



# Blackwood Primary School & ELC Parent Council

Blackwood Primary School, Carlisle Road,  
Blackwood, Lanark, ML11 9AT

**Blackwoodparentcouncil@gmail.com**

## BLACKWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL

Minutes of Parent Council Meeting – Wednesday 07<sup>th</sup> February 2024

### Present

Laura Watt, Jo McGuigan, Lisa Tweed, Alyson Bennie, Ruth Colquhoun, Vivienne Colquhoun, Erin Illingworth, Jenny Bowman, Pamela Mitchell, Kimberley Millar, Gail Hutchison, Julie Smith, Laura Wilson, Fiona Soper, Sarah Smith, Donna Neeson, Laura Izat, Suz Wayt, Lynsey Clark, Laura Hamilton, Louise Grattan, Cllr Ross Lambie

### Apologies

Wendy Thomson, Christine McMillan, Cllr Ross Gowland, Tori Summerville, Suzanne Bleasedale

### Welcome

Laura opened the meeting and noted how nice it is to see some new faces on the meeting tonight.

### Correspondence

Lisa advised there have been no new items received into the PC email. But this quarter's lottery return forms are due, so I will get them sorted over the next couple of weeks.

### Treasurer's report

Jo gave us a financial update starting with the closing balance from the last meeting of £6270.55

#### **Income**

- 5x bonus balls at £59 each, totalling £295

#### **Outgoings**

- Nil

Giving us a current balance of £6,565.55

#### Easy Fundraising Update

- Total raised to date so far is £1606.18
- Currently showing £54.75 over last 30 days with 1 new supporter
- Possibly expecting a cheque from them soon

## Head teachers report

### Staffing:

- C McMillan (HT) currently absent, A Bennie will take on AHT during absence. No ADHT being put in place during absence.
- A Meldrum – Baby boy, Lewis, born in December, R Colquhoun started Acting PT 18<sup>th</sup> December
- H Stewart – ELC, Baby Boy, Oban, Born last week.
  
- Host of teaching students in school currently
  - Kacie Miller – (P7)
  - Sarah MacDonald (P6)
  - Lynn Todd (P5)
  - Darci Shanks (P7/6)
  - Sophie Reid (P1 – Tuesday)

### Since our last meeting:

- P5 visited Sky Academy
- P7's Happy Place workshop with Saint Phoenix
- Carols Around the tree took place – 4 performances, 3x afternoon and 1x evening
- Christmas Parties
- Literacy gift – P1 & P2 workshops planned for March
- Choir entertained residents at Bankhouse Nursing Home
- Stephen Graham visit on 11<sup>th</sup> January for writing – worked with 3 classes: P4/3, P5 and P6. Teachers all observed at least one session.
- Miss Colquhoun's P2/1 class visited the Skoda car garage in Hamilton, following children's interests.
- P3/2 assembly took place with a sustainability focus on Bees. Aware of microphone/speaker problems and hoping to resolve this.
- Miss Colquhoun and Miss Lothian's P1-3 children attended a sports inclusion festival in Carluke
- Stephen Graham – visited and worked with Literacy team of staff on planning.

This week we focus on **Safer Internet Day** and the house captains delivered an assembly on this. Need to continue to raise importance of this with parent forum as we continue to have a number of social media related incidents.

**Children's Mental Health week** – importance of children's voice – linked to rights.

**Pupil voice group** in school are leading aspects of school improvement

- PEF – Playground
- YLL – Young Leaders of Learning
- Rights Respecting Schools award
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**Larkhall Burns competition** auditions have taken place – Competition 7th March at Blackwood. Very high number auditioned which is fantastic.

**Inset day** – All staff from ELC and school will attend Coalburn Primary for Emotion Coaching training. Consistent approach in the language used with children. Jenny Bowman and Chris Forbes have already attended training.

### **Budget Cuts & configurations**

- Configuration exercises have started and we are currently anticipating 9 classes next session. 20 P1's have enrolled and we are awaiting placing request decisions in and out.
- Budget Cuts are continuing to be discussed through staffing, school transport and ICT.

- During ICT refresh in June, equipment will be removed including desktops and laptops and not all replaced, with current RM contract. We have looked at grants previously, but most applications need to be made from a constituted group such as the parent council. If anyone knows of anywhere doing grants for ICT equipment, Chrome books, tablets etc, please let us know? Maybe STEM grants, or mobile phone companies?

### **Updates from previous meeting**

#### **Meeting with services / Community Resources**

- Caterers will only meet with the school and not the Parent Council, so Alyson will arrange to meet with them on our behalf, if we could collate all of the information on the complaints to allow Alyson to speak on our behalf.

#### **PVG Update**

- The school received an Email recently, detailing a change into who needs a PVG. An occasional parent helper wouldn't be left on their own with a child, so no PVG needed. This gives us a bit more flexibility. If someone wanted to volunteer long term, it might be worth getting a PVG. All volunteers welcome if anyone has time.

#### **P7 Leavers Gifts**

- We gave a maths set & pen to all the P7's last year, will probably do the same this year if everyone is happy, unless there are other suggestions. How many do we need?
  - LG – son has never used a maths set and is now in S3, other children don't use them either.
  - Diaries that were previously given weren't used either.
  - Would a notebook be any use?
  - PM – how about an autograph book for them to fill out?
  - Please let us know suggestions?

#### **How can PC support school as we have funds**

- Library furniture might be useful, as you could get Ikea furniture perhaps, cheaper than we could get furniture from procurement within school.
- School trips are expensive, once you take into account transport, admission, staffing etc, so it might be better to look at getting visitors into the school, such as the science centre to provide educational lessons. Help with costs of these could be something we could look at.

#### **Secondary School Transport**

- Cllr Ross Lambie joined the meeting and is very supportive of our fight against the secondary school transport cuts.
  - We have until 20<sup>th</sup> February with the School transport consultation.
  - It is very important we get a 90% return rate to change their minds as they are serious.
  - I was bought up here and this would have affected me. I would have had to walk past the bus stop where my friends would be waiting for the school bus.
  - It is a long distance for children to walk in the dark, in the rain, there's
  - s 2 motorway slip roads, it is an accident black spot, it is the motorway diversion route, there's no lighting...
  - The government look to the 'Safe Walking Routes' document
  - The demographic for Lesmahagow High is very unique, it is a large school in a small village. It doesn't have multiple busses or public transport routes similar to other high schools like Hamilton and Lanark.
  - I have been working with Lesmahagow High School Parent Council and they have raised the same points. We are looking to do a walk from Heathfield and invite council officers along. We also plan to take pictures of all the "dodgy bits". We will do it whilst it is a bit dark, to

simulate a winters morning. We have invited the pupils to undertake a survey to weigh their school bags as well, as if the children are carrying an 8kg bag full of books, their PE kit, musical instruments etc, they are going to feel that after walking for over an hour, and unlikely to be in a fit state to sit and learn. It is a barrier to their education.

- Also in the background, I have been trying to establish information on facts and figures, such as the number of students that will be affected.
- I have spoken to Sandra Whitelaw, and she is not keen on this idea either. She is not going to buy another bus, hire drivers etc to accommodate putting on extra busses on this route at school times.
- LW – There's not enough space for all the pupils on public transport. They are currently using 3 smaller busses and the 8.05 gets in at 8.15, so children would either be trying to catch an earlier public bus and hanging around the school, or they would be late, as the next bus gets them in after school starts.
- SW – there is a lot of kick up about the Hollandbush just now as well, so we need more kick up so it doesn't overshadow this, otherwise we will just lose the busses. A lot of kids walking to one concentrated area will affect local residents of Lesmahagow, some parents will drive if they can and the local roads will become more congested. The local residents need to be made aware of this as well. If this gets implemented, we won't get it back.
- JS – I keep getting kicked off forms trying to fill out, I will keep trying. Is this affecting GIRFEC (Getting it right for every child), not providing for their needs, relying on public transport, endangering education as well as safety? I have been in an accident on that road, so I know how bad that road can be.
- RL – There will be an Equalities Impact Assessment, which has not been released yet, it will be interesting to see what that raises. Some children might not be confident enough to get a public bus. How will the school bus drivers know who is entitled and who isn't, managing this will likely incur an extra cost and hassle for the bus companies. Is there anything else you can do to reach out to parents?
- AB – We have already included it in the newsletter to all parents.
- RL – Can the PC do what they can to make some noise? FB posts, save our school bus etc.
- Sadly, this is bringing back the Blackwood / Kirkmuirhill divide.

## **Leavers Hoodies**

- Historically, the school don't take anything to do with this. Its parents who arrange this, which can cause various issues with children being missed etc. Could the Parent Council possibly link in to assist with this? The school want to ensure the safeguarding of children, so prefer not to have individual names on jumpers.
- SS – we have been looking into this and thought maybe just an initial on front, keep it simplified. We have been looking at designs on the P7 chat on fb. Could put BPS on it?
- AB – One of the big issues with leavers hoodies is we are always aware of the 'Cost of school day', do parents feel pressured into buying these? It's a difficult one and there are a lot of financial pressures on families just now. As this looks like it is something that is here to stay, could we maybe work together? Is this something the Parent Council could maybe assist with? We could survey parents of P5-7 to get their views.
- SW – I like the tradition of the red jumper, and kids look forward to the leavers jumper. Sometimes it doesn't get organised well and children get missed, or if children don't want one. If it's accepted and going forwards, maybe PC needs to help with this to ensure inclusion.
- LG – I have told everyone about pros and cons in the P7 chat. However, be careful about setting president. If pc take it on, they will need to do it going forwards.
- Jo – could it possibly be as part of the P7 leavers gift? There will be a layer of transparency if PC take it on, to ensure inclusion and is above board, it doesn't necessarily have to be financial support.
- PM – option for a t-shirt instead? £18-£20 is the current quote for hoodies.

## Any Other Business

- 4G is getting used as P5/6/7 break area. 4G is used for football, which leaves very limited non grassy / muddy areas to play. Some parents are complaining about state of clothes and shoes.
  - AB –the pupil playground group are looking at this - new resources arrived today, little basketballs, balance, sensory area, reading area, lots of zones planned by pupils.
- Change of PE days but no communication to parents to let us know which days, so children went to school without PE kits.
  - AB – Wasn't aware this was an issue, but aware that communication was difficult with Christine's absence and we had to wait for the council to send out the notice first before we could do anything and that took a bit of time unfortunately.
- Lack of Google classroom this year makes it more difficult to communicate with teachers. Parents feel they are missing important information as there is little or no communication with them and not always able to rely on children to pass on messages.
  - AB – When we surveyed parents last year in the homework consultation, parents preferred written homework in jotters. Parents didn't want Google Classrooms, and most didn't use it. Parents can phone office to speak to teachers and we will call back when possible.
  - LG – I have never had any issues with communication, possibly a newer parent that's not confident to approach.
  - SW - maybe parents don't realise they can use diaries as a communication tool.
- LG on back of last meeting, talking about cost saving, at the end of the school year, children come home with several jotters with amazing art work, some jotters come home in June with only a couple of pages used. Could you not put a divider in and continue them into the next year. 5/6 jotters x£1 x300 kids... could buy a new i-Pad?
  - AB – teachers historically like a fresh start with their new class in august. We could look at the sustainability of that
- AB - Forgot to email Ross Lambie to thank him for his Christmas donation, all kids got an ice lolly.
  - JM – I am still awaiting the receipt for that, I will follow up with Sandra.

## Next meeting

Wed 17<sup>th</sup> April 2024, face to face in the school.

## Close

Laura and Alyson again thanked everyone for coming.

### **Blackwood Parent Council 2023/2024 –**

Wendy Thomson (Chair), Laura Watt (Vice-Chair), Jo McGuigan (Treasurer), Lisa Tweed (Secretary)

#### **In support of -**

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#### **In collaboration with -**

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