

Uryside School – Term 2 Parent Forum Meeting

Thursday 26th November 2020 at 6.30pm on Google Meets

Present

Councillor Lesley Berry (CLB), Joanna Bruce (JB), Janet Christie (JC), Rachel Corsar (RC), Lisa Coutts (LC), Kim Dodd (KD), Alisa Foster (AF), Catherine Liebnitz (CL), Monica Martinez (MM), Jackie McBeath (JM), Lyndsay McGunnigle (LM), Emma McKimmie (EM), Cheryl Pow (CP), David Shanks (DS), Adrian Stewart (AS)

Apologies

Councillor Neil Baillie (CNB), Diane Brands (DB), Dawn Carnegie (DC), Councillor Marion Ewenson (CME), Lindsay Glennie (LG), Claire Green (CG), Morven Robertson (MR), Councillor Judy Whyte (CJW)

1. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Previous minutes were approved.

2. Councillor Update

Over the last nine months the council have managed a pared down version of business as usual and have continued committees throughout via Zoom. Aberdeenshire council has done well in this respect as many councils have just decided to give up and leave decisions in the hands of a few people. A Recovery Group has been set up to decide whether services are the best we can offer and whether they can be afforded. Financially there is a £60M deficit and many normal sources of income such as community centres, school dinners were cut during lockdown. Other than COVID the only issues relating to Inverurie at the moment are the spaces for people, where Scottish Government wanted to allow people to pass each other safely on the pavements and allow for 2m social distancing with queues etc, and the one way system in the town centre. RC stated that a driver had actually blocked an ambulance in the town centre as she was trying to wait for a parking space and had pulled in beside the red/white barriers. CLB stated that one issue is that since the parking charges have been removed since March, shop staff are now taking up the spaces (including ones behind the town hall) that should be for shoppers. Car parking charges are being reintroduced in January though. KD felt that West High street was very empty and it must be having a negative impact on businesses. It was also felt that the barriers look very unwelcoming and aren't being used for walking in the road anyway. This is especially true at lunchtimes when the Academy pupils are out for lunch, with 3-400 children requiring served food within 40 minutes. It was also pointed out that shops are struggling at the moment anyway and without the Academy lunchtime, may wouldn't be open yet. JB felt that the one way system is fine apart from having to turn down Western Road, a one way street, then there is a bottleneck at the bottom of here onto Burn Lane. CLB agreed this was the weakest point of the one way system, however drivers do seem to be keeping to the 20mph limit and they are thinking of keeping this. RC stated that she used to work on the High Street for a very long time and would happily welcome 20mph. MM agreed and didn't understand why it has to be

discussed so much as this is a safety issue - why do we have to wait till something happens. CLB replied that for everyone that agrees you get someone that disagrees. If we had tried to introduce the speed limit last year off the cuff, there would have been a pushback about it, so it had to be trialled first. KD agreed with CLB as reducing the speed limit had been discussed back in 1997 when young drivers had been racing between the two roundabouts. A lot of people objected about it then, even though it was on safety grounds and a child had already been knocked down and significantly injured.

CL asked when the waste recycling centre will stop the booking system and return to normal as it's always empty with nobody social distancing. We are seeing fly tipping and she feels this is one of the reasons. CLB agreed that the system was good initially but has now gone above and beyond what is necessary. She is a lone voice though so please send an email to complain as she needs interaction from members of the public.

3. Head Teacher Report

Mr Scott has joined as a new teacher working from Mon to Wed on a flexible deployment to cover classes/absence and Health and Wellbeing. LC also joined as a temp PSA on Thurs/Fri as Mrs Barrow is starting a University course part time. Mr Ross is due to retire on 18th December after a long time spent with Market Place/Uryside and this will be discussed at the end of this meeting.

Pupil absence is up around 50% due to additional caution for the current Covid situation but is still above 90% and not as bad as expected. We are aware of increased Covid in the wider school community, although there have been no cases inside the school building so far. We are asking that pupils be tested if they have any of the symptoms but we haven't had to close any class or have mass self isolations so far. There is a fully functioning system in place for pupils needing to self isolate - as a contact of a confirmed case or an actual case - the link will be sent to families directly. DS has developed a very user friendly website for this and the tasks on it will be supplemented by the teacher if the rest of their class are still in school. If the whole class has to self isolate and the teacher is well, the class will be taught online. If the class teacher is also unwell then we would be using the website. During lockdown a lot was put on hold, apart from staff training. We wanted to keep the calendar for school events, but also for staff events as well, as close as possible to what was planned last year. We have adjusted training to online training and many training providers have been giving free courses. The early years team have been very busy embedding their new staff team lead by Cheryl Pow.

KD was pleased to report that the ASN learning boxes have now been deployed to all classrooms and are being used. The bill will be forwarded to CL. Miss Robertson and Mrs McElhinney in the office will also keep box contents under review.

A range of Christmas activities have been planned during this difficult time. Instead of class parties being spread across a whole week, all class parties will be held on the afternoon of Thurs 17th Dec as we have to stay in our separate classroom bubbles. Everyone will be viewing each other on Microsoft Teams so that the whole school can be together even though they can't physically be. There will also be letters from Santa's elves, Operations Christmas Food Hampers, community Christmas card project, a

Christmas musical experience online, a virtual pantomime and an online disco on 9th December for p1 - 3 and p4 - 7. We will also have an end of term assembly at which we will celebrate Mr Ross and make sure he has an event to remember for his retirement. There will also be the p1 nativity and Nursery xmas event, with Christmas lunch on Friday 11th December. Please can all parents ensure that Christmas cards are not brought into school to share with other children this year in order to prevent higher risk of contamination, Each class will come up with a way of wishing each other Merry Christmas, for example digital cards or a large card for the whole class. Also for anyone who wishes to buy the teachers a gift, which is no way expected, could presents not be brought into school for the same reason. If anyone has a gift could they please coordinate these through one parent from each class so these can be quarantined for 4 days. Teachers have also asked about presents going to pupils and have been given options of how to do this to ensure quarantine

The cost of the school day is still very high on priorities, many families not in the same financial situation as they would be normally at this time of year. For example, every child will be included in the Santa Dash and receive a medal for everyone to feel included.

Homework has been reinstated to fill in any gaps and to increase fluency in some skills, particularly around maths. It also helps make parents very aware of what is being taught in schools. The school also wanted to keep the system going in case of self isolation or school closure. DS has developed a survey regarding homework and we would appreciate parent engagement with this.

5. Winter Weather/Safe Travel to School

The issues will probably be very different this year as Mr Ross will have left and there will be no parents in the playground. KD will need to wait until the new janitor is appointed which will hopefully be within the next week and then we can have discussions with them.

6. Online Storage of PF Minutes

Action on AF to send previous minutes to DS to upload to Sharepoint and be stored online.

7. CONNECT - Online Session Feedback

EM and JB attended online sessions through Connect which is a free service covering Scotland and the membership paid for. One session was on fundraising and another on reaching out to all families. We discussed what the school has done over lockdown, communication with parents and social events etc with various schools from all over Scotland attended.

Fundraising

EM set up a fundraising meeting on the back of this, kicking about ideas of what we could do for both fundraising and purely social events. She also felt it was a good idea to try and do a free online quiz with a prize to bring the community together and this could be run live through our Facebook page. After discussions this week there wouldn't be time

to organise a Christmas quiz, so this will be postponed until February perhaps to coincide with Burns Night. There could also be a competition to design a haggis for example. We will also sell squares which are similar to a raffle, but will need a lottery license which is being looked into. Potential prizes are an afternoon tea for four from the Fly Cup and a chocolate bouquet. LG has also done an amazing job organising a Santa Run with more information to follow shortly. Another fundraising meeting will be held after Christmas.

Reaching out to Parents

JB had attended and the focus was to understand reasons why parents might avoid connecting with the PF and how we could still support them. There weren't many solutions offered but it had given JB the view that as long as PF numbers are good and we have most of the years covered in our group, maybe we need to go back to the class rep idea. A poll was taken at the meeting and most of the classes are covered, with only p7 and some p1 classes missing. Action on JB/AF to create a survey monkey to distribute to parents asking if they are aware of the role of the PF, meetings and how to contact us. Action also on AF to put this on the agenda for the next meeting,

Another issue discussed was the cost of the school day and having to buy uniforms at the start of the year etc. There is now a box for Christmas jumpers outside of reception and also the preloved school uniform initiative where they are washed then distributed by the community. KD had also mentioned the cost of school trips, we would never want to see a child going without, and the PF should be mindful of how we could contribute towards this.

8. Treasurer Report

Accounts have been submitted to OSCAR and have passed. Only £700 was taken in during the last school year which was low compared to the previous year. Expenditure was £2222 with an outstanding balance of £6306. KD stated that CL will also be receiving a bill for the ASN boxes and some outdoor learning expenses, although most of the materials have been given to the school for free. CL is still to hear back regarding the outstanding bank account from the Parent Council despite several emails. JM checked in previous minutes and the balance on this account was £1131.50 three years ago. Action on JB to check back through minutes who the previous signatory was. She will also send a note out, open and transparent, to try and get together and come up with a plan. DS felt that a letter produced by JB/CL would be a better approach without too much involvement from the school. CL had also received an email re funding on 11th November regarding funding that wasn't received last year. CLB suggested asking Christine McLennan to follow this up through local authority channels.

9. AOCB

Ragbag

This is a fundraiser for the school and needs to be readvertised so that everyone knows that the collection point is in the service area car park and what rags can be taken and in what condition. Mrs McElhinney deals with them directly and might have a flyer. Action on JB/DS to put in the newsletter.

Class List

EM/JB had watched a presentation about Class List, which is a way for the PF to communicate with the parent body. This can have event information, correspondence between classes etc and is a way of reaching families, sharing school news, selling tickets and organising events. Action on JB to look further into. KD stated that parents would have to approach the school to join due to GDPR regulations.

Rocking Chair

EM asked whether the school still had the rocking chair from last years Santa's Grotto and if it could be used for Santa Stories. LMcG stated that this was donated by Claire Green for last year's Books n Bosies, KD to arrange for it to be taken up to reception and then put outside for collection.

Nursery

EM stated that a few parents had pointed out that although the morning nursery session drop off is 8.45am they aren't allowed to go in until 8.50am. There is no one else in the playground at this time and they wondered if they could be allowed to continue to the second gate so that the children could arrive on time. CP replied that this was originally done because P1 parents were entering the building at that time but she will ask staff if you can come in earlier going forward.

Mr Ross Retirement

KD welcomed suggestions for retirement gifts for Mr Ross - he loves hats, his camper van, his granddaughter, food, whisky and the children at Uryside. Parents will be invited to give donations, CL felt that bringing in cash would be the easiest way to do this - this will be put into a box in each class to be quarantined. Action on CL to make up envelopes for each class JB asked whether the school will be making anything for him. KD replied that they will be putting together a photobook where the children each write a thought about Mr Ross. The end of term assembly will also be combining his departure with the christmas story and House Captains will present any gifts. We would like all the children to be part of this but the only way to do this at the moment is via Teams. JB suggested a hamper (i.e. whisky/food) supporting local businesses or gift vouchers. Action on KD to get something into the newsletter tomorrow and also send out as an email so as many parents see it as possible. All donations would also need to be in by Friday 11.5h December.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 6.30pm 25th February.

There potentially may need to be an emergency one before this, depending on what happens after ease of lockdown over the festive period.