

Dingwall Academy Parent Council
Minutes of Meeting on
17 September 2012 at 7.00pm

Present: H Thornton (Chairman), P Evennett, K Cormack (Rector), N Greenwood, L Ross, (Treasurer), A Munro, M Evans, H Lynch, A MacLeod, G Kerr, L Watson (Secretary), G MacKenzie (Councillor), D Morgan, S Blyth

Apologies: S Rae, A MacLean (Councillor), M Patterson (Councillor), MacKinnon (Councillor)

Minutes of last meeting held on 15 May 2012 were accepted.

Matters arising:

SB asked about the Railway crossing concerns.

KC responded saying that tannoys were made to the school and there were safety awareness meetings which has helped make the situation better.

GM Commented on plans for the level crossings. It is likely that the crossings at Mill Street and adjacent to the Academy will be fitted with safety barriers. There are on-going discussions about the possibility of closing the crossing on Craig Road. This would not happen without full Public consultation. The Parent Council may wish to consider the impact of this proposal especially in light of the proposed new Kinnairdie link road.

KC said there has been no more complaints about road safety complaints. There will be road safety talks with all of S1 and S6 and there was an accident with a boy getting off a bus. The boy has made a full recovery thankfully.

GM took up the issue of bus safety with the Council but the response is that for anything to be done a traffic order is needed.

NG asked about any plans for traffic calming in Muir-of-Ord like what has happened in Conon Bridge and Maryburgh.

SB also asked about any safety measures when the work on the Kinnardie bypass starts.

GM responded no.

SB also asked if the problem with the Girl's sanitary bins had been fixed.

KC responded saying that there were enough bins and they have been re-organised so there is no longer an issue.

SB asked about the maintenance of the minibuses.

KC confirmed that all 3 are being maintained and the 3 of them were about to get serviced.

SB also asked what had happened about the S1 homework concern.

KC said that a group has been put together and they will be making an audit of the amount the children are receiving, hopefully in the current session.

School news:

The school website was a victim of a Trojan horse and therefore closed. KC said they have a new host and parts of the website are back up. She is hopeful that the rest will be up by the end of the week.

There are quite a few long term staff absences but all have been filled albeit temporarily. D Simpson will not be back till Easter. There is an empty PT teacher position but this is going to be filled by Kirstie Watson after the October holidays.

The results were very positive. The amount of people getting Highers increased from 14-17% with 7 pupils getting 5As. KC expected a dip in the S4 results but the dip wasn't as large as she thought it would be which is good.

KC continued on to say that the S1s have settled in well and the PT department are running a 'Chance to chat' problem for anyone in the school to go for an informal chat about school with them. They are letting the children take their parents on a tour of the school. Pupils in Wyvis and Tulloch have had their sessions, Fairburn, Brahan and Novar are to follow soon. The S1s have been staying in at lunchtimes and the feedback is positive. This will continue until October and they will ease them into allowing them to leave the grounds by their Houses. The reason for this is to allow the children to experience the school canteen and make an informed choice about going out instead.

KC also mentioned the new S6 pupils. They have introduced a committee scheme for the prefects which has turned out fabulous. The Teenage Cancer Trust day was completely organised by the prefects and it ran perfectly.

KC said that on the 28th and 29th of September there will be a QI visit to observe teachers and speak to parents and pupils.

On the topic of CfE KC commented that the S3s delivering the National 3+4+5 will have priority in 2014. There is lots of tension at the moment but the staff are working on it. Some staff cannot see a huge difference in the lesson but others can.

KC also said that the SSTA union are having talks but they aren't acting yet and there is not disruption.

KC mentioned that there are lots of trips happening. A few to Germany and France for Language pupils and Autswick and Culloden for History pupils. There is an Art bus for Geology pupils and some are involved in the Dingwall Ting Project. There have also been visits from members of the Masai tribe. 2 S1s also spoke at a Viking conference at Ross County.

With an update on the pitches KC said that they are playable but there are still maintenance problems. People are also starting to notice the weeds in the paving around the school. KC is talking to Gavin Bowie about it but Highland Landscape recently lost the contract. SB said that they need to get a copy of the original contract to see if the Council is lapsing or if it's the Company lapsing in the maintenance. ME suggested that the new contract should fit around the school calendar year to make more sense.

KC expressed frustrations over the Fijitsu contract; they aren't able to access the tech school wanted.

KC updated the PC on the bus contract saying that it has changed from Spa/Stagecoach to D&E. They are running what has to be run but spaces are tight especially the Conon/Maryburgh buses. The Strathpeffer bus was late for a few weeks but that has been fixed. The problem about taking large instruments on has also been rectified.

ME asked about a problem of kids being kicked off buses to and from the school.

KC said that the drivers are not being realistic, they shouldn't be asking kids to get off. She said she wants to have a meeting with the drivers to talk about their behaviour and she is aware that the driver turnover rate is high.

AM asked about the ratio of school lockers to pupils as the S1s seem to have a lot to carry in their bags for the whole day.

KC responded that it is roughly 2:1. There is now a space issue though.

AM asked if there were plans to increase. To which KC answered they are looking but there isn't really space to put more lockers.

Sponsored Walk/BBQ:

KC announced that the funds to be raised by the walk will go to the Heart Start Foundation and the maintenance of the Minibuses. This will give the school ampn fibulators

To place in main areas around the school. The pupils in the Sports Leader course had a talk today about the Heart Start Foundation which will be rolling out to the rest of S6.

She also said that in the past the PC have helped by giving out water, fruit bars and fruit around the walk.

HT, AMu and AMc said they are willing to help all day.

KC mentioned that the walk has been shortened by Brahan and the children will be walking round the route backwards from previous years.

KC also announced that there will no longer be a BBQ afterwards as the walk will be taking place on a Friday and that makes a problem for transport.

PE asked to talk to the kids about what snacks they will want.

School Show:

KC said that on the 4 October the History teacher Simon Lyall and his drama group D.A.D.S will be having a public show called A Complete History of the World. It will be in the evening and everything is on track at the moment. KC is hoping that it will attract more of the general public and it is open to the whole school.

Financial Update:

Nothing has occurred yet.

Any Other Business:

ME asked about the children having time after P.E to go for a shower. KC responded saying that she will talk to the department but there is a timing issue for the lesson, it would cut even more time out of the limited time the children have for P.E.

GK suggested double periods for P.E and KC said will see what she can do but is a timetabling issue.

AM asked about the problem of getting from Swimming back to class for the next period and that some children panic as some teachers don't like it.

KC said that most teachers are fine with it but if there are problems to tell her and she will deal with it.

Date and Time of Next Meeting: 19 November 2012 at 7pm