

Castlehill Primary School Parent Council Meeting 25 November 2021

Virtual meeting 25/11/21 at 7:30. Chair: Katie Reid.

Attendees: Alice Hall (Clerk), Gail Hunter, Kirsty KachKach (DHoC Early Years Centre (EYC)) Hatice Kizil (Treasurer), Lesley McLean (DHT), Alastair Muir, Dave Nettleship (Co-Chair), Katie Reid (Co-Chair), Mandy Thompson (HT)

1. Apologies: Claire Chamberlain, Sara Kelly, Gemma Kemp, Rosy Marshall-McCrae, Deborah McQuaid, Caroline Miller, Elaine Sibbald, Qunshan Zhao.
2. Minutes of the last meeting. Agreed.
3. Head Teachers report
 - A team from the inspectorate had visited the school and nursery the previous week, following prior meetings with EYC staff, parents and the Head Teacher. The visit had included focused observations of staff-children relationships and learning walks in the three EYC rooms, a review of evidence submitted in advance and conversations with teachers and children from P4-7 on the school's response to COVID. Feedback had been provided the following day and had been really positive, acknowledging the progress which had been made since the 2019 inspection. The team had also commended the EYC's self-evaluation and plans for further improvement. The EYC would now be officially 'signed off', signalling that the inspectorate team were confident in the leadership and the quality assurance processes carried out by the Council. The formal report would be published in early January and would provide an overview of the EYC's progress and the school's response to COVID.
 - Dave noted the huge thought and effort which the EYC had put into its development. The HT said a key factor had been the focus on supporting staff through the change and ensuring they understood what was needed and why – this had led to really high levels of motivation. Alastair also noted that the Castlehill school community continued to draw people to the area because of its reputation.
 - On updated COVID plans, CO2 monitors were now in nearly all the classrooms and monitored through a central facility in Kirkintilloch – with any cause for concern triggering a response. Windows and doors would need to be open most of the time, and particularly after playtime and lunchtime – as a result staff and pupils would be allowed to wear extra warm jumpers. Daily toothbrushing for P1 and P2 children was now permitted although staggered breaktimes meant this could not yet be resourced; this was a problem across schools in Bearden and Milngavie, and the Council was exploring extra support staff. Schools could also now organise overseas trips. Multi-class Christmas parties could now take place, subject to a risk assessment, but it was not possible for parents to attend these parties or view school performances. Outdoor Christmas fairs could go ahead, but would be subject to a number of additional controls. Staff socials could not take

place on school grounds but could take place elsewhere right at the end of the school term.

- On staffing, a new clerical assistant was due to start the following week and the clearance process with Disclosure Scotland was now operating more quickly. The increased number of ELR classes had though created additional pressure; the Council was trying to provide extra support, but they were facing a wider staffing shortage.
 - On the P7 residential trip, most parents had said they'd be keen to support a four-night stay if a suitable option could be found. Many of the options were expensive but the school was continuing to look around. Plan B would be a series of day trips to do different activities, as a number of other schools were doing. The DHT asked if the Parent Council might be willing to contribute to the cost of a bus and Council members indicated that they would be happy to do this.
 - On feedback to parents, the teacher phone calls with parents seemed to have gone well; a subsequent survey of parents had received 62 responses and almost all had been positive. The school would also be continuing to roll out the Seesaw software as an additional tool to give parents information on their child's learning. The rollout had started with P1, P7 and the ELR, with a view to reaching all classes by April, and feedback from parents and children had been really positive. Staff were able to track whether parents had viewed the content, and there was a facility for the parents to leave comments – and for the teachers to reply. The expectation would be that each child would get at least two posts a week. The main limiting factor was access to the class iPad which was the only mechanism for staff and children to upload work. The HT and DHT asked if the Parent Council might be willing to fund an additional iPad for each of the main school classes to help increase the flow of information back to parents – see below.
4. Parent Forum Report. Dave reported back on the Parent Forum meeting which had taken place earlier that week – this was a meeting of the Chairs of all the Parent Councils in East Dunbartonshire. There had been a very good presentation by Boclair Academy on its work to stimulate pupil engagement in the local community, although the length of the presentation had meant there was no time to discuss other issues. Dave and Katie had suggested to the Chair of the Forum that for some meetings it might make sense to separate primary and secondary schools to allow for more focused discussion. On the specific issue of pupil engagement, the HT noted that each of the school classes had a specific topic on which they engaged with people outside the school (e.g. P1 on plastics).
 5. Fundraising Group Report. Katie noted that a small fund-raising group had been established since the previous meeting. The focus to date had been on the Halloween pumpkin trail and Christmas cards, and the group was now organising a Christmas raffle. Katie said that the Council co-Chairs had already approved funding for a licence for the children to watch an online Christmas pantomime (£125) and provide snacks. However, the fund-raising group was also keen to purchase a couple of den building

outdoor play kits (c.£1150) and picnic tables with board games built into them (c.£900 for two).

6. In discussion, Council members agreed to fund the den building kits (subject to agreement from members who were unable to make the meeting) but decided to delay a decision on the picnic tables until the school had established if planning permission was required, and we knew how much money had been made in the raffle. Separate decisions were made to fund additional iPads for P1-P7, further to the earlier discussion on Seesaw (c.£2000); to make a £100 donation to the EYC to fund its Christmas activities; and to contribute £100 toward the purchase of a defibrillator on the school site, which would also be available to the local community (with the nearest defibrillator currently a 15 minute drive away) – again all subject to agreement from the full Council. [*Note: this agreement was subsequently given and so the allocations listed above are approved.*] (**Action: Katie/Hatice**).
7. Issue for discussion – ideas to strengthen the relationship between the school and parents/carers post COVID: Katie noted that COVID restrictions had severely limited the scope for parents and carers to get involved in the daily life of the school and asked if there was anything the Parent Council could do to help rebuild these connections. The HT said that in the current circumstances it was simply not possible for parents to come into the school, given the large number of unvaccinated children in daily close contact and the impact that an outbreak would have on families. The school was though very keen to have parents back in school and would start facilitating this as soon as it was allowed.
8. Any Other Competent Business: It was agreed that, in line with other Parent Councils, local Councillors should be given a standing invite to future meetings of the Parent Council (**Action: Alice**). It was also agreed that the Co-Chairs should get in touch directly with our local Councillors and offer a short meeting to introduce them to the work of the Parent Council (**Action: Dave**).
9. Dates of future meetings: 27 January, 28 April.