

# DINGWALL ACADEMY PARENT/CARER COUNCIL

Committee Meeting – Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> August 2024, 7pm

**Present:** Karen O’Hanlon (KOH), Karen Cormack (KC), John MacDonald, Gill Macpherson, Paul Macpherson, Kerry Webb, Samantha Blyth, Nicola Wojtunik, Cllr Graham Mackenzie, David Genney, Derek McGregor, Alistair Rennie

1. **Apologies:** Cllr Angela Maclean, Cllr Margaret Paterson, Cllr Sean Kennedy, Hillary Cameron, John Tompkins

2. **Previous Minutes:** Approved by Samantha Blyth, and seconded by John MacDonald

3. **Matters arising:**

- Councillors not attending meetings – Sam actioned
- KC tabled a discussion with the Head Teacher group around vulnerable pupils accessing a hot meal on snow days. She will chase up their response.
- Key priorities around employability – KC was waiting until the DYW post was filled. This post is now filled by Sandy Mackenzie. He is very keen to come along and talk to Parent Council.
- ‘Employability’ matches one of the windfarm community funds key priorities so PC can apply for a £3000 grant. **ACTION: Karen OH**
- A date is still to be confirmed for a meeting between pupils/parents and canteen staff. **ACTION: Karen C**
- The first phase of the sensory garden is finished. Mears have engaged with this.
- The Marie Curie garden has also been ‘handed over’ to the school.
- The Community council is keen to engage with pupils on a 2026 Anniversary Tartan. Primary pupils will be involved in the design of the tartan and secondary pupils may be involved with the marketing and production side. A brief is needed for this group. **ACTION: Karen C and Sam**
- Councillor Graham Mackenzie spoke about the funds available to the local authority as part of the ‘Highlands Initiative’ programme. This programme will involve millions of pounds being spent on refurbishments and new builds. Dingwall primary school and St. Clement’s school are high on the list of priorities, following a Highland region survey.

4. **Head Teacher’s report**

- Pupils and teachers have settled back well. There is a healthy roll of around 1,100.
- S1 pupils have settled well with the help of Mrs Harrison and Mrs McGowan.
- The first week of transition saw prefects out on the floor helping direct pupils around the school.
- S2 is full
- S5,S6 still room in some classes
- There were three retirements in June. All posts have been filled, in business computing, science and music.
- One staff vacancy in maths - hopeful that this post will be filled within the week.

- Two probationers working in the school – one in P.E and one in science.
- The DYW coordinator post has been filled by Sandy Mackenzie. He will link the school in with businesses, organise work experience opportunities, and bring businesses into the school to establish links with young people.
- MCR initiative – a coordinator brings in mentors to work with young people.
- Exam results dipped a little from last year, much of Highland has returned to pre-pandemic result levels. This year, full courses were returned to the curriculum/examinations.
- Highland Council remains focused on raising attainment across the region.
- The school has existing rules around mobile phones and Kare C doesn't foresee any changes to these. Mobile phones are not allowed in class, unless part of the lesson, nor in the corridors.
- There is a big consultation on catchment areas for the Gaelic medium; minimal impact expected for Dingwall.

## **5. Treasurer's report**

- Club, Charity and Trust account - £6,619.58
- Business Instant Access account - £80.24
- There continue to be difficulties in communicating with our bank, Lloyds TSB, since the closure of the Dingwall branch. This is now affecting how we operate, looking into closing the accounts and moving to Bank of Scotland. Feedback from Christmas Fair Stallholders last year showed that stallholders preferred immediate confirmation of their payments. In response we have set up a business PayPal account and will be trialing this year, although will still accept payments by BACS (and cash). As a consequence, there will be a small increase in costs - £16 for businesses and £8 for charities. Thanks to Sam for her ongoing support.

## **6. Chair's report**

- The above funds will support employability initiatives for students, and the new drama club with the costs of hosting a production. Additionally, Karen took over the sensory garden project and has secured grants (£725), donations, and community partnerships (WoodBlocX and Mears). With the first raised bed, donated by WoodBlocX, now ready for installation by Mears, work on the garden has officially begun.

## **7. AOCB**

- New S1 parents were impressed with how the school handled the P7 transition.
- We talked about how overwhelming lunch time can be for new S1 pupils – there's no 'play' and a huge canteen to navigate. Karen C advised that, senior sports leaders will be organising lunch time activities for S1.
- S1 parents talked about managing the new expectations of parents and pupils. KC mentioned the weekly Friday email and Parents' evenings as ways of communicating with staff, and assured parents that they shouldn't hesitate to contact the school if they have questions/concerns.

- Autism provision – looking at enhancing the existing provision. Cllr Graham Mackenzie to discuss future provision with Karen C and PC representative. **ACTION: Karen C**
- Sensory garden – planter delivered – KC and KO to confirm a date for installation. **ACTION: Karen OH**
- Highland Council provides membership to ‘Connect’ – a resource for Parent Councils – lots of information and advice, includes PC insurance. Karen OH to attend an information session on 4<sup>th</sup> September.
- A drama club, run by Ms Rowe, is up and running. She hopes to put together a school production. Karen C to repost information on the FB page. PC has already offered support towards the costs of staging a performance. **ACTION: Karen C**
- The new ‘Employability’ group, made up of S5 pupils, will be trained as trishaw pilots this term. This group will also help in the café. The group will be a useful target group for the Christmas Fair. **ACTION: Karen OH**
- KC to ask the senior leadership team for ideas for the Christmas Fair. **ACTION: Karen C**
- We will be selling raffle tickets in Tesco, ahead of the Fair, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November. Volunteers required. **ACTION: all PC**
- A separate meeting will be arranged to discuss the Christmas Fair and individual responsibilities. **ACTION: Karen OH**

8. **Date of the next meeting**

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November, 7pm (Teams)