

Parent Council Meeting

Tuesday 16 June 2020 (via Google meet)

Present: Lynn Milton (Chairperson), Kerrie Laird (Head Teacher), Jenny Neill (Vice Chair), Kath Jones (Treasurer), Suzanne Haviland (Secretary), Fiona MacKenzie (co-Treasurer), Abbi and Michael Thorpe, Emma Hill, Louise Power, Anna Lound, Marsha Broadley

Apologies: Julie MacLeod

1. **Minutes and meetings** - Parent Council (PC) approved the minutes from 16 January. There was no meeting on 20 April because of lockdown and the earliest opportunity for meaningful discussion was 16 June. This was the PC's first virtual meeting and it may provide a future model to bring in parents who cannot attend in person.
2. **Swimming bus** - Soirbheas has approved the PC's grant application of £1000 towards transportation costs for swimming. The award will be deferred until swimming can restart.
3. **Treasurer's update** – after payment for the calculators (see item below), the balance on the account is £2485.
4. **School leavers' gift** – the calculators (total £250) have arrived and Lynn will liaise with Kerrie on how to get them safely to students.
5. **Return to School** – Kerrie gave an extensive briefing on how GUPS is preparing for a safe return on 11 August. This covered Highland Council's evolving guidance on how schools will operate and what this will mean in practice for GUPS. It also covered the questions that we do not yet have answers for and the questionnaire sent to parents/carers. Kerrie then consulted with PC on particular challenges and decisions that remain to be resolved in the coming weeks.

A non-exhaustive list of highlights is below. Please read the pre-meeting note from Kerrie for further details. *This is a fast-changing situation and nothing is finalised.* Information is current as of 16 June.

- **Days of attendance.** There are 120 children enrolled for the 2020/21 school year. The plan is to split children by year into two groups. (Currently, no composite classes are planned). So, there will be a P1 Group A and B, P2 Group A and B and so forth. Group A will attend on Mondays and Tuesdays. Group B will attend on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Children will not be allowed to interact beyond their group. For **Gaelic** medium, we discussed the possibility of having students in more often given the challenge of home learning if there are no speakers in the family.
- **Group siblings on same days.** In dividing into groups, the first priority is to ensure that siblings attend on the same days. Currently, this looks possible for the vast majority of families. After siblings, GUPS will look next at the best groupings in terms of friendships and academic need. However, it will not be possible to further coordinate groupings with the High School or Nursery.

- **Making drop-off/pick-up safe.** With half the students attending on any given day, congestion will reduce. GUPS will also make the following changes: request parents not to gather; ask that only P1 parents accompany children through the gates; open both gates; and institute a twenty-minute window for drop-off and pick-up (e.g. 08:50 to 09:10 for a 09:00 start). Children will enter directly through the fire exits to their classroom; they will not mingle in the courtyard. Schools await guidance from Highland Council on bus and taxi drop-offs. Whether children walk home by themselves is at their parents' discretion (and beyond GUPS's remit).
- **Start and finish times.** School will start at 9:00 and GUPS is considering either a 14:00 or a 15:00 finish. Staggered times are difficult for families with more than one child, so in and out at the same time is preferred. Cleaners' access after school is also a consideration in deciding when to finish. The PC then discussed a particularly difficult trade-off between a 14:00 finish (with teachers then available to support online learning for an hour) versus a 15:00 finish (with the additional classroom hour).
- **Support for home-learning.** Teachers will continue to assign and support home-learning until children can be in school full time again. The precise timing and amount of support remains to be determined and depends on a few factors including the length of the school day (see above) and a 0.7 full-time staff vacancy. There are very few children without internet at home and GUPS is aware of these cases and working with the families. Closing gaps in numeracy and literacy among classes will be an early priority both in the classroom and at home.
- **Making the classroom safe.** The two-metre rule will be maintained and children will wash their hands regularly. Soft furnishing will be removed and children will not share items such as stationery. There will be sprays and wipes available and each classroom will have an enhanced schedule of cleaning.
- **School lunches.** There is no decision yet on what can be offered or whether children may bring packed lunches. GUPS await guidance from Highland Council.
- **Managing the playground.** There will be set areas for each class and the two-metre rule will be maintained. Staff will encourage games that allow for social distancing. GUPS is looking into erecting a safety fence to keep P1s separate from P2-P7 as they will be less able to maintain distance. PC offered to help fund the fence and Kerrie is looking into options.
- **Wrap-around care.** Breakfast club and GOOSC will not be available from 11 August. This is not a local decision – it draws on advice from Highland Council. PC hopes these provisions will commence as soon as it is safe to do so.
- **PEF.** Highland Council has frozen PEF funding for all schools. It is unclear when or if schools will be able to access their funds. Currently, this means that GUPS must implement change without budget. Discussion among Highland Council and schools is ongoing.

The PC will meet again if there are meaningful developments ahead of the term ending.