

Madras Parent Council
Wednesday 1st July 2020, 19:00
Minutes - VIRTUALLY VIA TEAMS

Attendees: Lynn Christie, Eleanor Whitby, Olav Darge, Avril McNeil, Angela Robertson, Vicky , Susan Simpson, Carry Anamos, Moffat, Kay Moriarty, Jonathan O’Riordan, Rachel Philps, Irene McMenamin, Cllr Tim Brett, Sandra Vall, Sharon Hedley, Cllr Brian Thomson, Cllr Jane Anne Liston, Barry Mill, Hugh Watson, Tasciana Kasciukovik, Bren Thomson, Diane Wilson, Katrin Metsis, Nicholas Johnson, Giuseppe Smirne, Jill Hayter, Carole Cameron, Fiona MacDonald, Alison Christie, Wendy Scotland, Fiona Kerr, Fiona Cowden, Sascha Hooker, Shona Kerr, Susan Buglass, Emily Michelson, Lorraine McKay, Colin and Shelly Paterson Fritha Saeed Talajooy, Kelly Kyle, Louise Calley, Lorna McClymont White, Vicky Thomson, Christine Allan, Scott Bryson, Lotte and Lars Olsen, Lorna Tasker, Jennifer Innes, Nicole Henderson, Mercedes Torres, Claire Horner, Sonia Willis, Julie Mulderry

Apologies: Diane McGhie, David McClure, Jaap Jacobs, Clare Campbell, Pauline Smith, Leanne Hulse

Welcome: An unusual style of online welcome around the three screens from chair Lynn Christie.

Minutes of meeting held on 5 March 2020 and any actions arising

- Budget Update: Budget cuts, proposed reductions in secondary school funding. Current response is to wait for any further comment from government.
- Brian Thomson Update: School build, construction started, August 2021/2022 is the new date for entry. Baam the builders are working 6 days a week in order to get the revised programme of the build of the school. Widening of the path and the two synthetic pitches are due to start soon.
- Cllr Thomson added that the Madras new campus has been given high priority to be finished.
- Minutes proposed by Suzie Simpson, seconded by Anna Moss with the above amendments.

SQA submissions for exam grades (short precis)

Discussion led by Angela & Olav in response: EIS said SQA decision that they could moderate pupil’s grades (overruling those submitted by teachers without any discussion or professional dialogue with the presenting centres, to fit with statistical modelling) is appalling and undermines the teachers’ professional judgement. In addition a school’s previous performance in exams will influence their decisions especially if a school’s results this year differ in shape and distribution. No chance to sit exams so there will be a flood of appeals. Priority in these appeals will be those needing results to go to University this year.

- Parent Question: Will school support those appeals? Yes

Angela & Olav Cont...All that being said it has been confirmed that exams will take place in 2021. Funding is hopefully going to be made available by the Government to support those who are doing certified courses, and schools if they have the finances may put on extra teaching during

holidays should any catch up be required (Maria Lloyd) The government is also releasing funding to bring in NQTs to assist with both a full return or a phased return should the virus surge again.

PEF funding may be used to help those that struggled with home schooling catch up, but at the moment we don't know to what level we as a school can achieve this. The teachers and staff are working incredibly hard to identify those most affected and how they can effectively help them achieve catch up.

The school has acknowledged that the online provision via its website is not the greatest. Steps are being taken to remedy this so many more resources will be available on line for both parents/ carers and pupils

Olav Darge, Madras staff have been tasked with giving grade estimates on work done and inferred attainment. Based on evidence. Then passed to Mr McClure, to ensure they were in a 3-year trend and offer consistency. Each subject has submitted their estimate. Results were forwarded to Lynn Porter and Maria Lloyd. SQA are in the process of moderating the estimates and considering the consistency of the 3-year trend. Results are due with students on 4th August 2020. Appeal system will be present, similar to the current system, if the estimate is greater than the result they got then an appeal can be conducted, evidence would also be presented in this instance. Appeal details will be given on the day of the exam results, this can be done electronically via Olav Darge. This will be communicated to students.

- Lynn Christie: Comment concern on the system of schools having to keep within the 3-year trend. If this is an exceptional year of high achievers that should be allowed.
- Parent Concern: At what stage would mitigating circumstances that a student may have had in the year be taken into consideration.
- Avril McNeil (New Head): Confirms that additional circumstances were taken into consideration during this process they would therefore not be readdressed during an appeal.

Rector / Acting Rector (short precis and introducing Avril)

Lynn Christie formally welcomed the new Acting Rector Avril McNeil. There was some controversy around the title of acting so Lynn clarified the situation:

- Notification of Mr McClure's formal retirement was received by the education service during the 'Lockdown' period. In order to consider the potential impacts of Covid related constraints on the recruitment period they consulted with a number of Local Authorities to seek their experiences around recruiting at this time. It was clear that there was a high risk that advertising on a national basis would not at this time attract a suitable number and/or quality of candidates.
- After careful consideration it was agreed with the Madras Cluster Education Manager, the Head of Education Services and the Parent Council Chair (Me) that the best of course of action was to put an Acting Post into the school.
- Following the recruitment process a temporary, Acting Rector for Madras College has been appointed.
- Mrs McNeill is an experienced, highly skilled and committed Fife leader who has been Rector of Glenrothes High School for the past six years.
- Mrs McNeill will start as Rector at Madras on 11th August, continuation of planning for the new school will be a clear priority.

- The post will be re-advertised in a year's time when hopefully as a permanent position with the start date of August 2021.

Update on Fife Council return to School Plan for August

This was initially going to be about recovery planning and continued blended / online learning but after John Swinney's announcement at the end of June, things changed.

All known information was sent via letters from the school and council. Nothing more is known until the government gives out more guidance which is expected around the end of July.

All secondary school pupils will be returning to school to school full time from Monday 17 August, but from Wednesday 12th August the first 3 days will see a staggered / part time start. Whilst this is still to be confirmed it is envisaged that for the Kilrymont campus it will be S1 on the Wednesday, S2 on the Thursday and S3 on the Friday. For SS this will be S4 Wednesday, S5 Thursday and S6 Friday.

These first 3 days will be used for health and wellbeing of the pupils which is being taken very seriously. What the youngsters have had to endure and adapt to over the last 100 days has been incredible and it will have had some lasting effects. These 3 days will also be used for teaching of any social distancing methods required and hygiene which will be very strict at all times and in all areas of the school.

The School is working on some small staffing issues as there are some teachers that may not be able to return initially due to shielding / health reasons and or pregnancy for example. They will mitigate the negative effects of this to the best of their ability and will advise us on any changes that may have to take place as a result.

It is expected that all pupils return to school. As the staff will be working full time there will be no time or opportunity for some pupils to remain at home and undertake blended learning,.

All of this is subject to change via any further information coming from the government. Apart from John Swiney's announcement little or no further guidance has been supplied by them. This is expected over the coming days and weeks and fully by the end of July. Fife Council are strictly following guidelines published by Public Health Scotland and to be honest we can't ask any more than that. As the situation clears and more guidance received they will of course up date us as will the school.

If we go back into full or partial lockdown then the school has a fully developed contingency plan. It will be implemented over 4 stages with the 4th stage being a full return to school. Stage 3 would be 50% return and it is hoped that that would happen within a matter of weeks rather than months. To that point it would be a mix of time in school and remote or blended learning.

Stage 1 would see pupils in 1 day per week in their year groups and this stage is only expected to last a couple of weeks. Stage 2 would see kids in school (for 2 days per week). Staying in the same classroom with teachers moving between classes and stage 3 would be 50% return 1 week in 1 week off and that would be done alphabetically to aid families.

For both scenarios – back full time or back part time transport for our pupils remains the biggest issue as the vast majority of our pupils (70+%) are bused in.

Unless the government lifts the social distancing rules currently in place on public transport then single deckers can only take 11 pupils and double deckers 20. This equates to around 15% capacity to bring our pupils to school. The issue with School buses in life is that we do not have closed contracts with companies (ie the buses are not just for school pupils). We have public contracts with public buses (as an aside this explains why there is no need for seatbelts on buses, if we had closed contracts they would be compulsory). Any hoo, unless the government lift these social distancing restrictions this is the position that we are in and the pupils will be required to wear face coverings at all times when on the buses.

If the restrictions are lifted then we are fully good to go and the kids will all be back to normal by the 17th. If they are not then the council is looking at various options.

The main request likely to come from them will be for parents to drive the kids in. This in itself causes congestion and safety issues around the schools.

Those that can walk or cycle really will be expected to do that but this only applies to around 30% of our pupils.

It won't be possible to double up on taxis either as ideally the passenger needs to sit behind and away from the driver. This will cause issues for those children who are accompanied in the taxi to school. This may not be allowed under current guidelines. Also securing a taxi for every pupil who travels would be nigh on impossible and very very expensive. The council is considering replacing taxi contracts with travel expenses to be given to parent who can stop sending children in by taxi and can drive them instead.

Another issue for our pupils given the location and the split nature of our sites is lunch times and break times.

Everyone will be encouraged to bring in a packed lunch. 600 pupils queueing to get into their normal food shops with the current social distancing requirements means that first and foremost it is not safe for them or for the neighbours and businesses around both sites. It may also mean that they miss lessons by the time they get back to school.

We cannot enforce any requests to keep them on school property but we will really be encouraging them to do just that – making use of the outside space at both sites.

Under current restrictions volunteers who help out at the schools will not initially be allowed to do so. This tally's with the councils new rules that parents/carers can for the near future not just pop into any school. They will need to make an appointment. The council are looking at ways to mitigate the effect of this on much needed volunteers for those pupils with additional needs, they will advise as soon as they can, but it is hoped they will be allowed into the schools after just a couple of weeks, a month at the outside.

PE will take place outdoors only and possibly some lessons will also, everything possible to reduce any chances of infection.

Neither school will be available for community use as this falls under the governments advice on sports and leisure centres and currently they are not allowed to open.

All the guidance that we are following is from Public Health. The council takes its steer from the government and we as a school take it from the council.

Full guidance from the government is expected no later than the end of July and then all risk assessments and final arrangements should be in place for the 4th August after which we, as parents and carers, should receive full and final info from the council and school

The Chair thanked Olav, Angela and Hugh in particular for all the planning they have done especially given Dave's absence, as well as Rona Weir and Maria Lloyd who have answered all questions with extreme speed and as fully as the information they have allows.

Further conversation regarding the return to school plan

Avril McNeil: 9th July & 30th July for announcements regarding reopening of school. Physical distancing has not been clear regards to pupil to teacher.

- Parent Question: Additional bike racks? No unfortunately
- Parent Question: Face coverings? Not required at moment
- Angela Robertson: Assurance that the team want to make sure that all pupils are working through a normal timetable as much as possible.
- Parent Question: Taxi v parent expenses. Response: This is all pending physical distancing rules on school buses.
- Parent Question: What is happening on the first 3 days of school? Response: Return plan, Kilrymont, Wednesday 12th August – S1's, Thursday 13th August - S2's, Friday 14th August S3's. South Street – Thursday 13th S4, Friday 14th S5 & S6
- Parent Question: Are there any plans to communicate with pupils about their experiences of online learning? Olav Darge: Some of the ideas around online learning, through the timetable (face to face, Teams) was not allowed. No teachers have had training on this. Pupils and parents will likely be contacted for feedback at some point so learning can be done.
- Parent Question: Will there be any information regarding the numbers of pupils that have not been able to work online for various reasons. Angela Robertson: Some pupils have been unable to learn online, part due to technology, part due to experience. Engagement looks different in all families, not one answer that works for all. A form of triage to move things forward.
- Parent Question: It would be good to see use of TEAMS maintained in normality as it helps address homework issues, social anxiety, attendance issue. When time and plans settle would school review this in terms of development? Thanks to staff who have worked very hard on it. Response: Absolutely, this is something that is already being considered and will be discussed amongst the teaching staff.
- Parent Comment: Please record a huge thanks to all teaching and support staff for their hard work above and beyond the call of duty.
- Parent Question: Will school canteen be open? Response: Yes

Hamish Foundation offer of equipment / help for home schooling

Lynn Christie: Hamish Foundation has approached us to see what they can do to support us – to be fair this was before the full return to school was known, so I will need to go back to them now. However some pupils may not be returning straight away for health reasons so I shall go back to them about this. It may also be a wise idea to let them help us be prepared in case we have to go

back into lockdown. If that happens then by our calculations we would benefit from 30-40 laptops so I shall go back to them about helping with this. WiFi access can be provided via Fife Council – and for those of you that missed this Olav Angela would you be able to resend this information please? Debbie McCallum from the Foundation is with us tonight as she is also a parent – would you like to add anything Debbie?

- Parent Question: Are recorded lesson videos permitted for distance learning? Response: Yes. pre-recorded videos are allowed and Fife Council is looking at agreeing live videos.
- Parent Question: Bring your own device, laptop etc Response: The authority is looking at Bring Your Own Device guidance

PC Constitution

Rachel Philps: Constitution being updated at the moment. It has not been circulated as yet, input from the new head teacher has been requested by the group. Comments requested on how you would like to be engaged as parents.

Virtual AGM

2nd September AGM at 7pm followed by PC meeting at 7.30/7.45pm

AOB

To mark Dave's retirement, would it be appropriate to use £200 from Parent Council fund to show our appreciation. Some members of the PC were against this so a majority view from the PC will be taken by email before any funds withdrawn.

Post meeting note: majority did not want this so individuals were invited to make a donation towards the gift,

Date of next meetings

2 September 2020 at 7.40pm following AGM

28 October 2020, 7pm

13 January 2021, 7pm

3 March 2021, 7pm

19 May 2021, 7pm

These are only provisional as the school calendar is still in a state of flux and these have not been run past the Avril yet.

The Chair thanked everyone for their time and patience. Virtual meetings are not the easiest and the subject matter tonight has been important.