

Minutes of Balerno High School Parent Council Meeting held on 26.05.14 at Kirknewton Primary School

#### Present

Tony Foster, Mike Humphries, Liz Carrie, Kirsty McEwan, Helen Purves, Jessica Bryce, Marion Milne, Lindsay Fullerton, Graeme Sives, Karen Murray, Karen Gilhooley, Hannah Fisher, Sarag MacArthur, Shivaji Rane

#### Apologies

Rehana Shanks, Sally Gartside, Sandy Waller, Dominic Hislop

The minutes were accepted and there were no matters arising.

#### School Update - Graeme Sives (GS) Headteacher

In April the school was shocked and saddened by the death of a pupil in S4. Psychological services have been working with Guidance team to support family, friends and pupils. A retiring collection amassed £400, an amount which will be matched by the school, and used for dyslexia provision in the school at the request of the family. GS to take forward. Jessica Bryce complimented 3 pupils performance at the funeral service. GS described them as heroic.

The new timetable started today and much time has been taken up by time tabling.

Lindsay Fullerton and GS attended the launch of Insight which is a new tool for analysing exam data and achievement.

#### Recruitment

Simon May appointed as Curriculum leader in Health

Marie Duguid Curriculum leader in Creative Technologies.

Lindsay Fullerton (LF)

has finally been appointed as Depute Headteacher. The PC offered their congratulations.

LFs appointment means there is now a position available as Curriculum leader in English, Media and Drama.

Much time has been spent at meetings regarding enhanced transition and CatS.

#### Budget statement

Statement just arrived. Headlines are: £50 000 efficiency saving (cut)

£11 000 reduction for Advanced Higher provision

Charge of £5 per pupil for consumables

Loss of 1 full time equivalent.

In total this equates to losses of £170 000.

#### BCC update- Marion Milne (MM)

RBS branch in Balerno is to close. Quite a loss to the community. GS remarked that it will impact school staff making deposits.

#### Agenda Items

##### CatS review

Tony Foster (TF) and Mike Humphries (MH) met David Bruce (DB). Meeting described as frustrating and DB evasive and dismissive of suggestions. TF had submitted an alternate model but only 2 Councillors acknowledged receipt.

DB did not agree with our view that almost no consultation had been undertaken. BHSPC and BCC have not been consulted. Headteachers have had plans outlined not a consultative process. BCC described paper presented to budget committee as insubstantial however it was passed.

DB stated that nothing would change but this is only true until April 2015. Effects on BHS will need to be closely monitored over following months.

Dates for PC meetings

08/09/14 - AGM

10/11/14

09/02/15

30/03/15

25/05/15

A question was raised asking if these dates clashed with any PTA meetings. This led to the PC being advised that the PTA has a membership crisis and may fold. Discussion followed about the possibility of merging the PTA with the PC. Idea of asking all parents for a contribution at the start of each year was raised.

There is a possibility of uniform holidays across all Lothian Council schools.

Volunteers are required to drive pupils back to Ratho and Kirknewton after extracurricular activities. All training and PVG costs will be covered. This facility would allow Ratho and Kirknewton pupils much easier access to extra curricular activities.

Enhanced transition

Details can be found at <http://deanparkschool.org.uk>

GS has spoken at Dean Park, Ratho and Kirknewton. Curriculum for Excellence desired outcomes cannot be met by existing transition. Subject specialist input will help with Nationals and Highers. Proposal is for Dean Park P7 to have 7-8 opportunities with subject specialists over 3 days. Ratho and Kirknewton P7s would have 6 opportunities in 1 day. Dean Park P7 will also do their active Wednesday on Mallyen Park to allow all P7s to meet at lunchtime.

Discussion ensued about whether this was fair to Ratho and Kirknewton. GS state that he is committed to ensuring parity. A survey of parents is underway at Dean Park, undertaken by the PC. MH suggested that Ratho and Kirknewton should also conduct surveys.

GS also advised that Headteachers had been told for some time not to take plans to parents. This has led to the short notice of the proposed changes.

Cluster events have been held for several years at BHS but getting subject specialists to primaries is difficult. This proposal would overcome that problem. The Primary Headteachers have been consulted over which subject areas they would like and have been offered what they wanted.

BHS has made the enhanced transition a priority and staff are keen.

Karen Gilhooley (KG) raised further issues at the close of the meeting which are documented here. KG advised GS that there is a statutory obligation for a risk assessment to be carried out and that as the Manager in charge he has responsibility for any problem that might arise.

GS explained that a risk assessment will be carried out by Council risk advisers and legal advisers before the proposal can be accepted. If the legal officers accept plan then he will accept responsibility.

S4 timetable

Question raised about extended learning.

Extended learning was 2 periods a week where pupils undertook some alternative subjects.

Feedback from pupils was that they didn't see the value of this. Therefore, this time will be used to support subjects that have assignments and assist pupils with research skills. Other pupils will focus on literacy and numeracy.

Emergency communication

GS sent letter home today re. bomb scare on 16/05/14. School was evacuated to emergency plan and police officers swept the building. Office staff were back in the building by 13.20 to answer phones.

Transport seemed to have been a problem for some pupils. 1 Kirknewton bus was late. The school had not been informed of this, neither had school transport department.

Some Ratho pupils didn't get on the bus. All pupils were told that the bus would not wait for them. Advice was to leave belongings and come back later.

#### Senior Pupil Perspective

TF had invited Hannah Fisher to talk about the Balerno experience. Hannah was ably assisted by Sarah MacArthur.

The girls started by listing the "pros".

Teachers have good relationships with pupils.

Many opportunities to get involved out with classroom.

Music, PE very proactive and the school show a great success.

Trips are a very positive experience, bonding groups and allowing networking with other schools here and abroad.

Pupil council much improved. Some members took part in teacher evaluation.

Mentoring, paired reading and buddying all positive experiences.

Enjoyed having a float in the Gala. GS suggested this could be a 6th year group.

S6 a good transition year, feels more independent.

Atmosphere in the school is really good, no sense of being judged or bullying.

Uniform very positive.

"Improvements" were then discussed

More notice of events required, preferably at start of year. This could help improve attendance.

More trips

Loss of China trip noted.

Advice to other pupils

The more you put in the more you get out of it.

TF thanked Hannah and Sarah and hoped they enjoy Leavers Ceremony and Prom.

TF thanked Helen Purves for her contribution to the PC.

Date of the next meeting is 8th September 2014 for AGM in Balerno High School.