

Uryside School – Term 4 Parent Forum Meeting

Thursday 25th May 2021 at 6.30pm on Google Meets

Present

Joanna Bruce (JB), Dawn Carnegie (DC), Lisa Coutts (LC), Kim Dodd (KD), Councillor Marion Ewenson (CME), Alisa Foster (AF), Catherine Liebnitz (CL), Sheila Johnston (SJ), Jacqueline MacBeath (JM), David Shanks (DS)

Apologies

Councillor Neil Baillie (CNB), Councillor Lesley Berry (CLB), Rachel Corsar (RC), Janet Christie (JC), Lindsay Glennie (LG), Claire Green (CG), Lyndsay McGunnigle (LM), Emma McKimmie (EM), Cheryl Pow (CP), Adrian Stewart (AS), Councillor Judy Whyte (CJW)

1. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Previous minutes were approved.

2. COUNCILLOR REPORT (CME)

A huge backlog of road repairs is ongoing. The red barriers and one way system have been removed in Inverurie centre with the 20mph speed limit remaining until November at present. The recycling centre now has controlled entry for the public only with number plate recognition, this has stopped queues due to shorter slot times. The community council is currently looking for new members, if interested please look on their Facebook page or website, closing date is at the end of the month.

Access to Osprey/school from Howford via Uryside Park

AF had asked if there was an entrance planned so that people could walk across Uryside Park from the other side of Inverurie, especially children in the school catchment area. CME replied that this area is all now the catchment for Strathburn School and also council do not want to formalise an entry at that end of the park as it is a very dangerous road with no room/pavements for pedestrians and also very fast moving traffic. There are plans for the whole part of this road to eventually be improved when funding is available and this will be kept in mind then.

3. HEADTEACHER REPORT

All classes are now back in school, children are showing more signs of disruption than previously and everyone's very tired. There have been no Covid cases in school, all staff have to do two lateral flow tests per week and have had at least one vaccine.

All classes are also back eating lunch in the dining hall with extreme modifications to remain in class bubbles. We do hope to start the new school year as near to normal as possible. There will be a virtual P1 transition, there was positive feedback from last year as it was more flexible for parents. P7 transition is ongoing and is mainly online with an actual visit to the Academy on 3rd June which is an Academy in service day. For the last week of term, there are lots of activities planned. P7 will be making a movie instead of having their show, and this will also help them learn professional skills. The P7 yearbook is nearly finished, everyone will get a printed and digital copy. There will also be a recorded virtual award ceremony again this year to avoid technical glitches.

Education Scotland are very pleased with the school's progress since the last inspection, especially the nursery. We have also been carrying out assessments since the beginning of this term to study the attainment gap and overall pupils have not lost ground during lockdown, especially in reading. There were mostly positive results from the parent survey re learning during lockdown from 94 responses, although perhaps some of the questions should have been worded differently. Class reports hopefully will be out on the 4th June with ten minute parent interview slots available on 9 - 10th June via Microsoft Teams. Sports day is planned for 8th June but no families will be able to attend due to social distancing. A celebration assembly will be held on the 11th June, with an outdoor summer disco planned for the whole school (during school hours) - this will still be in class bubbles but the classes will all take part together. Various P7 leaver events are planned for 21 - 25th June with an end of year assembly on 25th June. Due to the pandemic we will be unable to finalise staffing before the end of term. There will hopefully be information on which class children are in next year during the last week of term but teachers names might not be issued before the end of the summer holidays.

Outdoor Learning Report

SJ has been in charge of coordinating the outdoor learning programme this year and gave a report to the meeting. One target this year was to develop outdoor learning and curriculum and to embed this into day to day teaching. Uryside is very privileged to have extensive grounds, grass and concrete areas, developing garden area and an amazing outdoor MUGA (multi use games area). We also have wildlife areas and lovely trees and plant life abundant in insects. SJ has engaged in background reading on perceived benefits of outdoor learning in kids development. Benefits include embedding learning in real world context, complimenting indoor learning, supporting kids emotional and physical wellbeing, impacting positively on attitudes and self esteem and increasing knowledge of and care of natural environment (how can you be expected to care about something they have no contact with?). Outdoor learning also helps with life skills such as resilience, perseverance, effort, team work, communication and productivity etc. The school is also making links with others in the community and we have had invaluable help from a volunteer group of around a dozen parents. They have helped to clear the garden, build a composting area and plant a willow tree structure as wind protection. We have a multipurpose seating area from logs donated from Haddo Estate, and two new log cabins - one for storage and one for an outdoor classroom. A parent also created a music wall from pallets and fixed tyres to the ground for outdoor play areas, and we are also thinking of adding buckets and spades etc to add to these contexts.

The school has been supported by many local businesses donating materials and a local farming family gave us tarp for den building. We have also been supported by outdoor specialists including John Molster, River Dee Trust, Helen Taylor and the Aberdeenshire Rangers - learning about rivers, moths and minibeasts. We are also planning on planting wildflower seeds to add colour and attract wildlife. All classes have had regular opportunities to learn outside/team build using loose parts. P5 planted sunflower seeds and delivered them to the food larder and day care centres to combat low mood and loneliness. Every child has planted a sapling and there have also been opportunities to weed, identify weeds and clear the garden area. Staff have also had a variety of opportunities to learn about outdoor learning benefits along with weekly opportunities to develop confidence. The curriculum has been written so that staff can use it to support their own teaching and risk assessments have been written.

SJ stated that so far feedback has been very positive, she is amazed that all classes in school have been outside and not one child has said they don't want to participate. They have all engaged so well and have just loved it.

Next year every class will be outside once a week. Aberdeenshire Rangers will return in August and September for various topics. Further development of the school grounds is also planned with both a fairy and wild garden planned. The school is working towards outdoor learning being seen by parents, pupils and staff as integral to learning and merely a context for learning development of inside learning (i.e P1 making clocks outside from stones etc and creating a human clock). Hopefully next year, teachers will be able to team teach (all of P2) without bubbles. KD stated that the enthusiasm of SJ has helped to motivate the children in all weather and thanked her very much. The school has a competition to name the outdoor classroom and will then hold an official opening event. JMcB felt that the wider parent community should know more about how amazing the outdoor learning programme is, as they won't all hear about it from their children. SJ's report and photographs will be shared with parents. KD added that the schools are trying to get a digital assistant from the Kickstart Programme (government initiative to get more 16-18 year olds into employment) in order to get us more visible on social media.

3. GREEN BEHAVIOUR/REDUCING WASTE

A parent had expressed that the school could be more proactive in green issues. KD stated that a large compost area has been built and photocopying/paper usage has also been drastically reduced (to around a 1/5) and the saving from this put towards the new log cabins. The school is also currently encouraging active methods of travel to school, using solar panels, operating a recycled uniform scheme, as well as all the waste from the kitchen going into biofuel. She feels that the school is doing more than people are perhaps aware of. We are also trying to combine things together, i.e. outdoor learning and looking at sustainability. There was also an Eco Club at school pre Covid if the parent wanted to get involved

4. FUNDRAISING/SOCIAL EVENTS

Apologies from EM, no update at the moment.

5. TRAFFIC/ROAD SAFETY

Park Smart

JB stated there was a lot of information and material that PF/school could work on in conjunction. Action on KD to dedicate some assemblies to traffic situations/cycling to school etc

Lollipop Person

A parent had expressed concern about several near misses on the Oldmeldrum Road between Osprey Heights/Village and wondered if there was a possibility of employing a lollipop person. CME stated that the council felt that the pedestrian crossing was adequate and it was sad it didn't seem to be working - this was probably putting people off letting pupils bike/scoot/walk. She also felt one issue was the difficulty employing someone for the role. It was also felt that parents need to take responsibility to teach their kids how to cross the road safely and there is only so much the school can help with this. CME has an informal meeting with the police very soon (8th June) and will bring this up

ahead of the meeting, perhaps the police could show their presence just for a few days. DS asked CME if there was anywhere he could direct complaints about parking near the school, blocking residents drives etc. Action on CME.

6. TREASURER REPORT

CL stated that the balance is sitting at £6409.52 with £100 still to come out. This is a healthy balance if anything is needed. Also the previous Parent Council Treasurer had been in touch but she's heard nothing since. Action on JB to chase up again. Some money will be needed for paint for the new log cabins and possibly for P7 leaver activities.

7. AOCB

Gym/Outdoor Learning

A parent had asked if there is something specific pupils should wear for PE. KD replied they can try to wear a shirt in their house's colour but really just comfortable, weather appropriate clothes. This also goes for outdoor learning days as activities won't be stopped if it is raining and we have had some children having to sit in wet clothes due to being dressed inappropriately.

School Uniform Supplier

KD stated that Pomprints do supply Craigdon but uniforms will cost more to buy from Craigdon than to buy direct from them.

Members

JB stated that the PF will be losing two great members: Jacqueline McBeath and Diane Brands who have both contributed a great deal over the years. JB thanked both members, they will be sorely missed. Also these are the two facebook administrators, so someone else will need to help her with this. Action on JB, and also to delete people from the Facebook group who are no longer parents of pupils at the school

School Vandalism

KD stated that there had been youths on the school roof via the pergolas, they had also been removing parts of cladding. Police were involved and we have managed to identify one person. She is far more concerned about them damaging themselves than the property. KD asked the PF to approach the council for our building/outdoor space to be used outside of school hours, this would also act as a security deterrent. Action on JB.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Meeting dates were decided for the following year: Thursday 9/9/21 (AGM), 11/11/21, 24/2/22 and 19/5/22 - all at 6.30pm.