

Minutes of Parenting Council Meeting held 1st September 2020 on MS Teams

Present:

Lesley Broadwood (LB) – Chair
Andrew Gillies (AG) – Vice Chair
Isabelle Jean Pierre (IJP) – Depute Headteacher
Christopher Santini (CS) – Headteacher

Parents:

Lisi Black; James Boardman; Josephine Beech-Brandt; Cathryn Broderick; Martin Clarke; Gaye Cleary; Julia Muyo de Bonroastro; Julie Dewar; Matthew Dolan; Leah Duffy; Catherine Gray; Louise Irvine; Moya Kilgallon; Clare Mackay; Andrea Manning; Simon Manning; Robert Marshall; Callum McCrone; Louise McSorley; Jonathon Midgeley; Claire Miller; Nancie Anderson-Moncrieff; Kirsty Mooney; Lorcan Mooney; Shona O'Brien; Lucia Ortisi; Jamie Penman; Jo Phillips; Alasdair Proudfoot; Emma Quinn; Joanne Ritchie; Kelly Rosbender; Liz Sams; Alan Seywright; Edwin Slater and Sue Widdicombe.

1. Welcome

Lesley Broadwood, Chair, welcomed all to the meeting, including members of the Senior Leadership Team. Mr Santini thanked staff, pupils and parents for making the start to school term positive in the circumstances.

2.1 Neighbourhood school / college arrangements.

St Thomas' pupils not allowed to go into other schools for National Qualifications. Headteachers will be meeting to discuss and look at preparing risk assessments, soft starts etc to allow pupils into other schools for lessons. A Quality Improvement Officer is auditing the City of Edinburgh Council's position. Pupils attending college will be attending online lessons from 7 September. All pupils who do not have ICT will be given by equipment by the school. Online teaching will continue until January.

2.2 Impact of COVID-19 on SQA results

In 2020, St Thomas undertook rigorous QA process and submitted estimates. Results:

S4: St Thomas's received 65% of pupils gaining 5 National 5s.

S5: 32% of pupils gained 5 Highers – same as last year

S6: 50% of pupils were awarded 5 Highers and 45% gaining 1 Advanced Higher.

The school is still waiting for new data (following the DFMs announcement of accepting teacher assessments) to be formally issued to compare with national, virtual and local data.

Mr Santini advised that when the school received original results from SQA many faculties were happy. However, one faculty was very upset and was preparing to raise a concern with the SQA. Some social subjects and drama were significantly down. Now this has been rectified, the data will be analysed and appropriate comparisons made.

2.3 Home learning arrangements

Pupil Equity Funding is financing a Wellbeing Hub in school. If a pupil was self-isolating, arrangements would be made via pupil support to send work home. The Pupil Support Officer would provide prompt contact with the family and ensure work is made available either to parent(s)/carer(s) and/or on MS Teams.

A concern was raised that this protocol had not been successful.

ACTION: Mr Santini stated he would arrange for a point of contact in the SLT to ensure swift resolution.

ACTION: Cllr Miller will raise concern to colleagues on the Education and Families committee re support to schools in the provision of work for pupils self-isolating.

Mr Santini advised that the school is coming to terms with the new routine.

Mr Santini stated that the school will be working on taking forward and building on the good work done on to support learning on MS Teams.

MS Team should be used for pupils who are not able to go for National Qualifications at another schools. Efforts being made to ensure this is in place.

A question raised about why lessons cannot be recorded live and broadcast through MS Teams or why the school/CEC is not linking up with other areas who are preparing online lessons.

It was noted that the demands of hybrid delivery will be significantly more demanding than the fully online model last term. There are equalities issues with on-line teaching and schools need support to develop online teaching expertise if it is to go beyond current practice. Live lessons – need to be a national conversation about how best to use the tech that is available to achieve high quality learning experience.

There will be no inspections this year. Education Scotland will be providing some additional support to pupils. The detail is awaited.

2.4 Catch-up for learners

Focus since 12 August has been on welcoming pupils back and learning.

Renewal Plan:

Phase 1 wellbeing and H&S – completed.

Phase 2 learning and teaching and equalities – due in October.

Mr Santini has now got a real focus in on learning and teaching to ensure gaps for pupils are met.

At the moment after school activities are not allowed, including additional catch up support. This will start when permitted.

Staggered starts impact on learning. S4-S6 pupils miss one hour of learning a week. There is also cleaning routine at the end of lessons and this impacts on learning. However, these mitigations are in place to allow all pupils to return.

A question was asked regarding whether the school day could be extended on some days to mitigate the loss of time on other days. Mr Santini reassured parents that everything was under constant

review and he mentioned that he was open to flipping S1-3 to start later, rather than S4-6, to balance out the impact of staggered starts.

2.5 School contingency planning

The school is taking cognisance of Scottish Government guidance and local guidance.

A H&S team has been formed comprising Ms Ritchie, Dr Wilson and Mr Herbison.

The contingency plan for Edinburgh schools is to provide 50% attendance and online learning if required due to lockdown/further restrictions. 50% attendance would be built up over 4 weeks. The Central Library has been allocated to St Thomas to allow additional space to facilitate 50% attendance. The first week of any future school closure would be a return to digital learning,

The school is planning for prelims and an extended prelim timetable for 2021.

2.6 Social distancing and face masks

The school follows the local authority guidance for social distancing:

- Staggered starts
- Reduced bells to allow a little bit more flexibility around start and end times of lessons
- Opening up of classrooms (as hall not able to be used during breaks)
- Plan to use Sacred Heart for S5 and S6 pupils, as a space for them
- Facemasks are obligatory – this is being complied with. Staff are not asking pupils why pupils not wearing face masks if that is the case.

By 7 September, S1 pupils will be allowed out at lunchtime. They have made a positive start to school.

2.7 Digital learning

Over the lockdown, pupils who did not have access to ICT were identified. iPads have been purchased and will be given to pupils accessing college.

At present there are no plans for live online lessons. This is being discussed locally and nationally in terms of the teacher contract.

Mme Jean Pierre is coordinating additional, emotional support for pupils who needs this. This involves the learning and nurture hub and the pupil support officer. The school is looking at extending the Place2B offer for parents as well as pupils.

3. Headteacher's report

Mr Santini reiterated his thanks to staff for their work and commitment during this unprecedented time. For example, making classrooms available to pupils.

Two pupils took on leadership to respond to Black Lives Matter during lock down and this has been a focus on the return to school. Five members of staff supporting the equalities group in planning the school response and actions to tackle racism. Twenty pupils have expressed an interest in supporting this work which will include:

1. Co-produced anti-racist lessons in RMPS.
2. Reflective piece of writing for pupils to promote learning about racist and bullying incidents.
3. House gatherings to reinforce ethos and anti-racist value.
4. Also looking at senior pupils acting as conduit for concerns when pupils do not feel confident speaking to staff.

A proposal for a Zebra crossing was refused last year. Mr Santini is asking the Pupil Council and the Parent Council to support this to achieve a safe route across Chalmers Street. Mr Santini asked Parent Council members to address concerns to their local councillors.

ACTION: Parent Council to write letter of support.

4. Parent Council events

Jo Phillips made some suggestions about possible events to bring the school community together and fund raise while COVID restrictions apply, for example a quiz, family sports challenges to raise money and an online Christmas concert.

Jo will put some ideas on paper and is looking for volunteers to support events.

Jo suggested an event for wider S1 parents.

ACTION: For parents to suggest ideas for future events to Jo.

5. Parent Council Vacancy

The position of secretary to the Parent Council is now vacant.

ACTION: Parents to contact LB if interested in the role.

6. AOB:

1. Important that parents know who to contact on Parent Council in relation to any issue. LB suggested that at least the Chair and Vice Chair email addresses should be on website.

ACTION: Email addresses to be made available of Chair and Vice Chair on the School website.

ACTION: For LB to confirm with Parent Council members whether they would be content for their email addresses to be shared with other Parent Council members.

2. The Parent Council asked Mr Santini to convey sincere thanks to staff for all the work carried out during the pandemic and in welcoming the pupils back.

Mr Santini will raise with staff request from Parent Council about how best to support the school and pupils during this period. The School made a request for art packs for pupils.

7. Future meetings

Next meeting 1st October 2020.

Following meeting 30th November 2020.