

## Minutes of Invergordon Parent Council meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2019

- Present were:

Michael Aitchison  
Alison Clarke  
Hazel Wakefield  
Kathryn Roberts  
Eilidh Skinner  
Lorraine Farmer

- Apologies were received from:

Nicola Mitchell  
Karen Mackay  
Aileen Mackay

- Minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as accurate.
- Head teacher's report:

**Staffing:** Discussion took place surrounding the vacant posts within the school. The adverts for the temporary contract PSA posts are still stuck in the backlog but are currently being covered by supply which is funded by the school. Similarly, the Support Manager vacancy has also not come out yet but the position continues to be back-filled which is expected to carry on until at least Easter. The Parent Committee asked if they can help speed the process along for the advert but MA said it is just a matter of waiting on the authority to release it in due course unfortunately.

**Mental Health Support:** 12 staff have had mental health 'first-aid' training – this includes teaching and non-teaching staff. Since November a counselling service run by two Scottish Counselling Service counsellors. It runs two days a week, accommodating up to 8 pupils who would generally attend for up to 6 weeks. Also, a Primary Mental Health Worker (Steph Brown) has been trained to share the workload of the current PMHW, Colin Millar, to relieve some of his heavy workload covering an extensive patch. Steph covers Alness/Invergordon. MA was asked about whether there is a current backlog of pupils with a referral for mental health support; MA said at present there is no backlog that he is aware of.

**Prelims:** Performance of the recent senior prelims was below potential. Despite best efforts of staff, some pupils do not take them seriously. Initial discussions with pupils indicate a lack of motivation, responsibility and, a preference to engage in social media and other distractions. The school invites parental support in looking for ways to tackle this apathy.

**Subject Choices:** Concerns have been raised by parents about the breadth of subject choices. MA advised that The Scottish Parliament's Education and Skills Committee is undertaking an enquiry into subject choices in secondary school. The Committee is seeking a

Scotland-wide perspective to inform its inquiry. Invergordon Academy currently runs a 6-6-6 structure for S4 to S6 as its standard options. Some pupils at all levels will require a more flexible curriculum and will work together with pupils, parents and other partners to put these into place where appropriate. These individual curricula can result in more or less options in any one year. Students going into S4 will in general choose 6 subject courses. S5 who are choosing 4 or more Higher level courses would choose 5 courses plus a Stand-alone Unit and/or Wider Achievement option; otherwise 6 full courses would be chosen. S6 students who intend to attend full-time should choose courses in at least 5 columns, plus a Stand-alone Unit/Wider Achievement option. The Committee voiced concern that by restricting choices early on it may negatively affect students if they decide to select new subjects later on. It was explained that subject choices are affected by government guidelines, staffing and funding.

**Chromebooks:** All pupils now have a Chromebook, with the rollout going relatively smoothly. There have been approx. 15 breakdowns/breakages and all spares have been allocated, information on repairs is awaited. Pupil feedback is very positive and engagement is high. All staff are currently using Chromebooks and associated apps to some extent, with training and support ongoing. The intention is to run our S3 and Senior Options process entirely through Google Forms with parents and pupils accessing through their Chromebooks, this will hopefully gauge interest in choices and will be in the form of a survey format on Chromebooks. The Committee raised the question of how parents who may not be familiar with the internet and/or Chromebooks can be involved in helping children with these decisions.

**Vegetarian meal choices:** Concern was raised regarding reports of availability of choices and allocation of these meals. MA advised that canteen offers more vegetarian options than not overall and each day there is at least one vegetarian hot meal option. In addition to this there is soup, a wide range of sandwiches, wraps, filled rolls, baguettes, pizzas, pizzinis, fruit, veg, desserts and drinks. The Committee enquired whether the canteen could perhaps take orders to ensure availability and potentially decrease food wastage. MA will query the issue of whether quantity is meeting demand with the appropriate canteen staff.

**Reports:** Senior reports are due to go out imminently. These have been written by pupils themselves and in some cases will highlight the concerns raised by staff regarding apathy. This is, however, the first time our pupils have done this and the school expect improvement as the younger year groups come through this new system of reporting. The younger year groups have been exploring these skills during their Skills Time courses. A teacher authored report is due in March. There will be a pupil component to the last S3 report due out in March, also to accompany the teacher report. The Academy is looking to roll out the same reporting system for S1 and S2 in the future.

**Family Learning:** The second 'Handling Teenage Behaviour' programme is due to start soon. The first ran very successfully and this is a relaunch for the second programme, after numbers dropped off. P6/7 parents have also been invited this time.

In partnership with a new family learning service provided by the council, the school are hoping to run cookery lessons – more info will follow.

**Door security system:** The upgrade is now complete, all exterior doors can now be locked electronically and specific doors can be controlled for entry. There is also a new camera system operating over all six doors. Pupil entry is now only via three doors at the front of school. Staff have electronic fobs allowing access to doors specific to their role.

A corner gate has been installed half way down the grass which helps to re-direct pupils entering and exiting the school grounds and to help keep them safe.

**Minibuses:** Due to changes in minibus licencing rules which incur extra training days and cost, the school are not renewing the minibus lease but will instead lease two people carriers. The existing minibus and people carrier will go and the new vehicles are expected to arrive in the next week or so.

**Parental Involvement:** MA highlighted that apathy is the biggest issue at present. An open invitation continues to be extended to parents and carers to come and visit classes. Thank you to KR and her husband who recently participated in the English, Languages and Art faculty review. MA will canvass parents during the forthcoming Parent Contact evenings about visiting classes. In addition, Parent Council Committee members are invited to be involved in the school improvement process which is ongoing but which builds up pace in the summer term.

Parent/carer views are sought on the following items:

Lateness: The school has done a lot of work has already done on tackling attendance and those figures are improving. However, lateness remains an issue especially at the start of the day and returning from lunch. Any ideas on how to improve this are welcome. The Committee will put a post on the Parent Committee Facebook group highlight the matter.

Social media: A lot of time is being taken up in school sorting out issues caused out with school, particularly on social media. The Committee acknowledge that this is unfortunately a common issue across schools and age groups and that it is a difficult problem to tackle.

Extra-curricular activities: Engagement with school clubs (with the exception of Rock Challenge), sports, Joss St Hall youth club, etc., are dropping. Parental views are sought on the causes and what can be done to boost involvement with these.

- Any Other Business:

**Pot holes:** The Parent Council raised concerns about the ongoing issue with pot holes at the entrance to the school. The Parent Council will email Invergordon's local councillor requesting that someone visit to see the situation and/or look at possible remedies.

**Windows:** There is no further update. The school is awaiting a further, more detailed survey.

**School transport:** It was raised that the bus has lacked capacity to accommodate all children requesting collection/drop-off. MA pointed out that sometimes a smaller capacity bus has been sent for the job. As those pupils eligible for transport are issued with a pass, there should not be any issue with the company knowing how many potential seats are required.

It was brought the Committee's attention that sometimes members of the public are using the service and simply paying to board – this is unacceptable and the situation will be monitored.

**Parent Council Improvement Plan:** Not discussed in detail at this meeting but will be on the next meeting's agenda.

**Special Thanks:** Miss McKie has ensured pupils who wanted to take Philosophy and Ancient Beliefs for N5 are able to do so by giving up her own time so that this is possible. It has not gone unnoticed and the Committee extends their thanks for her dedication and hard work.

**SSER:** Concern was raised that a local councillor had voiced that the Academy was 3<sup>rd</sup> in line for funding but in fact, the school remains simply in the top 11. It was suggested that there is a need for stronger links with councillors.

**Treasurer Update:** KR advised that there is still one signatory on the account which needs to be removed but that previous issues with the account have now been resolved. A statement was due to be released in February.

- The date of the next meeting is the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019 at 7pm at the school - please pass on any apologies or agenda items to Hazel, the Parent Council secretary at [hongkongphooey38@hotmail.com](mailto:hongkongphooey38@hotmail.com)