

Corstorphine Primary School Parent Council
*Corstorphine Primary School, High Street, Corstorphine
Edinburgh, EH12 7SY*

Minutes of Parent Council Meeting

Thursday, 20 March 2014

Present: Jennifer Ross (Head Teacher)
Andy Goodman (Parent Member)
Carol Christie (Parent Member)
Gillian Farrell (Parent Member)
Karine Masting (Parent Member)
Lesley Mason (Parent Member)
Billy Samuel (Parent Member/Acting chair)
Shona Richardson (DHT)
Sarah Cavanagh (Staff Rep)
Cllr. P. Edie

In attendance: Karen Lodomery (Clerk)

1. **Apologies:** Moira McDonald, Bill Halliday, Aleks Tomczyk, Audrey McColl, Jennifer Farrar, Jane Niven, Sarah Cunningham and Fiona Meldrum

2. **Minutes of last Parent Council Meeting (21 November 2013) and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the last Parent Council Meeting (21 November 2013) were approved as read.

The meeting of 21 January 2014 was cancelled and not re-scheduled.

Parentmail. It was decided at the last meeting that a Parentmail would be sent out in advance of each Parent Council meeting, asking if there were any items parents wanted to raise. This has not yet been implemented.

Action: Audrey

Frequently asked Questions. These will be drawn-up and distributed to new P1 parents and posted on the website.

Action: Audrey and Jennifer

Funding request. It was agreed previously that the Parent Council would write to the Children and Families Department asking that the request from the School to investigate the funding of replacement dining tables is followed up and an appropriate remedy agreed. Letter still to be drafted.

Action: Audrey

Position of Deputy Chair. Billy Samuel volunteered for this position, and the Parent Council unanimously agreed.

Parent Focus Group. So far only one parent has volunteered. To be discussed further under "AOCB".

Parent Pay. No information is available on the implementation of Parent Pay. The council has not yet provided information on when this is likely to be rolled out.

3. Items for Discussion

Review of Constitution (Billy Samuel).

Billy Samuel presented his review of the Constitution of the Parent Council. The key observations noted were that:

1. The current constitution is broadly in line with government guidance
2. There are elements of the constitution which have been “personalised” (which is perfectly allowable). The continued relevance of these items should be considered
3. There are a number of aspirational statements about the role of the Parent Council (some standard; some “personalised”). The extent to which the Parent Council is currently set up to achieve these aims should be reviewed, and any recommendations agreed.

A discussion around “personalised” elements of the Constitution was undertaken. This included the size of the Parent Council and current limitations on the tenure of Parent Council members.

As per the Constitution, all proposed changes to the Constitution will need to be approved at the annual meeting of the Parent Forum in September 2014. Proposals must be issued to the Parent Forum in advance, to allow reasonable time for members of the Parent Forum to respond to the proposals.

Initial proposals for amendments will be presented to the next meeting of the Parent Council to allow time for comment / review ahead of the Parent Forum meeting.

Action: Billy

Parent Council members were also asked to think about the role of the Parent Council and how best to communicate with parents. For context, Billy noted that the important role a Parent Council plays in supporting improvement in schools is recognised in the new school inspection framework introduced in August 2011. Further, that during an inspection, the lay member of the inspection team will meet with the Chair of the Parent Council (as the representative of the school parent community) and discuss all aspects of parental involvement in the school.

The following ideas were raised in relation to the role of the Parent Council:

Skills matrix. It was recognised that a range of skills are required within a Parent Council and that being able to articulate this may make it easier for members of the Parent Forum to understand how they might contribute.

Parentmail. As noted in “Matters Arising”, one will be sent out before each meeting. It is also important that parents know who the Parent Council members are and how to contact them. Parents also need to know that they are welcome to attend meetings if they have a particular matter to raise.

Flow-Diagram. It was agreed that it would be helpful for parents/guardians (particularly for those new to the school) to understand the role and linkages between the various school bodies - Parent Council, Parent Forum, PTA - and how to engage with them. It was decided to draw-up a flow diagram. This would be given to all new P1 parents and a large copy placed on a Noticeboard.

Creation of Sub-groups. To support the achievement of Parent Council tasks and goals, the creation of sub-groups would be encouraged whenever possible. Sub-groups would report back to the wider Parent Council, and have the ability to co-opt members of the Parent Forum where relevant.

Pupil Council involvement. It was decided to develop links with the Pupil Council. Mrs Ross would be very happy for a member of the Parent Council to attend meetings of the Pupil Council.

Diversity and inclusion. Consideration should be given as to whether the Parent Council is sufficiently accessible for members of the Parent Forum, particularly where English is not their first language.

Website. The school website is not kept up to date with minutes of Parent Council meetings.

All Parent Council members to consider how they can assist with progressing the above initiatives.

Action: All

4. Head Teacher's Report (Mrs. Ross)

Staffing. Mrs. Ross informed the Parent Council that this past year had been very challenging with regard to staffing. There have been staff on maternity leave, staff on short-term contracts looking for permanent contracts, staff leaving for promotion and a shortage of supply teachers. Following the departure of Mrs. Gracie, the School advertised the post of Principal Teacher. Unfortunately, however, no suitable candidate came forward, and it was decided not to appoint anyone to the position. Some parents have been frustrated to find out of staff changes through social media and feel the School should keep parents informed of changes on a more timely basis. Mrs. Ross is happy to do this, but noted that informing parents before the situation has been resolved can also cause stress for parents and pupils impacted. There is no perfect solution to this problem. It was agreed that information be sent out to parents outlining the current recruitment environment and how the whole process has been slowed down by the new PVG system. New permanent teachers are now being recruited for P1 and P4.

Action: Jennifer

Lunchtime Arrangements. The lunch arrangements are now working very well. All children are now able to eat in the dining hall and then use the park. This has facilitated the regular use of the park (with regular parent volunteers). There will be no more problems with children having only 15 minutes in the classroom to eat their packed lunch (because they didn't want to go to the dining room for extra time). There is still a problem at times with the length of the queue in the dining room but this is mainly due to the design of the hatch which only allows for two servers. The School has requested that this hatch be removed and is awaiting a response.

5. AOCB

Nestle Books for Schools. A parent has written to the Chair of the Parent Council, complaining about the School being involved with a company promoting formula milk in developing countries. Mrs Ross noted that following the initial Parentmail that the School has already decided not to pursue this initiative. The Chair will respond to the letter.

Action: Audrey

Nursery Provision. As a result of the Children and Young People's Bill of 2013, nursery provision is to be increased for 3 and 4 year olds. The hours per year will increase from 475 to 600. The Council has decided to let individual schools decide how to implement this increase in nursery provision. There will be no more setting up days and the length of the sessions will increase to 3 hours and 10 minutes. The proposal for this School is: 08.35 – 11.45 and 12.25 – 3.35.

Ethos Questionnaire. A Parent Focus group will look into the responses and conclusions will be presented at the next meeting of the Parent Council. A group of parent council members agreed to form a subgroup to meet with Mrs Ross to discuss this. An update will be provided at the next Parent Council.

Action: Jennifer, Karine, Carol, Gillian

Low attendance at Parent Talks. A number of parents have questioned the need for meetings to explore the curriculum in such detail. Mrs Ross felt that it is and will continue to be very important to keep parents abreast of changes to the curriculum and the way that children learn. She will however explore with the subgroup whether there are ways of delivering this information in ways that meet parents' needs. Also following parent feedback Mrs. Ross will re-think the way the current "Meet the teacher" sessions are organised and will also discuss this with the sub-group.

Action: Jennifer

Arrangements for P7 (current P6/5) classes. It is likely that next year there will be 3 small P7 classes and 2 P6 classes. No final decision can be made until the P1 numbers are confirmed. Mrs Ross will look to confirm this information as soon as possible after the Easter holidays.

Action: Jennifer

2014/15 Session Dates. Parent Council members are encouraged to look at the proposal for the coming years in detail. Any feedback should be fed back to the Edinburgh Council by 28 March 2014

Dates of future Parent Council meetings / Parent Forum. It was requested that proposed dates for Parent Council meetings (and the annual meeting of the Parent Forum) be presented at the next Parent Council Meeting.

Action: Jennifer and Audrey

6. Future Agenda Items:

- Sub-groups updates
 - Parent Council Skills Matrix
 - Flow diagram
 - Pupil Council interaction
 - Ethos Questionnaire
- Draft amendments to Parent Council Constitution
- Dates for 2014/15 Parent Council / Parent Forum meetings

7. Date of next meeting:

The next meeting of the Parent Council will be on **Thursday, 19 June 2014** at 7.15pm.