

**St Thomas of Aquin's High School**  
**Minutes of the Parent Council and Annual General Meeting**  
**1<sup>st</sup> October 2020**

<b>Present:</b>	<p><b>Parents:</b>  Andrea Manning, Simon Manning, Josephine Beech Brandt, James Boardman, Cathryn Broderick, Lesley Broadwood, Gaye Cleary, Andrew Gillies, Alan Seywright, Dorcas Owen, Jonathon Midgley, Ana De Bonrosto, Michael Gray, Jamie Penman, Lisi Black, Lorcan Mooney, Clare MacKay, Sue Widdicombe, Alastair Proudfoot, Emma Quinn, Therese O'Donovan, Jo Phillips, Tamasin Gray, Alasdair Proudfoot, Shona O'Brien, Julie Dewar, Julia Muvo de Bonrosto,</p> <p><b>School staff:</b>  Christopher Santini (CS), Stefania Mariani, Isabelle Jean-Pierre.</p>	
<b>Apologies:</b>	Viv Anderson, Fiona Bradley, Catherine Jacobs, Jo Kennedy, Claire Miller and Denise Simpson.	
<b>Welcome:</b>	Lesley Broadwood (LB) welcomed everyone and parents introduced themselves in the chat area.	
<b>Minutes from last meeting:</b>	<p>The following amendments needed to be made to sections 2.4 and 2.6 of the minutes, so that they read as follows:</p> <p><b>2.4 Catch-up for Learners</b>  All S1-S5 pupils miss 1 hour 15 minutes of learning every week, with each S6 losing up to the same 1hr 15min weekly depending on the individuals variable study timetabling in period 1. There is also a cleaning routine at the start and end of lessons and this impacts on learning. However, despite no other schools in Edinburgh or the Borders taking a staggered start approach these mitigations are in place to allow all pupils to return. It was pointed out that this significant loss of learning was detrimental and that due to the schools rigid timetabling method, was disproportionately affecting core subjects.</p> <p>It was asked what action the school had planned to prevent further loss, or to address the imbalance of lost learning across the curriculum.</p> <p>A question was asked regarding whether the school day could be extended on some days to mitigate the loss of time on other days. CS reassured parents that everything was under constant review and he mentioned that he may consider flipping S1-3 to start later, rather than S4-6, after Christmas to balance out the impact of staggered starts and early finishes. When it was pointed out that this change would come too late for those sitting prelims in January, CS mentioned that if there was enough demand for this he would consider looking into other options, but at this time no action would be taken.</p> <p><b>2.6 Social Distancing and Face Masks</b>  The School follows the local authority guidance for social distancing, and has elected to put the following discretionary procedures in place to aid with compliance:</p>	

	Subject to the amendments to the minutes, the document was approved as a true and accurate record. This was approved by Josephine Beech-Brandt (JBB) approved and seconded Andrew Gillies.	
<b>Matters arising:</b>	1. Christopher Santini (CS) confirmed arrangements for a point of contact within the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to ensure that pupils who are self-isolating are contacted promptly to ensure that work is available for them.	
	2. Councillor (Cllr) Claire Miller is raising parents concerns with the Education and Families committee with regards to supporting schools in the provision for work for pupils who are self-isolating. This is still in progress and the Cllr will provide an update to the Parent Council (PC).	CM
	3. PC to write a letter of support regarding the zebra crossing. Still to be completed but LB to get an update of current position from CS before drafting response.	LB/ CS
	4. Jo Phillips (JP) has received some responses with suggestions for future fundraising ideas. To be discussed later in meeting.	
	5. LB has received two enquiries regarding the vacant post of Secretary to the PC.	
	6. It was agreed that the email addresses for the Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary of the PC should be detailed on the school's website. LB to email Jo Ritchie to action.	LB
	7. LB followed up with parents on the PC regarding sharing email addresses. There is not currently a clear resolution to this and the action is still in progress. JBB keen for this to be action sooner rather than later to help improve PC responses to current issues.	LB
<b>Arrangements for parent evenings</b>	1. The City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) confirmed there are to be no physical meetings in school. The two options being considered: (1) teachers calling parents by telephones or (2) using laptop video calls. Preferred option is by telephone as concerned not all parents will have ability to use video calls. Compromise is only able to speak to one parent. The SLT's recommendation to be approved by union. The PC expressed concerns at the timetable for S4-6 parent evenings being at the Easter holidays as this was too late in the year for any action to be taken following teacher feedback before the SQA exams.	
<b>Continuous assessment of students</b>	1. At time of the meeting, the SQA was still in consultation with head teachers, deputies and unions with regard to examinations / assessments. The school is awaiting confirmation as to whether exams will go ahead and at what level. 2. At present the school is intending to have prelims in January 2021 but over an extended period to accommodate the restrictions of up to 50 pupils in a room at any one time. 3. It was asked if it is appropriate to include parents in the assessment process. CS felt it is best to leave to the teachers who are the professionals with detailed understanding of the standards and process. However, he did feel that a pupil and / or parental focus group should be considered to listen to their thoughts. 4. Another concern raised was the focus on short-term achievement. Pupils might develop a mindset which might not	

	<p>prepare them for a broader examination and reinforce long-term learning objectives.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. CS confirmed that the school will consider as much evidence as possible, with the most recent being most relevant. So for NQ5 reference would be made to S1-S3 tracked work.</li> <li>6. Concern was expressed regarding the pupils' high levels of stress given the number of assessments they are being asked to undertake. CS explained a Health &amp; Wellbeing survey is to be distributed to parents and pupils. Andrew Gillies from PC is to be involved in this and will feedback at the next PC meeting.</li> </ol>	AG
<b>Ventilation in the classrooms</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CEC and the Scottish Government state that there should be as much ventilation as possible.</li> <li>2. Currently at St Thomas' doors are left open and possibly windows as well. Pupils are allowed to wear their coats in the classroom. It was highlighted that some pupils were not aware of this. CS to communicate that pupils can wear coats in class to students.</li> <li>3. The Chief Education Officer is reviewing the minimum temperature rule, which is currently 16 degrees.</li> <li>4. It is a balancing act to ensure a healthy working environment.</li> <li>5. Every Monday the school's Health &amp; Safety team review the situation.</li> </ol>	CS
<b>Fundraising events</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. JP outlined a number of suggestions and was keen to progress some of them before the October break.</li> <li>2. 2020 by the end of year – a sponsored event to record 2020km before the end of the year. A flyer going out with three months to complete.</li> <li>3. Quiz Night - looking to use Microsoft Teams perhaps over two nights. Aiming for the end of November beginning of December. Donations to be given on the night.</li> <li>4. Online Christmas shop – Christmas cards, similar to the ones created at primary schools and perhaps wooden Christmas tree decorations made in CDT classes.</li> <li>5. Any other suggestions please get in touch with JP.</li> </ol>	JP     ALL
<b>Headteacher's Update</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CS explained that Health &amp; Safety support group are constantly reviewing the school's systems and quality assurance. They are currently considering a two week timetable.</li> <li>2. SQA's original results were issued on 4<sup>th</sup> August and revised results based on teachers estimates on 11<sup>th</sup> August. CS explained the results demonstrated that St Thomas' teachers have a good understanding of the pupils' performance as there was not a significant difference between the number of Highers obtained.</li> <li>3. However, a parent highlighted that the grades were relevant too, not just pass or fail, as the difference between the grades could affect a pupil's future plans. The stats did not show this level of detail.</li> <li>4. In previous years, a report was uploaded to the website itemising the SQA results with a more detailed breakdown. It was requested that these be added for 2019 and 2020. This was considered useful information for prospective parents.</li> <li>5. The S6 leadership team has been selected and they have: selected their chosen charity; are developing an online buddy</li> </ol>	CS

	system; organising a music concert and planning the school's Prom.	
<b>AOB</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There was discussion relating to how children can access water throughout the school day.</li> <li>2. Concerns were raised regarding the absence of practical activities carried out in Home Economics classes in S1 to S3. CS advised parents that due to the disruptions caused by Covid-19 the school needed to prioritise the delivery of practical lessons to those studying national qualifications.</li> </ol>	
<b>AGM</b>	LB welcomed parents to the second half of the meeting; the PC's Annual General Meeting.	
<b>7.</b>	<p><b>Chair's Report</b></p> <p>LB reported that 2019-20 had been her first year as Chair of the St Thomas of Aquin's PC. She stated that it had been a most unusual and challenging year and that many of the activities that the PC had planned to undertake could not take place due to the Covid-19 pandemic. She advised that the PC had worked to support the school where they had been able to and despite the pandemic, a number of activities had taken place.</p> <p><b>3. Recruitment</b> Earlier in the 2019-20 academic year LB supported the school with the recruitment of the Pupil Support Leader for St Andrew's House. She stated that it was a highly competitive interview process and that it was heartening to see the importance placed upon parental involvement in the process by the school.</p> <p><b>4. Communication</b> The PC continued to ensure that it communicates with parents both through the school mailing list and our own PC mailing list. Before the lockdown in March the PC endeavoured to have parent members at all school events, including parent / teacher evenings, so that PC representatives could speak to parents about what the PC does, and more importantly, to listen to parents about the matters that are important to them. LB stated that being visible, open and welcoming to all parents is key to the work of the PC.</p> <p><b>5. Online Parent Council meetings</b> She advised that due to the Covid-19 pandemic PC meetings moved online. LB thanked PC members, Andrew Gillies and Jo Kennedy and the school's Headteacher, Christopher Santini, for their support in making this a smooth transition. During the past two online meetings the PC had welcomed a greater number of parents to meetings, which enabled the PC to gain far greater insights into the views of parents. She hoped that this online provision will enable yet more parents to join PC meetings in the year ahead.</p> <p><b>6. Thanks</b> LB thanked the SLT and the school for their sterling work in supporting pupils and their learning over the particularly challenging months this year. She stated that the period of</p>	

	<p>distance learning and transition back to school in August was handled remarkably well and it was heartening to see our children returning to school with confidence. She added that there were still challenges ahead and that the PC's role is arguably more important than ever in terms of supporting the school during this tumultuous time.</p> <p>She added that a number of parents had moved on from the PC this year, and as such, she thanked Helen Field, Jason King and Colleen McCrone for their work in supporting the PC.</p> <p><b>Vice Chair's report</b></p> <p>Andrew Gillies (AG) reported that in line with the school improvement plan, the Health and Wellbeing sub-group worked collaboratively with the school to promote the values of the school and how these impact on improved wellbeing.</p> <p>Prior to lockdown, the group had agreed to run focus groups with pupils in each year group on how they see school values put into practice and look at any areas for improvement as a basis for formulating a plan. It was planned that the groups would be co-facilitated with the Pupil Council and dates had been identified for late March 2020. The focus was to look at health and wellbeing for the general pupil population.</p> <p>Clearly this work did not proceed as planned. Within the context of COVID, the wellbeing of pupils was brought into a renewed and sharper focus and the school has been working hard to ensure needs are met. AG advised that the group needed to review our approach in the light of COVID, including how we might undertake any activity given restrictions, with the school. Discussions will take place with Mme Jean Pierre about taking this forward. AG expressed his thanks to Jo Kennedy who has been the chair of the Health and Wellbeing sub-group.</p>	
8.	<p><b>Treasurer's report</b></p> <p>Tamasin Gray (TG), the Treasurer presented the Treasurer's report. The accounts were formally presented to the AGM. Please see the attached report for details.</p>	
9.	<p><b>Attainment and Outcomes sub-group's report</b></p> <p>James Boardman (JB), chair of the Attainment and Outcomes sub-group provided a report on the work of the sub-group. Details are contained within the sub-group's report, which is attached.</p>	
10.	<p><b>Fundraising report</b></p> <p>Jo Phillips (JP), the PC's lead for fundraising provided the AGM with a report on fundraising activity within 2019-20. Details are contained within her report, which is attached.</p>	

11.	<p><b>Appointment of new Parent Council members</b></p> <p>The following new members were appointed to the PC:</p> <p>Secretary – Alan Seywright (formally nominated and seconded)</p> <p>Parent member – Lisi Black</p> <p>Parent member – Gaye Cleary</p> <p>Parent member – Alasdair Proudfoot</p> <p>Parent member – Sue Widdicombe</p>	
<b>Next meeting</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> November 2020, at 6.30pm on MS Teams.	