

Blackhall Primary School Parent Carer Council
Meeting – 13 November 2024
Minutes

Parent Carer Council Members Present

Kate Chandler	P1 rep	Jane Browning	Chair
Amy O'Brien	P2 rep	Kate Walker	Vice Chair
Julia Pearson	P3 rep	Colin Chisholm	Treasurer
Emily Orr	P5 rep		
Sine Munro	P6 rep		
Caroline Irvine	P7 rep		

Other Attendees

Kirsty Martin	Head Teacher	Anna Hazel-Dunn	Depute HT
Hal Osler	Councillor	Max Mitchell	Councillor
Other parent/carer representatives		Olivia Chisholm	P7/Ravelston House Captain

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were notes from Chloe Riddell (P4 rep) and Councillor Jule Bandel.

2. Approval of minutes/action points from last meeting

The minutes from the meeting of 11 September 2024 were approved. Progress on the action points was noted as follows:

- (i) Cramond PS road safety audit and Edinburgh City Council travel plan

The Chair had been in touch with Cramond PS but was waiting on a reply. The travel plan from ECC had been delayed. The Councillors discussed the fact that travel plans could be complicated and some measures could take a long time to implement due to the need for traffic orders to be in place. The Councillors were trying to chase up the travel plan. The Chair advised that Davidson Mains PS had written a letter to the Council highlighting the backlog on road safety measures that were likely to affect children – their estimate was that it could take 10-25 years to achieve the necessary changes. The trial “school zone” around Dalry PS was noted – this is part of a 20 minute neighbourhood initiative. These zones do come with some limitations however eg Craigcrook Road is a through road so any traffic measures are likely to be in side streets. The exception to this would be a pedestrian crossing which Councillors continue to try to push for.

Actions:

- Chair to chase up Cramond PS
- Chair to chase up ECC Travel Plan (copying Councillors in).
- Chair to share D Mains primary letter with PCC members

- (ii) Materials re care experienced families

The P4 rep and Vice Chair had worked together on a wording for this which would be sent to the school for inclusion in the newsletter/uploading to website.

Action:

- Vice Chair to send materials to the school (updated – closed on 14 November)

(iii) Wording to parents re making donations to/volunteering to help in school

Action:

- Chair to draft wording on this

(iv) Map of safe parking areas to parents

This was covered under parking and HT – see below.

(v) Help with painting the playground

The P5 parent who volunteered has spoken to the HT and another parent may also do so. The HT noted that the painting needed to be focussed around the right kinds of activities so that children would use more than once. Closed.

3. PCC Priorities

(i) Parking

It was noted that the parking situation had not improved much since the PCC had started talking about it. The HT had issued a great number of reminders to parents/carers about where to park and where not to, highlighting the risk to the children's safety. There were some constraints about what could be done about the wider road safety/parking situation eg Council measures taking a while to implement and budgets limiting what could be bought for the school in terms of signage etc. The Head Teacher had prepared a map of safe/lawful parking areas and this would be circulated to parents/carers. PCC members agreed that they could take it in turns to volunteer to help highlight these rules at drop off/pick up times.

Action:

- HT to notify parents/carers of safe parking map and of PCC wardens to help enforce this (update – closed on 15 November).

(ii) Playing Field

It was noted that the tarmac area (first phase) had been completed. The second phase was to complete the bark area next to the new hall, so that the space could be used for loose parts play. The Chair noted that it would be good to update parents/carers on progress so far and assess the financial situation regarding phase 2. A joint meeting of PCC and PSA office holders would take place to discuss this. It was noted that a Freedom of Information request to Edinburgh City Council was still pending – the Council had stated that they didn't hold information on funding of playing field spaces and a review had been requested.

Actions:

- Vice Chair to set up meeting with PSA and PCC office holders to discuss progress of playing field.

- Chair to put an update on Classlist regarding progress so far and efforts made to raise funds/find out more information from the Council.

(iii) Mobile phones

The school policy of children not using mobile phones while in school was noted. This also applied to smart watches and these tended to create more issues than phones. It was difficult for teachers to confiscate phones as they then bore responsibility for what happened to them.

The PCC noted that there was a UK wide campaign to delay smartphones and this involved parents signing a pledge that they would all participate in this. A parent/carer who attended the meeting noted that GPs were starting to see children whose health had been affected by mobile phone/social media use. The police are coming into the school to speak to the P7s about social media use.

It was noted that the “delay smartphones” campaign could be controversial as not all parents would agree with it, and it was not supported by the Council. It was also noted that it was possible to give children phones which were not smartphones so that social media use was not possible. Some members favoured a “progressive” approach where children could be given such phones at an appropriate age, then supervised social media use at a later age etc, so that they could understand how to navigate the world in which they were growing up. The PCC acknowledge that this was a difficult area with many different views and concerns and thought it would be worth the school exploring some further measures to help support children and parents/carers around phone/social media use.

Actions:

- HT to send out reminder of school policy on mobile phone/smart watch use (update – closed on 15 November)
- HT to organise a further information evening for parents/carers
- PCC to work with parents and carers to help work up a policy position/supportive materials for parents and carers around mobile phone/social media use.

4. Head Teacher Report

The presentation is available on the school website. The following points provide additional information to the slides.

Staffing and numbers

Edinburgh City Council are monitoring school roll numbers across the city in advance of the UK Government’s planned change to VAT for independent schools which is due to take effect in January.

Maternity cover has been appointed for Mrs Noonan. Mr Jackson, PSA is absent at the moment after surgery and will be reducing his hours on return. The school is almost at full PSA complement.

There is a City Council wide review of support worker roles within schools – contracts are being revised to try to make job descriptions better match the important and valuable work that staff undertake.

Recent Events

The HT noted there had been some complaints around school photographs with some children feeling uncomfortable and undertook to explore any alternative options around this.

Action:

- School to explore options regarding alternative photograph options.

Coming up

Attainment meetings will take place soon. Maths week is planned for w/c 9 December. On Monday 2 December the school will have a winter art day and parent volunteers are welcome to help with this – please contact the school.

Homework

Noted that a meeting would take place in the school on Thursday 21 November. The HT wanted to improve homework and thought it was important that class learning was not dependent upon learning done at home. It was noted that 23% of pupils were completing/handing in all homework and around 50% were doing some. It was acknowledged that some families may be completing homework but not uploading it. The P4 and P5 reps were going to email feedback collated from parents to the HT.

Budgets

Remain very tight. There may be some Council funding available to help with a new bike/scooter rack for the school. The funds raised by the PSA from the Autumn Fair had helped to purchase new smartboards for P1.

Parking - See above.

Bikeability

Mrs Hazel-Dunn, DHT is doing the training for this as well as one parent. The school was hoping to run it at least for P7 this year.

5. AOB

The wooden structures in the wonder woods have been condemned for health and safety reasons. An Edinburgh City Council landscaper has been approached to design a play area in the space.

The next meeting of the PCC would be in January and the Finance Committee meeting would take place in advance of that.

There was a build up of leaves outside the school and the Council could be emailed to ask to clear these – the request would be allocated in terms of priority.

Action:

- School to email ECC re clearing of leaves (update – closed on 14 November).

Date of next Meeting: Wednesday 15 January 2025