

Castlehill Primary School Parent Council Annual General Meeting 8 September 2021

Virtual meeting 08/09/21 at 7:30.

Attendees: Alice Hall (Secretary), Sara Kelly, Lesley McLean (DHT), Rosy Marshall-McCrae, Deborah McQuaid, Alastair Muir, Dave Nettleship (Co-Chair), Katie Reid (Co-Chair), Mandy Thompson (HT), Qunshan Zhao.

1. Welcome and introductions. Dave (chairing the meeting) welcomed two new members – Sara Kelly and Qunshan Zhao.
2. Apologies and Confirmation of Quorum: Claire Chamberlain, Gail Hunter, Kirsty KachKach (DHT Early Years Centre (EYC)), Caroline Miller, Hatice Kizil (Treasurer), Elaine Sibbald. Confirmation of Quorum given.
3. Minutes of 2020 AGM and minutes of last PC meeting on 28 April. Agreed. Dave also noted that a review of the two set of minutes brought into relief the fantastic work the school had done over the previous year.
4. Elected Positions: Dave Nettleship and Katie Reid were formally appointed as the new Co-Chairs of the Parent Council. A huge vote of thanks was given for the fantastic work done by Caroline Miller as Chair, and Elaine Sibbald as Fund-raising Chair. Hatice Kizil was re-confirmed as Treasurer and Alice Hall was re-confirmed as Secretary. The Council agreed that, rather than seek a formal replacement for Elaine's role, we would set up a separate fund-raising group which would play the role of the School Fundraising Team (**Action**: Katie to draft an email to be sent to all parents inviting them to join the group).
5. Review of the Parent Council Constitution: The Council agreed to remove both the reference to formal fund-raising roles, and the reference to a cap on the number of PC members (currently set at 12) from the Constitution (**Action**: Alice to propose specific written changes to the Constitution and circulate these to Council members for formal approval).
6. Treasurer's Report and Approval of Accounts: The Council's bank balance stood at £6849.21. A significant amount had been raised in the previous year, despite constraints on face to face activities, with the Halloween trail and Christmas cards proving particularly successful. The accounts were approved.
7. Head Teachers report
 - The return to school had been a success, with most children very enthusiastic and settled – helped by the transition programme which the school had put in place before the summer. The end to bubbles had allowed teaching staff to work together across classes and the children to mix freely in the playground which they greatly enjoyed. This had also had a big impact on inclusion for children in the Enhanced Learning Resource (ELR). There had been 7 COVID cases

since school return, but none in the EYC and no outbreaks; figures were also much lower than in other schools. The school continued to emphasise hygiene protocols.

- The biggest challenge had been staffing, with a number of long-term absences and other staff, particularly in the EYC, needing to care for isolating children. Two posts – the office manager and a support for learning assistant – had been filled, but it was taking time for key paperwork to be processed; as a result the new staff had not yet started. The new clerical assistant was though doing an excellent job. The HT confirmed that volunteer support to help in the office was unfortunately not possible due to COVID and security restrictions.
- The biggest success had been retention of the UNICEF Gold standard for Rights Respecting Schools after a really intense day of evidence-gathering and interviews. Few schools in Scotland had achieved this standard, and even less had retained it for multiple years.
- The HT then gave an overview of the Standards and Quality reports which were sent to East Dunbartonshire Council (EDC) and reported on progress in the previous year and future plans.
- The school report was based on the COVID recovery plan and focused on four main themes:
 - **Health and wellbeing** – this had been a major priority given all the school missed the previous year. Teachers had held daily emotional/live check-ins during lockdown and assemblies had focused on resilience, core values and connection across the school community. Staff had also had additional training on resilience and wellbeing. An emotional census had been carried out on the return to school and a number of support schemes were put in place – most children had been confident to share their feelings, but a nurture room had been created for children who had been most challenged by the experience. Next steps would be an evaluation of the approach to nurture, dedicated support for children with particular wellbeing needs and more activity across different year groups.
 - **Family engagement** – the school had communicated a lot with parents over lockdown, including through a survey to assess experience of remote learning. Feedback was that 95% of children had been engaging, with the biggest challenge being technology. The school had followed areas of concern, including ensuring laptops/tablets were made available to all who needed them. Snapshot jotters had also been sent home with examples of children's' work. Parents' evenings had been greatly missed – fortunately EDC guidance had now changed and the school was planning 1-1 phone conversations with parents in October and March, alongside more workshops involving wider families. Further use of Seesaw, an interactive learning platform, was also being explored.
 - **Transitions** – to help manage the transition from home to school, teachers had carried out assessments of the impact of remote learning on attainment and then placed a real focus on feedback on learning. A full transition programme had been

planned for the new P1s and most children appeared confident and happy; normally there would be some children resisting school after a few weeks, but this did not seem to have happened. The school was keen to have feedback on the transition process and things to keep in previous years. Council members confirmed that their own children seemed settled and that visiting/touring the school and meeting people had really helped. Transition for the P7s had been more challenging but the school had organised Teams activities and an outdoor PE session at Bearsden Academy.

- **Equity and educational continuity** – most staff had received training in the past year on remote learning. Sumdog (maths) and BugClub (reading) provided individualised learning and had been most popular with the children. Clicker, a writing support package, had helped increase attainment, particularly in the ELR. All online resources would remain available in the coming year. Most children had maintained their anticipated educational progress despite the challenges of the year. Writing had seen the biggest dip and this would be the focus in the coming year, alongside developing a reading culture across the school.
- The EYC report was based on the Nov 2019 inspection plan. The planned follow up visit from the inspectorate in March 2021 had been unable to take place. The school had though taken up the offer of a weekly phone consultation with an inspector from January to March to talk through a range of issues – this had been hugely valuable. The context since the 2019 inspection had been very challenging with early progress set back by the closure of the EYC in March 2020 and the fact that the Centre was then host to children from across EDC - making it hard to embed training and new approaches for Castlehill staff. However, the approach of short (3 month) focused action plans and huge commitment from staff meant the EYC was probably now sitting at a good/very good rating, rather than the weak assessment given in the inspection. Activity had focused on three main areas:
 - **Indoor and outdoor space** – Castlehill now had a fantastic outdoor space, with visitors coming from across EDC to see what had been done. Senior staff carried out daily audits of the learning environment which were continually changing and improving. All staff now understood the principles of an effective learning environment and responded well to feedback. Resources were clearly labelled and easy for children to access, and all rooms had a quiet and nurturing area which were widely used for quiet time or sleep – something which had not happened before. Staff also understood how to plan activities that would motivate the children ('play provocation') and there was more evidence of children initiating their own play and engage with literacy activities indoors and outdoors. The previous year had seen a big focus on literacy. Numeracy would be the focus in the coming year although a June audit suggested some progress in this area had already been made.

- **Observations** – staff now had time set aside dedicated to observations and had a good understanding of what was needed. Audits of learning journal entries were ongoing and a lot of effort had been put into high quality learning walls which shared the children's voice. Staff could identify good practice in promoting literacy and the further action required to raise standards. Almost all staff had also agreed to take on champion roles, promoting different aspects of the Early Years curriculum.
 - **Tracking and monitoring** – staff were becoming increasingly confident in tracking children's progress and participating in conversations about individual children's attainment. The majority of staff were comfortable meeting a range of learning needs although further work was needed to ensure all staff were in this place. There was also a focus on modelling high quality strategies to provide differentiated learning.
 - Dave thanked the HT for a very comprehensive update and suggested the Council reflect further on the improvement plans next meeting.
 - Following the report Council members raised concern about the door next to the school pitch being left open and the slope up to the pitch being unsafe (e.g. presence of broken glass). The HT explained the door was open when children were on the pitch as otherwise they could not access the toilet. The pitch had not been used for PE prior to COVID and so this had not been an issue – but given the plan was to keep using the pitch, the school could look at changing the lock so it could be opened with a key held by the teachers. The HT also said she was due to do a health and safety walk with the janitor and Trade Union representative the following week, and would make sure to log both issues so they could be fed back to the Council (**Action:** HT).
8. Fundraising Group Report. The Council agreed to come back to a discussion on fund-raising at the next meeting, following the establishment of the separate fund-raising group.
9. Focus of PC in the coming year: Dave noted that the Chairs were keen to strengthen engagement between the Council and the wider parent body. One idea was to invite ideas from parents for key themes/issues which the PC could usefully focus on in the coming year (**Action:** Alice to pursue). We could also look to encourage PC membership from parents in year groups which were not currently represented. The Council agreed it would also be valuable to learn more about the pupils' priorities (**Action:** Dave/Katie to discuss options with the HT for strengthening engagement with the Pupil Council).
10. Any Other Competent Business: None.
11. Planning of meetings for the coming year: Future meetings were planned for 18 November, 27 January and 28 April.