

ST NINIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL
MINUTES OF PARENT COUNCIL MEETING



MONDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2020

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

This meeting was held on-line due to COVID19

Mrs Webb welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending.

Mrs Boyle started the meeting with the school prayer.

Mr McLaughlin welcomed Jennifer Livingston as the new staff rep. He explained that the school situation was as good as it could be. Our focus is on education.

Pupils have responded well to the changes and there have been no issues with pupils wearing masks etc. They respect the hand sanitisers, one-way system and mask requirements. However, this is challenging. We have had a spell with no positive cases after the October week break. When we do have a positive case, the day is basically written off putting procedures into place. There are approximately 70 S5s currently self-isolating. 30 S4s returned today.

There are SQA issues in that some pupils are still unhappy with estimates. The SQA have assured us that there will be no National 5 exams this year.

This year we will require solid evidence and the assessment calendar will be reviewed. A lot of work time has been lost and we are currently playing catch up.

Today we celebrated prize giving. Our former S2 pupils were recorded with music and speeches from Norman Drummond, Guidance Teachers and Heads of Year and the video was shown today. A very different set up from usual, but we are trying to include as much positivity as possible by trying alternative ways of including the good parts of school wherever possible.

The run up to Christmas is usually magical however this year will be difficult. We believe it is hard for the pupils, however parental letters have been very positive.

S Boyle confirmed things are going well. We had a public health visit on Friday which emphasises how well organised we actually are.

Y Webb passed on her appreciation of the hard work going on behind the scenes.

V McRae asked about attendance codes and how they will affect pupils' attendance. Mrs Boyle explained the new codes given to pupils who are self-isolating which will not affect their attendance as they will be working from home.

M McCarney gave her thanks and appreciated the constraints out with our control. One concern was the length of time pupils need to wear masks and asked if they could have "mask breaks". She did not feel it was good for them having to wear them all day without a break. She also enquired why only the upper school are required to do this. Mrs Webb added that masks make it difficult for teachers to be heard and cause problems particularly in Modern Languages. Mrs Boyle appreciated the concerns and Mr McLaughlin explained the mask rules are very relaxed at break times. K McCarthy also asked why the lower school do not wear masks in class and explained that if they have no health issues there is no health risk in wearing them for long periods of time. Mr McLaughlin explained that the constantly changing rules is a concern, and Public Health (health and safety) have been asked about this. However, we are complying with Scottish Government guidelines. Some staff and pupils are vulnerable and require others to be wearing masks for health reasons. It would be unfair on staff and pupils. K McCarthy explained that the science is developing as they learn more about the virus and we should continue to follow the guidelines.

Mr McLaughlin discussed how teaching has become different and while we try to stay safe and still run the school as normally as possible, it is frustrating and has caused problems.

Pupils sitting Highers this year have been identified as needing extra help. We are still not aware at this time if the Highers will go ahead as usual. Mr McLaughlin explain this needs to be agreed with the Scottish Government. Exams - the plan is under review regarding Highers, and we are expecting a decision to be made soon. If the current pattern continues pupils will not be able to sit Highers. The EDC picture is unknown. It was mentioned people are surprised the unions haven't been stronger.

Supported Study has been delayed as so many pupils have been off but should start back soon. J Livingstone explain that all courses are affected differently. Across the board most assignments have been removed, eg, in Business Education this means 25% of the grade will be removed which could allow an extra three to four weeks work time gained for exams. All subjects are working on Teams and teachers are adapting. Most subjects are progressing under the circumstances.

Mr McLaughlin explained that our ARC staff contact pupils half-way through their self-isolation period to check that they are coping or needing help. On return, Guidance Teachers check how they got on. He explained that Blended Learning is not ideal, but pupils seem focussed.

J Livingstone agreed that there is a noticeable difference in work ethic and enthusiasm to do homework.

D McCulloch recognised that the restrictions mean there is less fun in school, but pupils would rather be in school than not. He did ask how parents can support pupils who are at home as the current systems do not allow the same parental access as the old system of SMHW and that pupils don't always communicate things at home. Mr McLaughlin explained that the system had to change as they wanted everything to be accessible in one place and encourage teachers to put things on Teams. S Boyle explained that there are opportunities to have a chat with the host. There is an on-line diary which specifies what work is there. PowerPoints shown in class are also on Teams. We feed back to Microsoft and they do take our points on board. Mr McCulloch was concerned that parents could inadvertently contaminate/delete work etc by clicking on unknown things and asked how to avoid this. Miss Livingstone explained that Teams cannot go between groups and that work can be looked at but not edited. She explained that parents can look at the left side to find assignments and can get an overview as a diary.

Mr McLaughlin discussed parents' concerns about S4-S6 pupils. Tracking reports are now being issued monthly to give increased info to parents. Guidance Teachers are still available to contact for concerns re progress and reassurance if they cannot work Teams.

K McKenna raised a previous issue regarding concerns over increased mental health problems and asked if this was the case. According to press surveys, multi deprivation increases this. Mr McLaughlin explained that it has not transpired the way we thought as counsellors and Guidance had been put in place and are still there. We have been given extra funding to secure an extra counsellor. Most pupils are happy to be back and Guidance Teachers are in regular contact with vulnerable families. Where some families struggled over lockdown, pupils have settled now that they are back to a familiar routine. There are still some mental health issues, but no noticeable increase.

PTA Update:

E Cairney explained that fundraising has been quite challenging, however, they were able to hand over a cheque for £2000. This is a great amount considering some events were cancelled and there is only a small group of members. They are still trying to come up with suitable ideas which work within the restrictions. One suggested idea was raffle tickets which pupils could take home in envelopes to sell to family members. This way money is being handled less. This has still to be confirmed. Mrs Webb thanked the PTA for the £2000 in such trying circumstances.

She then offered any help that the Parent Council can give eg an open letter etc. to show appreciation to staff. Mr McLaughlin thanked her for this and explained that it helps to have such supportive members and would like to take up the offer of an open letter. Mrs Webb will draft this.

Mrs Webb thanked everyone for attending and the meeting was brought to a close.

Next meeting: (Date to be confirmed)