

MINUTES

St Thomas of Aquin's Parent Council

Meeting on 20th September 2017

PRESENT:

Jo Kennedy (JK) – Chair
Fiona Bradley (FB) – Vice Chair
Tamasin Gray (TG) - Treasurer

Staff:

Christopher Santini (CS) – Acting Headteacher
Peigi Macarthur (PM) – Supporting Headteacher
Megan Gardner (MG) –Depute Headteacher
Isabelle Jean Pierre (IJP) – Acting Depute Headteacher
Jo Ritchie (JR), Business Manager

Parents James Boardman, Gaye Cleary, Christine Rigouleau, Stephanie O'Donohoe, Shona O'Brien, Denise Simpson, Philip Best, Jason King, Lindi Smith, Cluny Sheeler, Andrew Barnett, Johnathan Midgley, Josephine Beech-Brandt, Jason Bradley

Guests Councillor Claire Miller

Apologies: Dee Armstrong (DA) – Secretary, Father Nick Welsh, Alice Musamba, Catherine Gray, Caroline Bendall (CB) – Teacher Representative

1. Welcome

JK welcomed everyone to the meeting and there was a round of introductions.

2. New Members

Josephine Beech-Brandt had expressed an interest to join the parent council as a new member. This was approved (proposed by Jason Bradley and seconded by Stephanie O'Donohoe).

3. Minutes of the last meeting

These were approved but a query was raised about who they were distributed to. JK confirmed they were emailed to all parents who have given the PC email address. In future they will be emailed to all those on the school email address. JR to confirm what % of parent group this represented.

It was highlighted that often bulk emails can land in parent's junk mail. It was suggested a note to be included on the website, to check junk mail or recommend adding parent council email address to your contacts list.

4. Faith Sub Group Presentation

DS and JB presented the 'Summary of Faith Group Work: Report to Parent Council' alongside a more detailed report called 'Annex – What does it mean to be a Roman Catholic School' which are to be added to the website.

The Faith sub group detailed in their summary seven recommendations. A number of amendments to these were suggested. The PC approved the recommendations subject to these amendments.

CS thanked the working group for their supportive approach. He explained the school now has two permanent engaging RE teachers. They are keen to add RE to the curriculum for S6. There is a real enthusiasm to be involved in Caritas activities (38 senior pupils signed up) and a real openness to the Catholic Ethos within the school.

5. Feedback from Sub Groups

(a) Curriculum Group

JB reported the group meets regularly, not many issues have been raised recently, happy to be contacted if parents have any issues. 5-6 main points to highlight:

- School considered that 7 nationals is the ideal position, to increase number would require reduced hours on each subject;
- Subject choices improved, including 'travel' column which allows pupil to take subjects offered in other schools. Of more benefit to S6 but available to S5 too;
- Pupils Straw poll – pupils provide an indication of their subject choices which highlights potential issues for school and enables parents to support decision making. Generally, pupils getting subject choices, maybe 1 subject not preferred choice;
- Considering importance of additional Highers or advanced Highers in S6. Flexibility to tailor courses to meet pupils needs is working well;
- It was felt that the SQA website was a good resource particular providing course outlines. This should be communicated to parents and a link provided on the website.
- Area of difficulty at the moment is the timetabling of languages. 2 issues – primary school are offering 2 languages and this needs to continue in S1-S3, although concern this is too much for some; also issues with timetabling if pupil wishes to do science and a language. It was agreed that this would be discussed at the next meeting in particular the '1+2' project (2 languages).

It was agreed to set up a Curriculum Group email address and for this to be included on the website.

(b) Fundraising Group

TG reported that the Festival Fireworks evening had been a great success, raising £480 in total; £230 was donated to Home Economics Department to purchase BBQs and tables and the balance went to the general funds. It was agreed this event was on to be repeated.

Beer & Wine Tasting Evening 27th October, hosted by Tom Bruce-Gardyne. No expertise, required £10 per ticket, ½ price for S1 parents. Keen to get new parents. TG asked for help in selling tickets at the awards ceremonies.

Christmas Fair confirmed as Thursday 7th December.

Bank in healthy state of £2k, not including £2k set aside see notes from Senior

Leadership Team (SLT) report.

(d) New Sub Groups

JK explained always keen to identified issues that we as parent council can work on. One area is the representation on parent council. Is the PC reaching all the parents groups? We are looking into setting up an Equalities Sub-Group to ensure that the PC does it's best to represent as many parents as possible

6. Senior Leadership Team (SLT) Report

CS presented this report. See Annex Comments were as follows:

- **SQA Results** – CS offered to identify a date to discuss the results with the wider parent group. He did highlight the only bands not to outperform the 'virtual comparator' S4, Decile 3 & 9 due to pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Virtual comparator not skewed.
- **Vision & Values** – CS already spoken with teachers and pupils (through pupil council & Take 5) to identify mission statement for school. He is keen to discuss with parents too and asked for 2-3 parents to volunteer by Friday 22nd September
- **Fire Alarms**- CS explained 12 screechers (devices used to discourage malicious fire alarms) have been installed.
- **Request for parent council funds** – CS explained that originally the funds raised from last year's Christmas Fair were to be used for ICT equipment at the school. However, the CEC have confirmed they are funding a refresh of ICT equipment for schools which should happen between Christmas and March 2018. It was therefore felt that the PC funds should be directed to other areas, including textbooks for Spanish (£919), Music Technology computer (£400), P7 Transition Project (£75) and Science Sensors (£500).

The Parent Council agreed to this but there was concern that PC should not be seen to be funding essential equipment such as textbooks. CS explained that these were not essential textbooks. They were to be used to facilitate the '1+2' project which is over and above the curriculum essentials.

7. Parent Pay

JK explained that the PC had written to CEC regarding Parent Pay, confirming their support and understanding that it should reduce administrative burden for school offices but concerned that there is a surcharge of 1.5% on all payments.

Questions were asked if there were to be different charges for different payment methods and was this legal.

JR explained it was CEC that encouraged the schools to set up Parent Pay. At present staff training was still to be implemented. She confirmed it can only be used for dinner money at the moment and payments for trips etc would follow.

8. Parents Survey

After the success of the parent survey last year, JK confirmed it had been agreed to complete a survey again this year. Stephanie O'Donohoe has volunteered to

manage this process. The subgroups and SLT have been asked to provide questions for the survey.

9. New Recruitment Sub Group

A sub group is to be set up to support recruitment within the school. In order to take part in any recruitment exercise, parents need to complete relevant CEC training. This occurs approximately once a month and dates are always circulated through the PC email list.

12. Any other business Parent Pay, New Survey and Date for recruitment training were covered above.

No details of other clubs other than sports clubs on the website. Details of these to be added to website.

11 Date of the next meeting – Thursday 30th November 2017 6.45pm