

Minutes of the Mearns Academy Parent Council meeting held in GP Room 3

at Mearns Academy, Thursday 14th October 2021 at 7pm

Present:

Marieke Wood – Chairperson

Katrina Suèr – Vice Chairperson

Karen Ramsay – Secretary

Gareth Campbell – Headteacher

Pauline Logue – Deputy Headteacher

Heather Herd, Bev MacKinnon, Arlene Dickson, Rachel Smith, Morven Robinson, Morag

Williamson, Gilly Milne, Laura Baird

Apologies:

Heather Hopkins, Kim Tait, Katrin Lewis, Angela Crichton, Nanette Cubitt Brown

First meeting of new committee

1. Welcome and Thank you

Marieke Wood, Chairperson, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the first in-person Parent Council meeting that we have had for quite some time – it has certainly been a big gap!

These meetings are to be an open forum for talk, to share ideas, to help support the school and to have the school support us.

Marieke then introduced all present to Katrina Suèr, the Vice Chair, and Karen Ramsay, Secretary. Jim Hendry will remain in post as Treasurer this year but is looking for an Assistant Treasurer whom he can train for the remainder of the year ahead of his relinquishing the Treasurer post to that person.

If you feel that you would be able to fill the post of Assistant Treasurer and ultimately Treasurer, please do get in contact with MAPC.

In her first task as Vice Chair, Katrina has set up email addresses for each role, (role)@mapc.org.uk, which can be used by each post holder going forward. In other words, chair@mapc.org.uk, vicechair@mapc.org.uk, secretary@mapc.org.uk, treasurer@mapc.org.uk and 200club@mapc.org.uk. These will make it easy for everyone to get in touch with the relevant person.

Going forward for Parent Council meetings, please do all sanitise and sign in on arrival and wear a mask while in the building. As we meet as a collective on a regular basis, together we can develop these meetings as a meaningful forum. The Zoom platform was great for while we could not meet in person but was beginning to be a Q & A session directed at Mr Campbell. From now on the minutes of meetings will be circulated shortly after each meeting to allow time for questions and ideas to be put to the committee and agenda items to be added for future meetings.

2. Headteacher Report

Mr Cambell opened by saying how pleased he was to be at an in-person Parent Council meeting again after such a difficult time.

Covid 19 continues to take up a huge amount of time and the restrictions remain tight at the moment.

- Mr Campbell explained the recent Scottish Government CO₂ monitor testing programme the school had recently undertaken. A monitor was switched on in the meeting room to demonstrate CO₂ levels and Mr Campbell explained that a reading of above 1200 needed to

be logged, a level of 1400 needed to be reported straight away. Due to the levels monitored, continued testing was not required to be done in every classroom/ teaching area.

- Over 600 pupils in the school had their flu vaccine, this was a big task to manage.
- Staffing continues to be impacted as staff members isolate awaiting results of PCR tests although case numbers are now lower.
- In a recent change the Warn and Inform letters now only go out to the affected year group. About 1 letter per week is all that is going out now.

The restrictions are proving a strain so the revised guidance, expected 15th October, is eagerly awaited. It is hoped that the face mask requirements may be removed, assemblies can begin again and potentially some parent meetings can be held in person. This guidance will be eagerly reviewed upon receipt.

Mr Campbell's Monday updates give a snapshot of what has been happening at the school and an overview of what is planned. If these are of use they will continue, possibly move to fortnightly/ monthly.

The recent attainment figures have been shared and the school are delighted with the performance of Mearns Academy. The school were aware of the figures for a while but now have the comparison figures to measure against. Mr Campbell showed those present at the meeting two slides which demonstrated Mearns Academy's performance against geographically close Aberdeenshire and Angus schools, as well as virtual comparison (VC), which is what Education Scotland use to measure a setting. Mearns Academy results show us above VC in all measures and doing well in comparison with closest schools. Mr Campbell was keen to stress that behind each result was a pupil who had worked hard and families and staff who had supported that pupil so a big thank you for that commitment went to all pupils, families and staff.

The S2 and S3 virtual parents evening have now taken place and, although a few technical issues, they worked well and the response has been positive so far.

S2 Parents Evening –

69% of families made bookings
94% of those with bookings attended the meetings
787 parent/ teacher conversations took place
52 replies to the survey sent out afterwards

S3 Parents Evening –

75% of families made bookings
96% of those with bookings attended the meetings
630 parent/ teacher conversations took place
53 replies to the survey sent out afterwards

Uptake for face to face meetings in school is usually around 70%

Staff feedback has also been positive, no surprise visits they were unprepared for, the evening ran on time and they felt the timer resulted in directed conversation. Most productive use of time would be to start with parents questions and then move to general feedback.

S4 Parents Evening session – this has now been brought forward a week and will take place on **10th November, 4pm – 7.15pm.**

The appointment time for each session has been increased to 6 minutes and each meeting will have a 6 minute break between so no consecutive bookings. The evening timings have been extended to accommodate these changes and to allow breaks.

Appointments for Maths will be available this time and the Maths Department will also run two evenings at the end of November for S2 and S3 parents who wish a meeting.

Parental questionnaires will continue to be sent out after each evening.

If you have more than one child in a year group, the system can easily accommodate all the meetings required.

Each meeting can be joined from more than one device if two parents want to be at a meeting.

The Pupil Leadership Team – all photos are now on Facebook and Mr Campbell said they were a cracking bunch, full of good conversations and ideas. Hard to think that the current S6 pupils were in S3 when they last had a full school year, restrictions have been in place for so long. They are now looking at ideas for fun opportunities and days out for all year groups to give the pupils something back after the difficult time we have all been through.

Prefects, House Captains and Leaders all did a team building day last week with a company called Fifth Dimension, held in the school theater, all about challenging mindsets and self, very worthwhile day.

School trips are currently been looked at by the legal department, there is a lot to consider in this area before going forward with anything.

Mrs Logue gave an update on the Duke of Edinburgh survey recently sent out to those with children in S4, S5 and S6 to gauge interest. 55 replies have been received, 45% are keen to take part. At the moment the stumbling block is the expedition as there are training issues, every leader would need to renew their low hills training, for a new volunteer 20 different walks would need to be logged and existing volunteers 10 walks that have not been completed previously, so that is a time consuming requirement. Also first aid training would need to be sought. Currently no parental volunteers allowed, so this all falls to the staff team, but new guidance may have some updates on volunteers. MAPC suggested they could look at some grant applications to help get Dof E started again, hopeful to start after October holidays.

Busy time after the October holidays with the following:

4/11 – S4, S5 and S6 tracking reports issued

10/11 – S4 Parents Evening 4pm – 7.15pm

12/11 – Masterchef Final

16/11 - Assessment calendar out for prelims

18 + 19/11 – Inservice Days

25/11 – S1, S2 and S3 Tracking Reports

1/12 – Prelims begin

15/12 – S1 and S2 Christmas dance planned

16/12 – S3 and S4 Christmas dance planned

17/12 – S4, S5 and S6 Christmas dance planned

Crew Drug and Alcohol Training have done a virtual ‘Just Say Know’ training session for staff. They have provided resources to hand out at an assembly and are looking to do a 2.5 hour parental workshop which will be open to all Academy parents and the Primary 7 parents.

Mr Campbell advised he will be out of the school around mid November to recuperate from an operation on an existing ankle injury. He hopes to return quickly to work, perhaps working from home initially.

Recently an elderly resident in Laurencekirk has been in touch with the school regarding youngsters damaging her house sign. There was no evidence that it was a Mearns Academy pupil however some of the school leadership team went to speak to her and took the damaged sign away for repair. This week, along with some S3 pupils, they returned the repaired sign and also cleaned some of the driveway, cut back bushes.

Mr Campbell and Mrs Logue then left the meeting.

3. Treasurers Report

Jim was not able to attend the meeting but has provided an update for the minutes.

Bank account balance - £6280.30

Petty cash - £59.65

4. Fundraiser Alternative

Since the school sponsored walk has been cancelled, we need an alternative suggestion. Marieke is keen to progress her idea of a fundraiser using the exercise bikes that the school already have, something all pupils can easily take part in to accumulate miles for each class/ year group/ house – exact details to be decided. This type of fundraiser would be low risk, is not weather dependant and MAPC volunteers can be arranged to run the event rather than school staff. Those present at the meeting agreed this was a good idea and some of the parents were keen to volunteer their help for this. **If you would be interested in helping, please do contact MAPC.**

5. Discussion Topics and AOCB

Marieke has also been thinking of ways to improve morale in the school and had spoken earlier with Mr Campbell about having the band play at lunch time on a Friday. No singing will be allowed. Mrs Birse is onboard with this and keen to get started after the October holidays.

It was discussed that parental communication is really important and that the school really do want to be engaged with each family. Parents should be encouraged to make contact with their child's guidance teacher, especially if they have a question or a concern. Some parents shared that they have contacted / are in regular contact with guidance staff and have found this very helpful.

It was discussed that the different tiers of communication that the school use can be confusing and daunting as it seems a lot that we are sometimes bombarded with. The school use Expressions App for notifications, email, text messages, GLOW, Google Classroom and Facebook – Mearns Academy Official and Mearns Academy Parent Council (MAPC). Google Classroom is to remain in place going forward. Mr Middleton, on behalf of the school, is to put together a working party to work with parents to find the best way forward. **If you would like to be involved in the working party or have suggestion, please contact Katrina at vicechair@mapc.org.uk.**

Bev MacKinnon updated that she still has tickets left for the 200 Club so please do get in contact with her at 200club@mapc.org.uk if you would like to purchase tickets. They are £12 each.

Data Protection Policy

A five page document detailing GDPR protocol was circulated as a draft document (copy attached as Annex 1), stating MAPC data collection and retention protocol.

- Minutes of meetings will be retained for 6 years
- Sign in sheet/ Track and trace log will be retained for 3 weeks
- 200 Club info will be retained for 13 months

It was agreed that previous office holders will be contacted to obtain data they may hold. Moving forward, documents will be electronically stored on a shared secure platform so the data controller can ensure compliance. Any comments on the draft should be sent to Katrina at vicechair@mapc.org.uk.

Once the minutes of meetings are made up they will then be circulated immediately to generate discussion and ideas which will be added to the next agenda. Mr Campbell will continue to attend regular meetings, he wont always be required to stay for the whole meeting. We can investigate whether we can have some meeting attendees via Zoom or Teams so that people have the option to still join a meeting when they can't come along in person.

We will look at how minutes are distributed to reach the maximum amount of parents, also make them available on school website.

Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting will be held on **Tuesday 23rd November 2021 at 7pm** in GP Room at Mearns Academy, all welcome.

The meeting then ended at 8.40pm.