

## **Kirkcudbright Academy Parent Council Meeting**

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

**Present:** Chair: Laura Moodie

Rector: Anthony Tuffery

Local Councillor: Dougie Campbell -Zoom

Parent Members: Kathryn King,

Parent Forum: Elinor Dorrian,

**Zoom:** Treasurer: Gill Durham, Clerk: Julia Archibald, Lesley Garbutt, Deborah Trotter, Claire Johnston, Lesley Shepperton, A.Currie, Gunta

**1. Welcome & Apologies** Co-opted Members Paul Tebay Teacher Rep. Shameen Syed Jacqueline White, Elizabeth Parsons

### **2. Approval of last Minutes and any matters arising**

Proposed: Jacqueline White Seconded Kathryn King

**Item 8** on the agenda was moved forward to allow Emma Irving to speak before travelling back to Dumfries in the snow.

#### Rights Respecting Schools Award

Emma Irving has been working with the Pupil Council and pupils on the Rights Respecting Schools Award. This is an award initiated by UNICEF using the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child UNCRC. The school has already achieved the Bronze level and is working towards the Silver level. There have been staff awareness sessions and three Rights Days for the pupils have already taken place. The next Rights Day is planned for June. Staff and organizations out with school are organizing activities. The Pupil Council is particularly concerned about the cost-of-living crisis and how the school could help with this. They have suggested more second-hand uniform days. Mrs Davidson already sells stationery items but pupils don't always have cash to pay for them.

- The Parent Council would be keen to help and a number of suggestions were made.
- Central stock of stationery in the school office for pupils.
- Lost property could become a clothing bank or could be sold as a fund raiser
- Gill suggested approaching supermarkets which are known to give unsold clothing to charity for donations of uniform.
- Clothing Amnesty for the donation of outgrown clothing and shoes to pass on.
- Linked to this Gill asked for space within the school to store items.

#### **ACTION Gill to speak with Emma and Pupil Council about finding funding.**

Emma Irving then spoke about raising awareness of UN Childrens' Rights policy in the wider community, especially parents. There is a monthly 'radio' show or podcast (for the next one the pupils have chosen to look at Article 38 – protection of children in war). Further suggestions such as approaching West Sound local radio and the local press were made. Mr Tuffery suggested having a parents being taught by pupils session to get awareness out into the local community. Mr Tuffery asked local councillor Dougie Campbell if elected members are briefed on UNCRC? Dougie responded that he is part of the group looking at this but they have not yet had a meeting. Dougie added that he has a Master's Degree in Human Rights Law so could be available to speak with pupils/parents.

### 3 Treasurer's Report

Account stands at £9240.48

£250 is earmarked to go to Achieve which is very popular with pupils.

February Draw winner Mike Holt in Borgue March Draw winner J. White

Parents Evening coming up - more Draw Sheets to be put out.

### 4. Chair's Report

Schools Estates Consultation

This consultation is dealing with the provision of education establishments within the county and excess capacity in the schools estate. While it is not yet a formal consultation on school closures, the regions demographics make that a medium-term prospect. Parental Engagement evenings are being held across the region during March. Laura has raised with the Council's parental engagement officer that these meetings are not parent friendly. They are being held in March when most schools are having Parent Evenings, one evening in one town in each "shire". Concerns were raised about potentially setting school against school. School closures could result in more busing of children to school outside their home area. A better solution could be moving teachers around schools or better use of technology and online teaching.

Deborah Trotter asked whether there was an online consultation process to which the answer was no. This could be seen as discriminatory to rural communities.

The next consultation meeting is 28<sup>th</sup> March. Deborah is able to attend this.

Dougie will feed back the PC concerns on the consultation process. He also cited the recent Galloway News report on centralization of local schools to the new Dalbeattie campus. Dougie is on the Education committee and was keen to emphasise that none of the three local councillors are in favour of a closure of Kirkcudbright Academy and they support the refurbishment and/or rebuilding of the Academy to bring it up to the standard of other schools across the region. He did point out that there was some uncertainty within the council following the recent new administration as regards meetings, processes etc. Laura hoped that a compelling case for the Academy would be made and Gill pointed out that the primary school feeder was at capacity and feeds into the Academy.

Applications of Maths Higher

There was a lot of discussion on the potential for an Applications of Maths Higher being made available to pupils. Deborah Trotter was particularly keen to promote this. This focusses on life skills Maths and would follow on from the National 5 already available. Higher Maths is available. Applications is sometimes seen as an option for those not capable of Higher Maths. Mr Tuffery pointed out that to run the course would require interest from 15-20 pupils. He also pointed out that Applications is not acceptable for University courses such as engineering. Thus far the emphasis has been on Higher Maths though this may be changing. At the moment Applications Higher is not on the options list.

**ACTION Mr Tuffery will look more closely at the potential to run the course if there seems to be a demand (.Newton Stewart are running the course but it would clash with KBT timetabling).**

Timing of Parent Evenings

Currently these run between 4:00pm -6pm which can be difficult timings for working parents. If they were later than this staff would have to have time to go home and come back again and could then be

in breach of employee conditions of service governing working hours. Mr Tuffery informed the meeting that a Progress in Learning report could be made available to parents unable to attend or if a specific subject was of concern, staff would be happy to discuss with a parent.

Gill felt that the Y4-Y6 Parent Evening scheduled for 28<sup>th</sup> March was quite late in the year to affect any change in a pupil's performance. Deborah suggested that it should be before the Prelims. Mr Tuffery pointed out that this fitted in with the reporting approximately after each third of the academic year.

**ACTION MrTuffery will look into the possibility of changing this timing, perhaps swapping over parents evening with School Reports timing.**

## **5. Head's Report**

Exams

Mr Tuffery commented that it was full steam ahead towards the exams. However, it has been a very disruptive run up to these with head teachers across the authority in a recent meeting commenting on high levels of pupil stress but also a lack of work ethic following Covid.

Gill asked why the timetable listing study help/extra tuition went out to parents just this week.

Mr Tuffery responded by saying that pupils have known about this for some time and it is widely advertised throughout the school, however there has been a lack of response on the part of pupils to follow up these extra tuition opportunities even if staff have made appointments to see pupils and have come in at weekends for this. Teachers are frustrated by this lack of response. Gill asked Mr Tuffery to pass on thanks to staff for offering extra help.

Mr Tuffery commented that there seems to be a Covid effect where some pupils are working too hard and others not working hard enough whereas pre Covid there was a much better balance. Deborah asked if there would be a Covid effect allowance on results? Mr Tuffery responded that no such allowance would be available through SQA and that head teachers had been told to remove any Covid references in pre-inspection reporting to school inspectors. He says as well as exam year groups being affected S1 and S2 were displaying noticeable gaps in socialization skills and behaviour as well as in achievement.

Dougie stated that the Education Committee had not met yet (change of administration) but he would certainly raise the issue of the Covid legacy with the Chair Richard Brodie and will give feedback to Laura.

F1 in Schools

Mr Henry took S2 competitors to Newcastle where they did very well winning a number of individual prizes. They will be able to compete again next year in the same group as they are all relatively young.

Two S4 pupils, Lewis and Nathaniel are through to National championships in Badminton Doubles.

## **6.Pupil Council**

No report. Working with Emma Irving on UNCRC

## **7. Rotary Report.**

Please see update sheet from Paul.

**8.** See start of meeting

## **9. AOB**

ASDAN accredited riding lessons.

These are available at 3R's Horse Rescue Centre Gatehouse of Fleet and are aimed at pupils who are struggling in school (mental health issues, school refusers, behavioural issues). They cost £30 per session per child. Sessions run 9-12pm and 1-4pm three days a week. Pick up and drop off at the school can be arranged for £20 per session.

#### School Buses

Deborah raised the issue of pupils being penalized if late for class due to their bus being late.

Mr Tuffery responded by saying that the school is made aware if the school buses are running late and pupils are not then penalized. The issue seems to have been due to service buses running late particularly in the run up to Christmas and the school is not informed about late running service buses. The service bus had to be used as there is not enough places on the school transport mini bus. This is an issue of lack of appropriate school transport buses. Dougie is aware of these issues in the area.

Mr Tuffery concluded by saying the Late marks on a report card were there to keep parents informed.

**ACTION Dougie to speak to school transport manager to resolve issue.**

#### **Date of next meeting:**

Wednesday 3rd May 6pm

AGM- the date will need to be changed as it clashes with Grease