

Dingwall Academy Parent Council

Minutes

29 November 2021

Present:

Sam Blyth - Chair	Karen Cormack	Karen O'Hanlon	Emma
Hilary Cameron	Gill Macpherson	John Tompkins	Cllr Angela Maclean
Paul Macpherson	Megan Milton	Kerry Webb	Sarah McLennan (Item 8)

Apologies: none

1. Welcome and apologies
2. Minutes from previous meeting: all in agreement; approved and seconded by Hilary and John
3. Matters Arising –
 - Confirmation that the Parent Council Facebook page has now been closed
 - Chocolate bars were provided for the well-being walk at the end of last term
 - Duke of Edinburgh Award update provided to Hilary
4. Head Teacher's Report
 - **HMI sign-off** – full sign-off has now been received, after a full presentation from the Head teacher. Sign-off was delayed significantly because of to delays with the 'year-on report' due to COVID-19. A letter to parents from HMI is expected within the coming weeks.
 - **COVID-19 update** – numbers of positive cases have fallen from a high 3 weeks ago and we can expect numbers to rise and fall of the coming weeks and months. Positive cases are phoned in by the school and 'warn & inform letters' sent out to parents/carers. To date, there have been no cases where transmission occurred in school. The school has been close to closing on a small number of occasions due to staff shortages. Staff absences are covered through a mix of internal and external resource. If internal resource is exhausted then this may lead to the school closing to pupils in S1 and S2 first. Teaching seniors pupils will be prioritised.
 - **Christmas socials** and other big events are not possible – rules for schools are different to those for wider society. However, are planning a whole school celebration on the last day of term with a cèilidh in the car park. Plan to finish early, have a BBQ, music, outdoor stage and other food stalls. KC is seeking ideas from the Parent Council. **ACTION: any suggestions to KC please.**
 - **Online Contact evenings** –2 sessions have been held. There have been a few technical problems but otherwise going reasonably well. Unfortunately, no sign of in-person contact evenings resuming anytime soon.
 - **Staffing** – all full-time posts have been filled but PEF 0.6 Maths and 0.6 English vacancies are proving challenging to fill. Aware of robust discussions in Council re staffing allocation across the Highlands. Hope for additional teaching posts in the New Year, but Highlands will remain behind the rest of Scotland, as additional posts are across the whole of Scotland.
5. Treasurer's Report - No change from previous meeting.
6. Mobiles phones & social media are having a detrimental impact on pupils and staff. It's becoming apparent that for some youngsters that this activity/behaviour is becoming a norm. School is taking action – liaison with the police; assembly on 30/11/21, where victims (staff & pupil) of this abuse will share their experiences; and still running 'wellbeing check-ins'. The latter have been amended to include this type of activity/behaviour. Clearly a requirement for the school to engage more with parents, families and youngsters to challenge and tackle this. Also looking to deliver the 'Mentoring & Violence Prevention Programme' in school. This intense and peer led programme is based on gender based violence; training youngsters not to be passive bystanders. Staff are currently being trained up. Staff will then train senior pupils. This will take some time, but has the potential to be transformational.

Allegations of bullying were made by one of the parents in attendance and Karen C offered to call her the following day. Karen C assured everyone in attendance that bullying is taken seriously by the school.

7. Litter – One meeting took place last term between concerned members of the community and senior pupils. A number of actions were discussed, which senior pupils agreed to pursue, including follow-ups with shop-owners. Paull has heard back from the Council, in its opinion, there is not a shortage of bins. However, the Council has offered to work with the school on a litter project once COVID has settled again. ACTION: Karen C to schedule a follow-up meeting.
8. **Sarah McLenan, Developing the Young Workforce** Inverness & Central Highland, school coordinator, joined the meeting to update the PC on her role; bringing prospective employers into the school and making links with local employers. So far, very encouraged by the amount of engagement from local businesses.
9. AOCB
 - School Improvement/Recovery Plan Summary was circulated with agenda
 - COVID bus will be at Dingwall Academy (Leisure Centre car park) on 8th and 9th December offering vaccines to pupils with signed consent forms. Plan to start with senior pupils.
 - Parent Council acknowledged that this continues to be a really difficult time for the school and its staff, and Sam asked Karen C to pass the Parent Council's thanks onto all the staff.
10. Date of next meeting : 7th Feb 2022