astro plans, need to be in the pot, before the planning process can be undertaken. It was noted that the PSA are fundraising hard.

### **Slide 11**

Focus on attendance continues, as it is linked to attainment.

Clarification was provided that there is no such thing as authorised leave in Scotland. Parents should inform the school if their child is not going to be in school and the reason why (to ensure absences are coded properly.) A better approach would be to consider it as notified or un-notified absence.

When attendance falls below 85% that is when there is an official trigger for school to contact parents to understand the reasons and provide the necessary support.

All schools across the learning community are going to be sending out attendance information with similar messages at the same time.

The Chair thanked Mrs Martin for an excellent and comprehensive report.

## **3. Head Teacher recruitment update**

It was noted that the recruitment process is underway and that the parent body can expect to hear about the appointment shortly after the final interviews have taken place.

#### **4. Free school meals/funding from council**

Mrs Martin explained that a part of the school's funding (through the Pupil Equity Fund) is dependent on the number of children whose parents/carers have registered them for "free school meals". To be eligible the family needs to be in receipt of certain benefits.

The provision of free school meals to P1-P5 (and in due course to all primary children) has led to the unintended consequence that many of the families that would be eligible to claim "free school meals" have not done so. And it's this that has led to a reduction in the funding available to the school, which is in the region of £1200 for each child where "free school meals" have not been claimed.

Mrs Martin and Cllr Hal Osler explained that an application for "free school meals" also brings other benefits to the families such as payment for lunches during school holidays, free milk, a school clothing grant to help buy school clothes, and a Scottish child bridging payment.

The school knows that there are families that could apply, but does not know who they are so cannot proactively contact them to support them in their application.

The Parent Council agreed that this issue was worth highlighting to the parent body to encourage those who are eligible to register for "free school meals" to ensure that the school gets the share of Council funding that it is entitled to.

Cllr Hal Osler shared the link to the relevant Council website: [Free school meals, milk and school clothing grants – The City of Edinburgh Council](#)

**ACTION: Year Reps to raise with year groups and signpost to the application process**

#### **5. Industrial action**

The chair noted that this was an opportunity to raise any concerns regarding industrial action, but noted that there is a limited amount of action that the school can take.

No specific issues were raised. It was noted though that the longer the industrial action continues, the position Edinburgh Council have taken of closing all schools completely, will be harder to justify with the focus on attendance and attainment.

#### **6. TOTS campaign <https://turnonthesubtitles.org/>**

It was noted that there is national campaign running to improve literacy – called TOTS – turn on the subtitles. The campaign is encouraging parents to turn on subtitles while their children are watching TV. This has been shown to improve literacy.

School agreed that this is something that could be highlighted to parents and fits nicely with the school focus on improving reading and literacy.

It was noted the subtitles on children's' programmes on channels such as CBeebies, are tailored to lower reading ages.

**ACTION: JB and KM**

## **7. Online safety/ social media awareness**

A member of the committee raised the question about whether there is something that Parent Council in conjunction with the school could do to support parent awareness around online safety and use of social media.

It was agreed that it would be useful to investigate this and possibly run a session at the time of the AGM in June. This might have the additional benefit of more parents attending the AGM.

Chair to speak with Chair of PSA to see if they would be in agreement with this.

**ACTION: Chair**

## **8. Updates from year reps**

The Chair reminded members about our “ways or working” approach that encourages parents/carers, or reps if they have been contacted by parents/carers, to contact the school first with any questions or issues. Reps can feed back any relevant issues at Parent Council meetings or where something requires fuller discussion can ask for it to be added to the agenda.

P1 – concerns about the increase in litter in the playground. It was noted that the squirrels go into the bins looking for food and often bring the litter back out again. There are regular litter picks. Litter is definitely ‘more squirrel than children.’

P2 – A parent had raised that the timing of the parent sessions in class, following 2 strike days, could prove problematic for working parents. Mrs Martin acknowledged this point and agreed to note the concern raised in her weekly newsletter. The school timetable was planned before the strike days were known.

P4 – specific class issues to be discussed with Mrs Martin. Traffic concerns were raised. Parking outside the school on zig zag lines and turning in the care home entrance without taking into account children walking to school. Parents should remember to park legally and considerately to residents and those walking to school.

P5 – ongoing issues with Parent Pay deleting booked lunches and parents not being aware of this until it is too late to remedy. School will investigate if there is anything that they can do to support this.

P6 – it was asked whether the P6 trip to Scottish Opera would be going ahead. This is a trip that is usually undertaken by the year group. It was noted that it an expensive trip and that the school being able to fund it is unlikely. AS noted in the Head Teacher update, there is also a limit on what parents can be asked to fund – as the school needs to keep the cost of the school day to a minimum.

## **9. AOB**

At the meeting in May, committee members will be asked to confirm if they will be continuing for another academic year. Following this, the list of vacancies will be shared with the Parent Forum to seek nominations prior the new Parent Council being confirmed at the AGM in June. Under our

constitution, even if someone wants to stay on the Parent Council for another year, another parent or carer can be nominated for a particular position, which would lead to an election at the AGM.

Cllr Hal Osler noted that the Council budgets were going to be agreed the following day. It was noted that there is a large deficit in funding for next year. She asked that the Parent Council should be more involved in reviewing budget plans and holding councillors to account. Some Parent Councils have been more active in engaging with councillors.

**Date of next meeting:** Wednesday 10 May 2023 – on teams

Joint AGM with PSA – date in June TBC (now confirmed as Wednesday 14 June 2023)