**ST NINIAN’S HIGH SCHOOL**

**MINUTES OF PARENT COUNCIL MEETING**



 **MONDAY 7 MARCH 2022**

PRESENT: MR P McLAUGHLIN (HT)

MRS S BOYLE (DHT)

MS J LIVINGSTONE (PT Bus Ed)

MRS Y WEBB (Chair)

MS S MacLEAN (Vice Chair)

MR D McCULLOCH (Parent)

MRS V McRAE (Parent)

MS M McCARNEY (Parent)

MRS M WILSON (Parent)

MS K JAMIESON (Parent)

MR T BRESLIN (Church Rep)

MR K McKENNA (Co-opted member)

MS L FAIRBAIRN (Clerk)

APOLOGIES: MS K McCARTHY (Parent)

MR J O’DOWD (Parent)

MR D CHAPPELLE (Parent)

Cllr S THOMSON

This meeting was held on-line due to COVID19

Mrs Webb welcomed everyone to the meeting and handed over to Mr McLaughlin.

P McLaughlin began by acknowledging that the Covid problem continues and that numbers continue to rise, today being the worst so far with 17 new cases amongst pupils and 3 amongst staff. The local authority has been alerted and we have been advised that it is similar in other schools. This has caused disruption to staff. They are still having positive tests after day 6/7. We did manage to hold assemblies last week for the first time since the pandemic began. We had been holding quick assemblies in the Social Area at the end of interval. Masks are no longer required in class but are still being worn in communal areas. Uniforms are back to being worn as normal.

The S6 Valentine’s dance went ahead as planned and was well attended with no problems. Their Christmas dance had been cancelled and S6 prom and leavers mass have been cancelled over the last 2 years. We hope the end of term this year will be more upbeat.

This will be the first time that senior pupils will sit exams under SQA conditions. The potential attainment doesn’t look as good as previous years, but we have put in place Supported Study, Easter School and Mentoring/Coaching.

The S4 virtual parents’ night has already taken place. S5/6 will be held tomorrow. S Boyle is leading this and we are interested in hearing parents’ views. P McLaughlin does not know if this system will continue but feels it has a negative effect on us trying to build a community.

Pupils were in Skye last week as part of our Columba 1400 program and had to spend an extra night there because of problems on the roads due to extreme weather conditions. They were well looked after.

Over 100 of our S1 pupils were involved in our trip to Lendrick Muir.

The New York trip planned for February was cancelled as we couldn’t book trips abroad.

Staffing – we currently have several vacancies, including some temporary posts becoming permanent.

We are trying to create time out of class for S1-S3 pupils focusing on Leadership & Wellbeing etc. We have learned lessons through the pandemic, and we are now looking at old ideas that can be removed from the curriculum and hope to be in a better place when we come back in August.

S Boyle explained that EDC are using the new Parents’ Night online system. The Parent Portal allows access to different applications. The security set-up ensures only the correct people can access the system. There have been some problems accessing it and it can be slow, however, parents were also offered a direct link if they couldn’t access the Parent Portal. This is set up in a way as close to the old system as possible with allocated times being 5 minutes apart. However, 30 slots of 5 mins with no break is very demanding on staff straight after a full day. This was the first time using the system for teachers and parents and there was a 78% uptake for S4 appointments and 89% of those were upheld. There were a few technical problems, but most settled after a few minutes. There has been mixed feedback with most negative feedback being due to technical problems. The positive aspects included no queues and the ability to access from places of work etc. Appointments for S5/6 are still open till 10am tomorrow. So far there has been a 54% uptake but could still rise.

Primary Transition – We have still not been able to bring primaries into the building. However, 6 departments have held Teams meetings with them and are now ready to go into primary schools. With the changes in restrictions, primary pupils are now able to visit, and 2 full day visits have been set up for 3 schools on 24 & 25 May. The provisional numbers are approx. 150.

J Livingstone discussed PTs positions regarding exams. Assignments have been put back. The main problems have been pupil absence, but most have now caught up. The SQA are giving a rolling release of what to expect in the exams. Departments are now focusing on revision, which is a big help to pupils. Most are confident and knowledgeable. Anyone can appeal this year and this will be based on assessments. Additional second prelims have taken place for many subjects which gives us more evidence for appeals. Revision is much more focused. Supported Study after school and during lunchtimes as well as Easter School will all help.

P McLaughlin explained that we are reverting to the old style of appeals where we will submit estimates and should grades be lower than expected, appeals can be submitted providing we have evidence. None of the pupils have sat exams under exam conditions or with invigilators. Assessments have taken place in class. We will practice as most won’t realise some basic requirements, eg no phones in the hall.

S MacLean asked about feedback from S4 Parents’ Night. It was agreed that we need parents back in the school for Parents’ Nights to enhance the sense of community. The on-line system ran smoothly and was easy to book. It was easy to target teachers you really need to see. Appointments were fine with some teachers very focused and most had time for questions at the end. Most explained the time limits each time which wasn’t really necessary. All teachers were really well prepared, and the content was as good as face-to-face meetings.

M McCarney felt the timing of Parents’ Night is too close to the end of term for senior pupils. Tracking Reports have been great and very helpful. The five-minute appointments didn’t really help. She did appreciate that we are working within confines and gave her thanks.

P McLaughlin feels strongly about how we are working and worries that some people in EDC, who don’t work in schools, are making decisions and don’t appreciate the reality of our situation. We are still encouraged to have meetings online and some of these decisions are detrimental to building the community. There will be a meeting with Ms McCahill and the Primaries tomorrow. They haven’t met for 2 years, and our Primary transition has suffered. This will take time to build up again.

K Jamieson, who has a child in S2, has not yet met anyone from the school, and though she would love to be involved, feels completely cut off and feels she is missing out.

P McLaughlin explained that the legal team are going through the legalities of online Parents’ Nights. This all needs to be approved by the unions.

K McKenna agreed with the strength of feelings about meetings online and feels they are too impersonal. Schools are meant to be communities and appeal to people because of community and pastoral care. He asked if we have had any feedback from parents. Politicians are pushing for online meetings as this means there is no need for new buildings etc, and we can have virtual education.

P McLaughlin explained that people in power making decisions are keen to have it this way and want consistency across schools. We have less input in decisions. He explained that people who work at the leadership center have been fighting hard and if parents want different things, the parent body (Parent Council) need to get involved.

Only one year group have experienced this so far. Y Webb suggested a pupil questionnaire being put out to get opinions and asked if there is anything the Parent Council can do.

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P McLaughlin is meeting unions regarding working time etc. discussions are due soon. We need to make sure we’re not missing things. Teachers have restricted-hours contracts which they can’t go over. Parents’ nights need to be focused on first and are more valuable than reports.

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S McLean felt parents prefer in-school parents’ nights and their voices need to be heard. She suggested getting feedback and using parental power to get what suits our school as we should have the choice based on evidence. K Jamieson felt we shouldn’t be dictated to regarding our school and we should be proactive in getting information.

S McLean commended and thanked those involved in Supported Study and raised questions about Easter School. S Boyle explained that it is open to all and would run for 2 weeks in 3-hour sessions offered in mornings and afternoons. Pupils can opt in on-line but don’t need to sign up to 2 full weeks.

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

Next meeting: Monday 6 June 2022 at 7pm via Zoom.

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