

MINUTES

St Thomas of Aquin's Parent Council

Meeting on 15th June 2016

PRESENT:

Jo Kennedy (JK) – Chair
Fiona Bradley (FB) – Vice Chair
Catherine Gray (CG) - Treasurer
Dee Armstrong (DA) - Secretary

Staff:

Peigi Macarthur (PM) – Supporting Headteacher
Christopher Santini (CS) – Acting Headteacher
Isabelle Jean Pierre (IJP) – Acting Depute Headteacher
Megan Gardner (MG) – Acting Depute Headteacher
Sandra Murray (SM) – Teacher Representative
Fr Peter Scally – School Chaplain
Steve Maher – Teacher

Parents

Kors Allan, Janice Baines, James Boardman, Stuart Brown, Angie Bryce, Gaye Cleary, Angelo Deponio, Natasha Durkin, Austin Flynn, Katarina Flynn, Grace Harwell, Jason King, Mark Lazarowicz, Andrea Manning, Callum Mccrone, Colleen Mccrone, Catherine Midgley, Shona O'Brien, Yvonne Pryor, Christine Rigouleau, Montserrat Santandreu, Bernadette Sawyers, Cluny Sheeler, Julie Slater, Mary Stevenson, Joanne Thin, Diane Watters

Apologies

Simon Armstrong, Karen Brownlee, Kitty Bruce-Gardyne, Brenda-Anne Cochrane, Deirdre Fitzpatrick, George Harte, Eugene Mullan, Naomi Neilson, Stephanie O' Donohoe, Denise Simpson

1. Welcome and prayer	ACTION
JK welcomed everyone to the meeting and there was a round of introductions. Fr Scally led the opening prayer.	
2. School chaplain	
JK announced that the school had been notified in recent days by Archbishop Leo Cushley that he had decided to make a change to the school chaplain. From August Fr Scally would no longer be chaplain and the role would be filled by Fr Nick Welsh, who is Assistant Priest at St Mary's Cathedral. Concern was expressed by some parents that this change had been made with no consultation or explanation at a time when the school was already in flux, although they understood that it was the Archbishop's decision to do so if he chose. SM commented that the teachers were disappointed – they felt that Fr Scally had been a supportive presence, especially during the recent sad losses of two pupils and a teacher, and that it was a bad time to lose another member of the school community. CS added Fr Scally had been a fantastic chaplain and that the school would be very sad to see him step down. After some discussion it was agreed that the PC would send a letter to the Archbishop expressing disappointment at the lack of discussion about this decision and formally recording its gratitude for Father Scally's years of service as school chaplain. JK thanked Father Scally formally and he was presented with a small gift from the Parent Council.	JK

<p>3. Minutes of the special general meeting on 26th April 2016</p> <p>JK explained that because of the sensitive nature of the strong views expressed at the special general meeting on 26th April, it had been decided to prepare a summary set of minutes - it was proposed that the summary would become the public record and that the initial verbatim record of the meeting would remain confidential to the parent body. There was some disagreement amongst parents about the production of the verbatim record and there was a discussion about confidentiality at PC meetings and how this should be handled in future. JK commented that it had been important on that occasion to accurately capture the views of parents at the meeting but said that in future, summary minutes would be produced rather than a verbatim record. JK asked the PC to approve both the verbatim record and the summary minutes of the meeting on 26th April - both were approved with a couple of amendments to the summary minutes.</p>	<p>JK/DA</p>
<p>4. Minutes of the AGM on 19th May 2016</p> <p>The minutes of the AGM were approved with an accuracy amendment around item 2.2 on SCES guidelines for RE lessons.</p>	<p>JK/DA</p>
<p>5. Feedback dossier</p> <p>JK reported that a dossier of feedback from parents had been submitted to Andy Gray at the Council on 30th May 2016. This contained 29 submissions from parents and a statement from 10 former pupils. Andy Gray had informed JK on 15th June that a senior officer had read the dossier and had advised him that elements of it required investigation under Stage 2 of the Council's complaints procedure. The Council's procedure indicates that this process is normally completed within 20 days. An anonymised summary of the dossier was available to any parent who wished to request it – anyone wishing to do so should email DA at stthomasofaquinpc@gmail.com</p>	
<p>6. Update on the action plan</p> <p>PM reported that she had been continuing getting to know members of the school community and expanding on aspects of the action plan. Work had been done on communication, consultation and collegiality and the curriculum.</p> <p>6.1 Communication - PM noted that different previous headteachers had wanted different things from staff around communication and so a detailed plan had been created from scratch. PM had discussed and agreed the plan with staff and the junior and senior pupil councils.</p> <p>6.2 Consultation and collegiality - PM reported that the action plan for consultation and collegiality was out to staff for feedback at the moment. It included wider involvement for staff in decision making, including support staff. Another important aspect of this thread was timely agreement of the working time agreement, which needed to be agreed by the start of the school year.</p> <p>6.3 Curriculum – PM reported that the rationale and detail of the new curriculum structure had been revisited at all levels. Feedback had been gathered and considered on S1/S2 timetabling and personalisation and choice in S3. Proposals had been developed to meet local need e.g. 3 sciences / 2 social subjects /</p>	

<p>expansion for business education and elective PE in S3. CS would expand on this later in this meeting.</p> <p>Further details of these action plan threads are appended to the minutes.</p> <p>6.4 PM reported that the pupils were looking at a positive discipline policy under the umbrella of 'better learning, better relationships, better behaviour'. This would be launched after the summer holidays. In addition, the school would be reviewing its policies on equality and bullying.</p> <p>6.5 PM said that action plan work on leadership had not yet started. There needed to be further work done on leadership at all levels but there had been no opportunity yet for her to work with the headteacher since he remained off sick. Parents sought reassurance that the positive work that had been done at the school in the last few weeks would lead to long lasting improvements and that PM would not leave the school too soon – PM confirmed that the situation would be closely monitored and that performance would be assessed. She said that CEC would seek feedback from parents, staff and pupils going forward and confirmed that her own input was open ended at the moment.</p>	
<p>7. Acting Headteacher's report</p> <p>7.1 <u>Exam results</u> - CS reported that he would be in school on 9th and 10th August to support pupils who had just received exam results and help with any re-coursing issues that may arise.</p> <p>7.2 <u>Staffing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four candidates had been short-listed for the Depute Headteacher post – interviews would be held on 24th June 2016. • CS reported that Lisa Armstrong, Clerical Support Assistant, would be leaving the school to take up a new post in July – the Parent Council recorded their thanks to Lisa for her service to the school. • CS took the PC through a list of other staffing changes. All vacancies except RE had been filled – that post was being re-advertised. <p>7.3 <u>Website</u> - good progress had been made on the new website in terms of meetings with web designer and input from the Parent Council. JK thanked CS and Gaye Cleary for taking forward this work. The website project was ongoing.</p> <p>7.4 <u>S6 leadership team</u> - a process had been discussed and agreed with staff and pupils for the election of the S6 leadership team. Applicants will need 2 staff references, applicants will present to the school on 21st June, then all S6 pupils and staff will vote and the top 3 candidates for Head Girl/Boy, Depute Head Girl/Boy and House Captains will go forward for interview in August. The interview panel would comprise the Acting Headteacher, a Depute Headteacher and a Guidance Teacher.</p> <p>7.5 <u>Curriculum</u> - CS circulated a detailed document on curriculum changes, the key points of which were:</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pupils will receive a Broad General Education (BGE) from S1 to S3. This model will be phased in gradually and will have been rolled out completely by 2018/19. In the 2016/17 session S1, S2, S6 and S6 will be following the new model. For 2016/17 S3 and S4 will continue with the model which results in 8 National 5 qualifications. For 2017/18 only the S4 year group will continue with that model. - S1 and S2 under the BGE will study a wide range of 18/19 subjects in line with the staffing complement of the school. Languages offered will be Spanish and French. Personalisation and choice will impact mostly at the start of S3 and a system of rotation within the sciences, social subjects, expressive arts, and technologies column structures will support this process (14 subjects). - The senior phase – S4 pupils will study 7 national qualifications. S5 pupils will generally study 5 subjects. Some pupils may mix in school subjects with college placements / work experience. S6 pupils will be able to study a range of subjects at school, as well as opting to attend college, work placements and voluntary opportunities. S6 pupils study a range of numbers of subjects depending on what level qualification they are pursuing. <p>Parents raised a number of concerns with CS including arrangements for PE, ensuring that teachers can accommodate a wide range of abilities in classes during the BGE and concerns about pupils having to work at a fast pace in S4. CS said that there would be no ‘glass ceiling’ and that setting would be possible. CS said that the key to making the BGE successful was good learning and teaching, that evaluation of teaching would be ongoing and that he was confident that teachers will be able to drive through the work at all levels. He also pointed out the additional teaching time in S4 now under the new timetable arrangements and that we would be working in partnership with other local schools. An informal ‘curriculum sub-group’ of parents who were working with the SMT had arisen in recent months - it was agreed that this sub-group would be formalised and other parents were welcome to join. Anyone wishing to do so should contact DA at stthomasofaquinpc@gmail.com.</p>	
<p>8. Fundraising</p> <p>It was agreed that some dates would be agreed for fundraising events for the next school year and we would then work on the detail of the events themselves.</p>	CG
<p>9. Dates for meetings in 2016/17</p> <p>These would be circulated and posted on the school website. Meetings will start at 6:45pm in future and the dates are:</p> <p>Tue 6th September 2016, Wed 26th October 2016, Thurs 8th December 2016, Tue 31st Jan 2017, Wed 22nd March 2017, Thurs 25th May 2017</p>	DA
<p>10. Any other business</p> <p>10.1 A parent raised the issue of uniform recycling – a sub group to look at uniform issues would deal with this.</p>	YP

11. Date of next meeting: Tue 6th September 2016 at 6:45pm	