

Dingwall Academy Parent Council Meeting 16th June 2014

1. Apologies

Alistair McKinnon; Carol Seaton; Alison Macleod

2. Present

Helen Cameron; Nigel Greenwood; Angela Maclean; Mike Evans; Stephen Mackenzie; Dawn Morgan; Samantha Blyth; Sandra Rea ; Laura Ross; Lindsay Ramsay; Anita Munro; Alan Radin; Karen Cormack; Graham Mackenzie; Linda Watson.

3. Approval of minutes of 28th April

Changes to Fijitsu - the price of contract has not been lowered but will remain the same.
Minutes Approved by Sandra Rae and seconded Sam Blyth.

4. Minibuses

The Academy's new minibus has arrived. It has 14 seats and is 'ice white' in colour. Funds of the Parent Council will be **used for the lease payments**. Photo opportunity to be arranged with PC members and PE staff.

5. Seemis training progress

Training has taken place. Dingwall Academy hosted Invergorden, Charleston and Alness for training. It was decided school would go live with Seemis during second week of training; theory being there would still be Seemis trainers in the school supporting staff while they learned on the job! Registration seems to be going well.

Karen informed PC that the system can cover Monitoring and tracking, however, it allows for no flexibility. KC is disappointed as she had anticipated using the views of PC to develop a more inclusive reporting system.

6. Feedback from meeting with Bill Alexander.

Bill Alexander offered to come into school for an informal visit. He was told that the parent council had prepared a letter. Topics discussed included – demands on staffing, budget cuts, SQA and Fijitsu. He listened, however says finance won't be changed greatly. It was agreed that HC would still send the letter with the concerns of the PC.

KC – down in terms of supply budget. The new curriculum has more internal assessments therefore an increase in demand for staffing. There have been days where not all classes can be allocated a teacher. Children needed to combine classes and work together in a social area, perhaps not on the timetabled subject. KC agreed this is not ideal.

It was brought to the Parent Councils attention; there is a small minority of parents who believe their kids are in the wrong classes because of lack of teachers. Concerns this prevalent negative attitude towards the school could damage Dingwalls reputation.

There are concerns that the current curriculum may potentially be failing due to lack of staffing. Pupils are being put in classes of a level that isn't right for them. There are National 5/Higher composite classes and tri-composite classes. Class sizes are generally increasing and have an average of 30/33 pupils. Ideally the school would prefer smaller, separated classes of National 4 and 5. Current staffing is not allowing for this.

The English department has put together a sheet on all the bands and sets. However parents must appreciate that nothing is set in stone. KC will invite Maths and English Department to speak to the parent council regarding the matter of staffing and the band system.

Graham Mackenzie informed parent council at this stage that Highland Council are committed to a 5 Million cut in the education budget for the forthcoming financial year. PC was shocked by this news, as the implications of such a dramatic cut were considerable.

7. Charging senior pupils a deposit for books

Books not being returned to school by seniors before they leave school for summer (or permanently) has always been an issue. Leaver's forms should not be signed until the pupil has returned their books, however there are many 6th year pupils that leave without completing the form. Because of financial constraints we need to consider charging a deposit. A precedent is set at Fortrose Academy, where pupils must pay a deposit at the beginning of the year which is then returned to them when books are returned.

The concern was raised that a pupil's book may be damaged by a bully/peer, however KC states this is generally not an issue with senior pupils. Sandra Rae suggested that a letter could be sent out to parents explaining 5 Million cut in education fund, may have more understanding about the requirement for a deposit.

It is suggested a one-off charge for all the pupils - possibly around £15? It was agreed fifth and sixth year pupils only, as they have chosen to remain in school.

Sam Blyth & HC believes the idea of a book deposit should be floated on a questionnaire to parents of said pupils.

Mike Evans raised the question, whether there is a way of assessing which year groups are most responsible for unreturned books? Sandra Rae proposed the idea of a reward system as opposed to deposits.

PC made the decision that KC to speak to Fortrose Academy and find out more about how they handle their book deposit system and feed this back at next PC meeting.

8. Pupils printing at home

Printing costs have increased in art department. This is due to the new assessment process. Most pupils now print in school instead of home. The Art department would like feedback from PC on introducing a small £5 fee?

Mike Evans makes the point that this may be due to the fact that printers at home are becoming less necessary because people tend to communicate via email/phone, Helen Cameron suggests that the fact school printers provide much better quality than home printers may be part of the decision.

Although the vast majority of the Parent Council agrees that they wouldn't have a problem paying the deposit, there are concerns that the PC is not a full representation of all parents of Dingwall Academy pupils. It was agreed we need to seek parent's views via the questionnaire. Decision to be made at a future

9. PE notes – advice for parents

The head of the PE department Mr. Morris would like parental input in a letter he will be sending out to parents regarding the level of students wishing to be excused PE lessons. Lindsay Ramsay and Sandra Rae have volunteered.

10. Sports day

Sports day will take place on Friday 27th June. Sam, Stephen & Helen have volunteered to help out on the day. The parent council spent £96.60 on produce for last year. It was decided this year that the school would purchase the produce required.

11. Finances

Balance of £679.94 in cheque account – Balance of £1178.02 in deposit account.

Since last meeting expenses have included – donation to the drama group, Book tokens for Prize giving ceremony, catering & flowers for Prize giving (done in house to greatly reduce costs this year) Sam Blyth was reimbursed for postage regarding the partnership evening in May.

Books will be submitted for Auditing during the summer period.

AOCB

- Fijistu - Discussion continued regarding costs involved. Positive move ahead **but** **reliant on Highland Council approving the finance package in the Autumn. School to**

be fitted with Wi Fi during next session, schools are now also able to purchase Apple Products. However guest access is still not available and portable devices will have limited use until this function is available. Debate continues regarding the pricing structure of Fijitsu. Printing costs have escalated this year, especially with additional course work for National 4/5's. It is anticipated that if Fijitsu are given the contract on a permanent basis, costs will be significantly reduced.

- Parent questionnaire was issued to all first year parents. Karen was delighted to report a huge increase in parent questionnaires being returned. The questionnaires had been issued with the report cards and this method deemed successful. Therefore the plan next term is to continue with this method. Thanks to parent council who came up with this proposal.
- Karen discussed government guidelines that study leave should be reduced/abolished, there were major concerns and some difficulties this year with pupils returning to school on completion of national 5 examinations at different times. It is essential for teacher that they have this period of time to prepare for the next educational year.
- Sandra Rae apologised that her husband was unable to make the partnership evening, he is however, happy to attend future planned events.

Next meeting will be the AGM on the 15th of September 2014, 6.30pm.