

## **Castlehill Primary School Parent Council Meeting 28 April 2022**

Virtual meeting 28/04/22 at 7:30. Chair: Katie Reid.

Attendees: Alice Hall (Clerk), Lesley McLean (DHT), Alastair Muir, Dave Nettleship (Co-Chair), Katie Reid (Co-Chair), Mandy Thompson (HT).

1. Apologies: Rosy Marshall-McCrae, Deborah McQuaid, Caroline Miller.
2. Minutes of the last meeting. Agreed. On the issue of school lunches, the HT said the quality of the food was improving although there were still some issues in relation to stock. The menu had been reduced to two hot meals (one vegetarian) and sandwiches in order to streamline the service. Proper crockery and cutlery were also now back in use and the water in plastic bottles would shortly be replaced with a jug and cups. Dave noted that he had not received a reply from EDC to the letter he sent on behalf of the PC. He also said that, in a recent meeting with other Parent Councils, it had become clear the situation was worse in Castlehill than other schools. The HT said that communications with the Council on this issue could be challenging due to staffing pressures, but that the school was logging and reporting issues every 4-6 weeks.

On communications with parents, the HT confirmed that Seesaw would now be the main mechanism for sharing class-related information, including feedback on children's work. Information on whole school issues and events would be sent by email, and Teams would be held as a backup service in case of further lockdowns or isolation.

3. Head Teachers report:
  - On COVID, the HT said that in January the school/ELR had seen nine children testing positive. In February this number had risen to 30 children and three staff members, and in March to 61 children and 20 staff (with the HT and DHT off at the same time). It had been a very challenging time for the school, but the staff team had responded amazingly, being willing to flex and work outside their comfort zone. Since Easter there had been just six cases in P5 and four among the staff, with the vast majority of staff having now had COVID.
  - Restrictions had been further lifted, with the children mixing freely in the playground. Parents would be encouraged to attend sports day and would also be invited to the EYC graduation. For P1 induction, the school would be keeping the online information system as this had worked well, but would also be running sessions for parents to come into the school, do a tour and ask questions.
  - The HT said there did though remain a need to stagger break and lunch times because the EDC recommendation was for staff to keep over a metre distance from each other, limiting capacity in the staff room. Risk measures would also remain for class bubbles and posters would stay up around the school. Alice asked if the space restrictions for staff were necessary now so many staff members had had COVID. Katie also said parents had expressed concern over the statement in

the recent newsletter about not returning to a pre-pandemic situation, and the ongoing wearing of masks by staff. The HT noted that several children and staff members had already had the illness twice. There were also children and families who remained very anxious about COVID. Staff were encouraged to wear masks in the corridors and communal spaces, but not otherwise unless particularly vulnerable.

- On planning for the new P1 intake, the numbers were still in a state of flux, but the school expected to have too many children for a single P1 class. They were also waiting to hear whether they would have access to a Newly Qualified Teacher. As a result, it was unlikely that a decision on classes and teachers would be made before June. Information on the transition had though been sent out to parents, with plans in place for a teddy bears picnic, buddies and opportunities for children in the EYR to spend time playing in the P1 classrooms. The DHT also noted that the school was waiting to hear from Bearsden Academy on the transition for P7 leavers.
  - On the departure of Kirsty KachKach from the EYC, the HT noted that this would be a great loss. An Acting Depute Head of Centre had been appointed and would start the following week, with the advert for the permanent replacement going live on 22 May.
  - The HT said that increasing attainment in writing was one of the focal areas for the School Improvement Plan - and the newly introduced 'Talk for Writing' programme had had a big positive impact on the children's motivation to write. The school was planning an online workshop to introduce parents to the programme on 31 May and would be discussing it further at the forthcoming in-service day.
  - The HT also introduced the new resources being used for the Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) element of the health and wellbeing curriculum. These were national resources being delivered in almost all Council areas across Scotland, from early years to college level. The programme acknowledged that most learning in this area takes place outside school, and for each block of learning, a letter outlining the content would be sent home to parents, with every lesson plan and FAQs available online. The resources had been updated in response to feedback from young people who had felt the previous material was not sufficiently relevant to their lives. There was evidence behind all the areas of teaching, and a lot of work had been undertaken to ensure the content was age appropriate. The new resources would be rolled out over the summer term, with a number of letters having already gone home to parents. Alastair asked about consultation with parents in the development of the material and the HT confirmed that this had taken place.
4. Parent Forum Report. Katie reported back on the recent Parent Forum. There had been a number of questions on the parent portal and healthy eating, especially with the rollout of free school meals, and it had been agreed the EDC Facilities Management team would be invited to future meetings. There had also been a brief opportunity for breakout discussion with other PC Chairs. The next meeting would be 24 May.

5. Fundraising Report. Katie reported that the Spring Quiz trail had raised £230. There had also been positive feedback, including via Facebook, on the sense of community that had surrounded the event. Planning was now well underway for the Summer Fayre on Saturday 11 June.

With regards to use of funds, the DHT confirmed that the purchase of the iPads was still being pursued via EDC. The picnic tables were also due to be installed shortly. Following a request from P6, the PC had agreed to provide a further £150 to purchase new bins for the playground. Katie said that the fund-raising team was keen to set fund-raising/spending targets for the new school year to focus efforts.

6. Issues for discussion:

- PC office bearers. Katie noted that Dave would be stepping down as co-Chair at the end of the school year, and Hatice was also keen to resign as Treasurer following two years in the role. The PC put on record its enormous thanks to both for their contributions. Katie also said that other Bearsden primary schools separated out the PC and the fund-raising committee and noted that it would not be sustainable for the current small team of volunteers to cover both areas – there was therefore a need to recruit more parents to the PC and fund-raising committee. Alastair suggested seeking expressions of interest at the Summer Fayre and the HT suggested that the Chairs attended the planned info session for new P1 parents to talk about the PC's work (**Action: HT/Katie/Dave**). We could also use the school newsletter to put out a specific request for office bearers. Separately, Alice said she would reach out to existing PC members to see if there was more that could be done to make the meetings more accessible - e.g., holding them at different times of day (**Action: Alice**).
- Times rankings. There was a discussion of the rankings of Scottish Primary schools published in the Times newspaper in January. The HT said it was not clear what information had been used for the rankings as the Scottish Government did not maintain league tables. Schools did submit data on children in P1, P4 and P7 and whether they were expected to achieve the standard curriculum levels for their age group. This was much less likely if the children had special needs and therefore schools with ELRs would score lower. What mattered, however, was not how children compared to a set of external standards, but how they were progressing in their own terms. As a small school with a series of targeted interventions in place, Castlehill was very good at identifying and meeting individual needs to help all its children develop – and this was reflected in the progress that was tracked. Dave suggested that the PC write to the Scottish Government to find out what data was being used to inform the Times' rankings and ensure it was being handled in an equitable way that recognised and acknowledged different school contexts (**Action: Dave**).

7. Any Other Competent Business.

- School photos. The school was hoping to arrange photos before the end of term.
- Meeting with school groups. It was agreed that this would be an area of focus for the next school year, when hopefully things would be even more back to normal. In the meantime, ELR 4 had invited the PC to see their 'give racism the red card' model (**Action: Katie and Dave**).

8. Future meetings. It was agreed we should aim to hold meetings next school year in person – and certainly the AGM. (**Action: Alice to follow up on lettings for next term,**)