

Stromness Academy Parent Council

Minutes of Meeting

Wednesday 30 May 2018



Present: Kate Carmichael (Chair) Jane Partridge (Headteacher), Morag Miller, Cllr Rachael King, Joe Horrocks, Karen Bevilacqua, Kirstie Moar, Steven Tulloch, Melanie Johansen, Jane Hunter (for Accelerated Reading System), Barbara Scollay (Minute Clerk)

Apologies: Carmel McElroy, Lorraine Sharpe, Helen Wailoo, James Wylie, Brenda Johnstone, Kate Shiner, Rob Crichton, Fiona Towrie, Jane Beckwith

Accelerated Reader System

Jane Hunter gave a presentation on this topic, accompanied by some papers to aid understanding of the outputs. Teachers were invited to a demonstration of the Accelerated Reader system at St Andrew's Primary and were impressed by the range and power of the data produced by the programme, and a trial began at SA in January 2018. Concerns had been raised previously about pupils' performance in exams containing long narratives; not only in English but across all subjects.

Every child has 20 minutes of dedicated reading time per day at SA, and studies demonstrate the benefits of reading, for all ages. Jane gave an explanation of the display in the foyer as the books read by pupils in each house, and points awarded after successful completion of an online quiz on the book read, with variation in points awarded depending on the length (number of words) of the book and number of correct answers in the quiz. The classroom displays were also explained and demonstrated that the pupils are measured against their own targets, not each other. Targets are set on the complexity of text and the length of the book, at levels 1 to 12. Only S1 pupils are participating currently.

Jane then explained the detail of the system and the various data it contributes, and how what pupils read affects their targets and the acceleration of their reading. Pupils are free to choose their own texts, but teachers do discuss the books with the pupils. Previously there were difficulties in measuring performance in reading but with this programme teachers can see what pupils are reading and how they are progressing and can assist in key academic success.

A variety of questions were asked, and comments made about the system. A short overview is available, and parents can look at the website www.arbookfind.co.uk to check suitable texts for their children.

Adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting: the minutes of 14 March 2018 were proposed by Kate Carmichael and seconded by Kirstie Moar.

Matters arising

- Internet Safety – on hold after cancellation; Kirstie will enquire if the person that did a session at the PSYV meeting could carry this out for SA PC.
- Support for Learning Assistant cuts – the issue has been resolved for this year, but the school has lost language assistants and one-fifth of the Council's Educational Psychology budget has been cut meaning one day per week of support in this area has been lost. Kate proposed writing to the Council to note the PC's concerns about these cuts.

Parent Council fundraising

The final total raised from the prize draw is to be confirmed but is believed to be around £1,200 after expenses. The money raised from the raffle at the spring concert is also to be confirmed. The next fundraising event will be the raffle at the This is their Moment concert.

An offer has been made by the parent of a pupil to make benches in their own time if the PC supply the materials. To make best use of the quad outdoor space it may be necessary to flatten the hillocks. The budget available will need to be prepared before work can be planned. Outdoor Education had intended to submit an application to Awards for All for equipment in the school's name

but it was uncertain whether this had been done – Jane to check as it they have not done this an application could be made for outdoor equipment/works.

Action 1: *Kate to ask Fiona to confirm the totals raised from the prize draw and spring concert.*

Action 2: *Jane P to check whether Awards for All application was submitted.*

Parent Council questionnaire results

S1, S2 and S5/6 results have been compiled and the results given to the school, and Kate gave a note of some points raised. The S4 results are still to be collated. Jane P reported that in relation to the S1 lunchtime arrangements, the official position has been clarified by the Council that the Headteacher cannot keep pupils in the school over lunchtime, and the school is not responsible for pupils when they are not on the premises over this period. Jane P is keen to provide skills and guidelines for behavior. A letter to explain the position has been sent to S1 parents, and PC members felt it would be useful to issue this letter to all parents.

Action 3: *Jane P to arrange for letter regarding position on lunchtimes to be issued to all parents*

Anti-bullying Policy follow-up

Officers have taken in all feedback from schools and settings and have amended the policy following this feedback. The cyberbullying area has been strengthened, and the order and sections have been moved around. The policy will be presented to the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee on 6 June, and if the committee agree, should be ratified at the General Meeting of the Council at which stage it will be formally adopted. Every school and club will then be tasked with updating their own policies by June 2019.

Morag will provide a template with appropriate legal sections and blank areas to be completed by schools and clubs in consultation with parents and staff. A leaflet is being prepared for release to parents after the summer break that summarises the Education Leisure and Housing Policy.

Updates on S1 lunchtime arrangements, S6 prefects, Stromness Shopping Week

The S1 lunchtime arrangements were explained earlier. S6 prefects are to provide higher profile leadership roles for senior pupils and will give practice in letters of application, interviews, hustings and selling themselves. In relation to Stromness Shopping Week, the school was successful in getting two male attendants as part of the Queen and attendants group, and a local business is sponsoring their kilts.

School update

A detailed update was provided prior to the meeting and is attached as an appendix to these minutes. The sudden loss of Stephen Crawford was noted, as this was the first meeting since his passing, and the PC members noted the gap he left at the school and wished to note their appreciation of him and pass condolences to his family.

Jane P explained the various vacancies and reasons behind them. Babette Hegarty is taking a two-term career break hence the advertisement for 2 temporary Acting Depute Headteachers. S3 pupils have undertaken exams as preparation for next year and this has gone very well. Monday 4 June will be the induction day for the new S4 to S6 pupils and there will be a focus on time management, study skills and advice on developing skills to sell themselves to employers and college admissions.

Morag is co-ordinating benchmarks on attendance and lateness in order to prepare a policy on this. There is also an issue with parental requests for holidays outwith holiday periods. The aim is to raise awareness and expectations. There are of course genuine reasons for some absences including long-term illness. The school aims to work with parents to resolve some absences and would encourage parents and pupils to come and discuss with the school any problems that have arisen, and to see if the school can assist at all.

The next bus contract will be considered shortly as the current one runs to 2020; members had a strong desire to get involved at an early stage on the discussions and considerations prior to tendering. The P7 transition day usually has a PC representative in attendance and there are three sessions for parents across the day – 11am, 2pm and 5.45pm. Kirstie was willing to attend the 11am session; volunteers for the other two will be sought.

Action 4: Once the survey data on school buses has been compiled Kate to write to the Council asking for a representative involved in school transportation to attend a future meeting of the PC.

Action 5: Kate to email round asking for volunteers for 2pm and 5.45pm sessions on P7 transition day.

Potential office bearers for next school year

Kate confirmed that she will be stepping down from the role of Chair but is willing to remain on the committee. She asked members to consider whether they would be willing to take on the role and noted that Jane B had expressed willingness to remain as Vice Chair. Thanks were paid to Kate for all her hard work over the years in the role.

Kate also advised that the minute clerk would be resigning and Barbara's last meeting for the PC would be the first one scheduled in the new school year. The PC will need to advertise this role on Facebook; it was noted that the role involves putting out a call for agenda items, preparing the agenda in collaboration with the Chair and Headteacher, circulating meeting paperwork and attending and minuting the meetings. The PC holds around 7 meetings per year and the annual remuneration is £200.

Action 6: Minute Clerk post to be advertised with start date around September.

PC Chair training session

A training session will run from 1pm to 2.45pm on 7 June as part of the Headteachers and Parent Council Chair's day, and Kate is willing to attend, but asked if any others would be interested. Karen is willing to attend if work commitments allow.

AOCB

SA PC Facebook page – Kate is going to make all other members of the PC administrators of the page so that they can post, share etc.

Action 7: Kate to add administrators to the PC Facebook page.

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is on Thursday 14 June at 7pm and includes the AGM.

Appendix 1 – School Update

Staffing

We are currently in the process of recruitment for the following posts:

- Principal Teacher of Support for Learning
- Acting Principal Teacher of Geography
- Teacher of Home Economics
- Teacher of Digital Technologies
- Teacher of Music (maternity cover)
- 2 x temporary part-time Acting Deputy Head (cover for 2 term career break) Graeme

Horne has been temporarily transferred to Stromness Academy as Acting Business Manager.

Aline Lidwell will be joining us in August as Teacher of Geography.

Learning

The Accelerated Reader programme will be presented to parents at this meeting.

S1 pupils have been working on written pieces to go into a book, to be published by Scholastic. The launch of this will be on Tuesday 5th June and all parents are invited.

S2 pupils have been on Hoy, experiencing outdoor activities and completing personal challenges to work towards their Dynamic Youth Award.

S3 pupils are taking exams in the 6 subjects they have chosen as options for S4. The main aims of this are to give pupils an experience of preparing for a block of examinations, and of working in a sustained manner in the examination. Teachers will use the information from these exams as a starting point for their S4 teaching.

At the end of the S3 examination period, S3 pupils will have first aid and water safety training from the Navigation School, and then spend a day working on their public speaking skills.

Senior Phase SQA examinations have gone smoothly thus far. Pupils return to school on Monday 4th June, on which day all pupils move up to the next school year. This day is an Induction Day for the new S4-6, covering skills they will need for studying at Senior Level.

One aim of the school is to prepare pupils for the world of work. This includes providing opportunities for pupils to gain the soft skills valued by employers alongside their academic qualifications, and to give pupils experiences of describing their skills in application processes. A greater number of leadership roles for S6 pupils are being introduced, and the application process for these roles will include writing a letter of application and group and individual interviews, as well as presentations by those wanting to be considered as House Captains.

Budget

We have recently received our budget allocation for the current financial year, which, in line with savings required across Orkney Islands Council, includes a reduction against what we spent in 2017-18. The number of teachers we employ is not affected, but we will need to make efforts to reduce spending on areas such as heating, lighting and photocopying. A fuller report on the budget will be given at the next Parent Council Meeting.

School Improvement

Staff worked together on the School Improvement Plan for 2018-19 during the In-Service Day on 25th May. The finalised plan will be presented to Parent Council at the June meeting, along with the finalised school vision, values, curriculum rationale and strapline, which the Parent Council contributed to in meetings earlier this year.

Attendance

We are very aware of the effect of poor school attendance on attainment and life chances, and are currently working with schools across Orkney to produce an attendance policy. There will be a greater focus on attendance in the coming year.

Upcoming Events

Weds 30 th May	Last S3 exam (am). (pm) S3 pupils doing DofE complete final preparations for their expedition; remainder of S3 Nav School/First Aid
Thurs 31 st May	S3 Dof E Expedition or SpeakEasy; Guitar Workshop; S2 reports published
Fri 1 st June	S3 Dof E Expedition; House Day from P2 onwards
Mon 4 th June	New timetable starts for BGE; Last SQA exams; Senior Phase Induction
Tues 5 th June	New timetable starts for Senior Phase; S1 "We are writers" book launch 7pm
Weds 6 th June	Head Teachers' Meeting
Thurs 7 th June	Head Teachers' & Parent Council Chairs' Meeting
Fri 8 th June	Celebration Elevenses
Tues 12 th -Thurs 14 th	P7 Transition
Thurs 14 th June	Parent Council AGM
Tues 19 th June	Sports Day
Weds 20 th June	Reserve Sports Day
Fri 22 nd June	Band Comp; This is their Moment Concert
Sat 23 rd June	Swiss Trip departs
Tues 26 th June	Jonsmass Foy (part of St Magnus Festival) Click here for details and tickets
Mon 2 nd July	Last day of Term; Swiss Trip returns

If you have any questions or feedback about items in this update, please bring them to the Parent Council Meeting on Wednesday 30th May, or if you are unable to attend, forward them to the Parent Council Chair, Kate Carmichael on katecarmichael@yahoo.com