

ST NINIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL
MINUTES OF PARENT COUNCIL MEETING



MONDAY 4 MAY 2020

PRESENT:	MR P McLAUGHLIN (HT) MRS S BOYLE (DHT) MRS M HERON (PT Guidance) MS M McCARNEY (Chair) MRS Y WEBB (Vice Chair) MR T BRESLIN (Church Rep) MR K McKENNA (Co-opted member) MS S MacLEAN (Parent) MS K McCARTHY (Parent) MR D McCULLOCH (Parent) MR D CHAPPELLE (Parent) MRS V McRAE (Parent) MRS M WILSON (Parent) MR J O'DOWD (Parent) MRS E CAIRNEY (Parent & PTA Rep) MS L FAIRBAIRN (Clerk) Cllr S MURRAY
APOLOGIES:	MRS A HENDERSON (Parent) Cllr J JAMIESON Cllr S MacDONALD

This meeting was held on-line due to the COVID19 lockdown

Mrs Webb welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

Mrs Boyle led the meeting with the school prayer.

Two points were addressed before the main topic:

Uniform – Mrs McRae asked how we are going to deal with ordering uniform this year. Our main supplier, Academy Uniforms, are currently closed due to the lock down, however, Mrs Boyle has been in touch with them. Due to our long-standing partnership they currently have a stock of 300 blazers, already badged and the school will have a size range for pupils to try. They intend to put more detailed sizing on-line to enable people to order directly and these will be delivered to pupils' homes instead of the school, during July/August. Academy are also open to other suggestions and will keep in contact with the school. There could be some initial problems for the new S1 pupils. PE kits are supplied by a different company. Mrs Boyle will contact Mr Mulgrew, (PT PE) for information, however, a plain dark T-shirt will be acceptable until we have this sorted. (No football colours). Ties are available directly from the school office.

PTA – Fund-raising – Mrs Cairney explained that there are no fund-raising plans at the moment due to the lock down, however, we are looking for new idea, possibly on-line.

Food Bank – Teams are working to deliver food to people who require assistance during the current Covid19 situation. Mrs Cairney asked if members can pass on details of anyone they know who might need this service.

Mr McLaughlin thanked all those for their efforts in carrying this out, especially Jessica Chappelle and Andrew Harris (Head Girl & Boy) who have been very involved.

COVID19:

Mr McLaughlin explained how the school prepared to support pupil learning on the run up to the lockdown. Year group assemblies were held to give pupils information. Staff were upskilled on on-line learning and IT equipment was offered to pupils with no access.

Last day celebrations were held for S6 pupils. It was a very emotional day, as their education was brought to an abrupt end, with exams and prom being cancelled.

When school ended, available staff were asked to come in to oversee pupils of front-line workers who required supervision due to their parent's jobs. However, numbers were very low, and it was decided that Kirkintilloch High School would be the designated HUB for secondary pupils. This is still running, and we are often in contact with them. None of our pupils are currently attending. Holy Trinity was the designated HUB during the Easter Holidays. If any individuals find they should need this service, they should apply on-line to EDC. We have staff on standby for this, but they have not been required so far.

The building is open, but staff would only be allowed access with permission from Jacqui MacDonald, the Chief Education Officer and only in very exceptional circumstances.

Mrs MacDonald was due to retire but has delayed this until December under the circumstances.

On 30 March SMT produced and issued an Action Plan on-line, eg, having weekly communication with staff by email, and with parents. Staff are also in regular communication with each other, by department as well as other groups, for support. Emails from parents are checked and responded to daily by Mrs McGarry, Office Supervisor. The main questions originally from parents were regarding problems accessing TEAMS etc, but have now become a much wider range. Derryk Gray (SSM) is working from home but has full access to our C&G system for options etc. This has allowed us to complete the new timetable which we put into operation after the Easter holiday, two weeks earlier than planned. As the senior pupils (new S4-S6) would usually have been on study leave at this time, this has allowed them to begin studying several weeks earlier than normal.

Over the last few weeks, we have been gathering information on how pupils are engaging. There is a minimal number who are not engaging, and their details have been passed to Guidance who will contact to find out firstly if everything is ok, or if they are having problems either with health or family or simply IT access. Guidance are also very involved with vulnerable pupils and families and have on-going contact. HUBs are also set up for vulnerable children with Social Work involvement.

SQA – The cut-off date for estimates reaching the SQA is 29 May. Teachers and departments are currently working to get this info sorted and on-line meetings have been held between PTs and Mr Sheerin (SQA Co-ordinator) to keep on top of this.

EDC are targeting S4-S6 families without IT access, in the hope of supplying laptops to them. We have already sent our details to EDC.

Primary 7 transition work has started. Our S1 intake is approx. 155 this year. Placing

requests have not been confirmed yet but look hopeful.

We have been in touch with our S6 leavers and will try to rearrange their Prom and Leavers Mass when suitable.

Our D&T dept were very involved in making 3D printer visors for local care homes and the NHS. We are delighted that this has been recognised in the Scottish Parliament by Rona McKay, MSP.

Mrs Heron explained the role Guidance are playing to support vulnerable pupils and families while the school is closed. This includes weekly contact by email or phone, and so far, this has all gone well. There were concerns that some parents may find this an imposition, but they have all welcomed the contact and reassurance. Several have experienced stress and problems with IT. Mrs Heron has explained there are other ways of getting work handed in eg, simply by doing it on paper and taking a photo.

Mr Breslin asked what criteria SQA are using to give awards. Mr McLaughlin explained that it will be down to teachers and PTs professional judgement in basing estimates on previous attainment. Mr McLaughlin will sign off all estimates, so these will be Quality Assured and not just accepted. Work in departments is huge at the moment to get this completed accurately.

Mrs McCarney asked that her thanks and appreciation, and those of the Parent Council be passed on to all staff for their hard work.

Mr McLaughlin continued with details of plans to hold an assembly via Zoom for the new S6s as pupils have been missing contact and need reassurance. If this is a success, assemblies will be arranged for other year groups. Mr Sheerin (S5 Year Head) and Mr Killin (S6 Year Head) are arranging a video through TEAMS for S6 with a Q&A session afterwards. This will allow contact for pupils and will also be offered to S5 if successful.

Data has been collected on what per centage of pupils have been accessing on-line work and how much is being marked and followed up. Results have been good, but we realise that the whole situation has affected everyone, and the main concern is pupils' emotional wellbeing. There is genuine concern over mental health and the tone used in all communication is deliberately tailored to ensure that people realise this, and do not feel they are being pressured. We are aware that some families have suffered illness, hospitalisation, and bereavements and that we are unable to provide our usual level of support due to the lock down.

We are aware that on-line learning is not consistent between departments as staff are at different levels of familiarity with the new platforms with some never having used these before. Some parents have asked for other methods of teaching, but Mr McLaughlin stressed that staff are not upskilled enough for all to teach in the same way, and that they are all working to give pupils the best possible support. It is recognised that this cannot compensate for being in class.

We are also very conscious that some families will not be living in ideal conditions, eg shared use of laptops, other children at home and other disruptions which will all have an effect on learning, and we have to accept this.

Mr McKenna asked how we will deal with pupils' emotional/psychological needs when school returns. Mrs Boyle explained that counselling is in place and the school counsellor is currently working with families. Mr McLaughlin added that we are concerned about the psychological effects and discussed the three phases we are likely

to go through and explained the Scottish Government's 10 working streams which have been set up.

He then explained the difficulties experienced in the last few days before lockdown, where staggering lunch hours etc to encourage social distancing were considered too difficult to be effective. This will all need to be looked at for pupils returning. Again, he emphasised the priority of mental health, acknowledging that many families will be experiencing negative changes in circumstances, ie, loss of jobs, losing family members etc. which will have major consequences. Decisions on how things move forward in the future is ongoing.

Mr O'Dowd thanked Mr McLaughlin for his feedback on the new arrangements. He felt that while many pupils will have accepted the current arrangements for on-line learning, some are finding TEAMS a bit glitchy and Glow very slow, and asked if there is a more consistent way for homework to be handed in. It was agreed that more consistency would be preferred, and that this is being looked at.

Delivery of TEAMS – Our version has its limitations. Cameras are defaulted to 'off'. Lessons cannot be recorded or saved therefore cannot be accessed later.

Mr McCulloch expressed his thanks to all for their efforts saying the situation has been fabulously handled, and very impressive at such short notice. He appreciated that cameras are set to off and understands the limitations. He felt that feedback has been great for disadvantaged pupils but asked about the process for others to feel engaged and how to encourage them. Ms McCarthy commented on the admiral job everyone had done in the very short turnaround but explained that it is difficult from a parent's point of view to see what needs done.

Mrs Cairney left the meeting.

Mrs Heron explained about departmental weekly Twitter links, and Mrs Boyle discussed a variety of ways being used, including notebooks, textboxes, PowerPoints and verbal feedback. She did stress that this will not be on the same level as classroom working. New tricks are being shared by staff as they are learned. Mr McCulloch asked if there are any facilities for parents trying to support children and Mrs Boyle explained that the new systems are not like Show My Homework, where parents are able to access work, and while this is more difficult, it is more secure. Updates or changes will be made as and when relevant. Mrs Boyle went on to explain some of the problems with different formats and difficulties in locating previous tasks. She added that some versions are more compatible with different devices, eg some documents may work better as a Word document than a PDF. However, as pupils are all working with their own devices, this is not something that can be easily sorted, but people have been innovative in finding what works for them. It was agreed that we need to address the ability to access work from one place.

Mrs McCarney asked about pupils who may be too embarrassed to ask questions on the forum in case others make comments. Mrs Heron emphasised that pupils should be encouraged to ask questions and can do so directly by emailing teachers with any concerns. Mrs Wilson thanked staff for good communication but felt that some pupils may be reluctant to contact teachers directly and may not be submitting work even though it has been completed. Some feel a sense of separation and may benefit from a class meeting. She was assured that teachers are aware that many pupils don't feel comfortable with the new strategies but are hoping to overcome these. The possibility of other online meetings will be considered.

Ms MacLean congratulated the school staff on the marvellous job they are doing and was delighted to hear about the school assemblies. With pupils now finding new ways of working, she asked how parents know if pupils are not engaging and what EDC are doing to support the school. It was explained that staff throughout EDC are supporting each other by sharing ideas, HTs from other schools are in touch with each other and EDC discuss requirements as we move on. Mr McLaughlin suggested asking Jessica Chappelle and Andrew Harris to make a video to stream and help connect pupils and a link for Mass will be sent to parents.

It was recognised that pupils would like to see people and have a sense of connection, and that it is difficult to structure the day. All challenges are trial and error and everyone is coping differently.

Mr O'Dowd suggested a TEAMS meeting to explain basics to pupils, like how to find teachers' email addresses etc. Mrs Boyle felt this would be a good idea as children are probably not as clued up on IT as we tend to assume. Quick guides will be made available and uploaded to TEAMS.

Mrs Webb reminded staff that we have many members who are capable and willing to help in any way possible, and not to hesitate to ask.

Mr McLaughlin thanked everyone for the positive comments which will be passed on to staff. These will be useful, and staff will appreciate them, particularly as they will not be getting any feedback.

Mrs McCarney thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The next meeting date has yet to be decided, but hopefully we should be able to hold another before the end of term.

Next meeting: Date to be confirmed