

ST NINIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL
MINUTES OF PARENT COUNCIL MEETING



MONDAY 25 JANUARY 2021

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 M WILSON (Parent)
MRS E CAIRNEY (Parent & PTA Rep)
MS L FAIRBAIRN (Clerk)
Cllr S MURRAY

APOLOGIES: MRS A HENDERSON (Parent)
MR J O'DOWD (Parent)
MRS V McRAE (Parent)

This meeting was held on-line due to COVID19

Mrs Webb welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending.

Mr McLaughlin started the meeting by thanking the Parent Council for the newspaper article at the end of term. This has given the staff a real lift and there has been a lot of appreciative feedback from them.

Education Scotland had a review of remote learning last week and will publish a report on Friday. Last week HMI asked for feedback on remote learning, but it was too soon to tell. Forms were sent out to parents today regarding this.

Arrangements for pupils returning are unclear. Government meetings are being held over the next few days and we hope to know more after that. A phased return is expected, and we are trying to put plans in place.

The rollout of laptops has helped increase attendance.

Staff and pupils are more familiar with Teams than during the first lockdown. Due to several positive cases & many pupils self-isolating, there has been lots of online work over the last few months and staff have been sharing good practices. There was no consultation between schools as to the best way forward. Each school has its own model. HTs had to put in structure. We opted for double periods to reduce time to log on/off and staff only had to prepare for 3 classes per day instead of 7 as preparation for remote learning takes longer. It is easier for pupils to deal with 3 x 90-minute sessions per day. Staff were happy to accept this as it made common sense.

PTs were given the option on how best to use the 90-minute lessons as each subject is different and requires a different format. These could include PowerPoint presentations, live work, pupils' worktime, questions, practical demonstrations etc. Live communication at the start and end of lessons is encouraged as this helps maximise attendance.

A live spreadsheet has been set up for all staff to access. This allows staff to register who is not logged in and the office can send out texts to parents to alert them and deal with any IT issues. We want pupils to be aware that we are following this up to maximise attendance. Out of over 850 pupils only 42 had not logged on this morning and this reduced later in the day.

Our timetable allows all departments to hold a weekly remote departmental meeting where PT's will feedback names of pupils not engaging. These will be followed up by a phone call home. We realise there are still some problems where pupils can't access technology, eg 3 children in one household with one laptop, however IT issues are reducing and most Teams have been sorted. There is a lot of communication between staff and pupils.

Moving forward issues – We are trying to find ways to make things work eg, the Options Evening which was due to be held last week will be replaced with a Sway presentation instead. Option forms are in place and Teams meetings with Guidance staff can be arranged if necessary. S3-S5 information will be sent out. As Seemis (our management system) is not available for staff to access at home we need to find another way to get info to parents. We are working on this and S3 information should be out this week. We are not able to implement our assessment calendar and are still working on this.

Ms Livingstone explained that all departments work slightly differently. She explained how the Business dept works and felt that pupils' confidence is great and the technology has been brilliant.

Mrs Boyle discussed the technical glitches at the start of term but that we were quick to get on top of this. Whiteboards can be used which allow teachers to see pupils' work without other pupils seeing it. Teachers are positive but are feeling tired.

Mr McLaughlin – we average 20 pupils in school every day (children of key workers, vulnerable children, and ELR pupils). They are doing the same work as those at home.

Mrs Cairney added her thanks and feels St Ninian's are way ahead of other schools and her son is fully engaged and confirmed that the text alerts work.

Ms McCarney thanked staff for the engagement with pupils and agreed that the text alerts work. Ms McCarney's main concern is that, for some subjects, 90-minutes can be difficult to be actively participating. She felt there is a lack of knowing what pupils are working towards and understood that we don't have answers, but felt they need something final to aim for. It would be helpful if the government could inform pupils what form "exams" will take and what is expected of them. Mr McLaughlin accepted that 90-minutes is long, and that teachers find this too. Some afternoon classes finish early if the work is completed.

SQA – There will be no exams. If senior pupils are able to return to school in February we will begin assessments. Teachers will provide grades based on evidence, which is different to last year where it was based on teachers' judgement. Prelims should start at the beginning of March and May and this will count as 2 pieces of evidence. Other evidence is already being gathered and will be submitted at the end of May. The SQA could possibly extend the deadline to June or July. Departments are concentrating on

getting through the curriculum and will concentrate on evidence later.

Mr McLaughlin is very conscious of reassuring pupils. Assemblies for S4 and S5 are being held this week for reassurance, options, explaining how assessments will work and time for pupils to express their concerns.

Mrs Webb expressed her thanks to Mr McLaughlin for this. She also thanked Mr McKenna for arranging the newspaper article on behalf of the Parent Council.

She then asked if PE are able to do more to encourage pupils to get more active as they are missing out on the walk to and from school and movement at lunchtime. Pupils are basically spending most days in the one room and could benefit from encouragement to self-care for physical and mental health. Mr McLaughlin explained that this was discussed today at S3 assembly. Pupils are encouraged to get out at lunchtime and go for a walk. Junior Captains have suggested introducing Motivational Monday with music and motivational speakers to get pupils' steps up. He then explained that PE have been most affected as they can't do many activities and are concerned about practical activities. Other forms of physical activity are being encouraged, eg yoga.

Mr McCulloch re-affirmed his thanks to all staff for doing an unbelievable job. He then asked how parents can help ensure children are engaging rather than just logging on. Mr McLaughlin explained that PTs check the engagement with teachers and if there are any concerns eg, no chat or no participation, names are passed on and pupils will be contacted. Ms Livingston explained that in some subjects, teachers can watch what pupils are writing as they do it. Teachers are also using different strategies to keep pupils focused, eg a quiz partway through to check on engagement. She explained the importance of deadlines, especially in senior phase, and that pupils are aware that SMT and Guidance will follow this up.

Mrs MacLean thanked staff for doing such a great job and has listened in to lessons at home and is impressed with the high level of engagement. She expressed her appreciation of the information on options and of the possibility of seniors returning but was reminded that it will be a government decision. Primary parents have been asking about transitions. Mrs Boyle will be year head of S1 next year and had 2 Teams calls regarding this today. Letters should be going out to parents tomorrow and depending on circumstances, we hope to go ahead with visits in May or June.

Mr Chappelle suggested clips linked to the Daily Mile to raise awareness of the importance and benefits of walking/exercise. He went on to say his daughter has fully engaged in online learning where she hadn't in school. He asked that this is kept in mind when pupils return as many might struggle, and not to be too quick to "get back to normal" as skills are as important as knowledge.

Mrs Wilson passed on her thanks to all staff for engagement and hard work and acknowledged that ninety-minute lessons are very long for pupils and teachers. Mr McLaughlin explained that subjects do allow pupils to leave early if work is complete.

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

Next meeting: (Date to be confirmed)