

# MINUTES

## St Thomas of Aquin's Parent Council

Meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2016

### PRESENT:

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

### Staff:

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

### Parents

Simon Armstrong, James Boardman, Janice Baines, Dominic Fergus-Allen, Austin Flynn, Katarina Flynn, Tom Freeman, Mary Gray Chris Jones, Nancy Little, Andrea Manning, Jonathan Midgley, Eugene Mullan, Alice Musamba Purves, Shona O'Brien, Stephanie O'Donohoe. Jessica Privitera. Yvonne Pryor, Christine Rigouleau, Denise Simpson, Julie Slater, Joanne Thin, Michelle Thomson, Dianne Watters

**Guests** Alexia Gaitanou (Place 2 Be)

**Apologies:** Brenda Anne Cochrane, Naomi Neilson, Kitty Bruce Gardyne, Callum McCrone, Colleen McCrone, Hilda Stiven

1. Welcome	ACTION
<p>JK welcomed everyone to the meeting and there was a round of introductions.</p> <p><b>2. Introduction to new Head Girl and Head Boy</b></p> <p>The newly appointed Head Girl and Head Boy, Sophie Drury and James Rennie, attended the first part of the meeting, introduced themselves to parents and each said a few words about their experiences and career at the school. JR commented that he felt the selection process for the pupil leadership team had been fair and democratic and that pupils had had a voice. Parents asked them what improvements they thought might be needed at school. JR commented that there remained controversy about a social area at school for senior pupils and this remained to be resolved. An annexe of the library is available for revision and there is discussion at the moment about an area of the main hall also being allocated to senior pupils. SD told parents about the events that are planned this year for younger pupils organised by the pupil leadership team. A Halloween Disco for S1/S2 had already taken place and whilst it went well there was some disappointment with the level of uptake. SD and JR were keen to work on engaging more pupils to attend events like this and to make sure that they knew who the pupil leadership team was and felt confident to approach them. Planned events included charity week in November which would be in aid of Syria Relief, and S5/6 ceilidh and a bake sale. JK asked SD and JR whether there was anything in particular they thought the PC should be addressing? JR commented that the loss of form time since the timetable reorganisation meant that there was</p>	

sometimes a lack of information reaching pupils. Ways of improving this were discussed including using the TV screens in the hall and using the website. The school was also starting to use twitter and this could be a useful way of communicating. The school's twitter handle is @thomasofaquins

Parents thanked Sophie and James for attending and JK invited them to approach the Parent Council directly if they had any issues they wished to discuss in the future.

### **3. Place 2 Be**

Alexia Gaitanou (AG) from Place2Be attended the meeting with two of her colleagues. They gave a short presentation on the work of Place2Be – it coordinates the work of over 1000 counsellors in the UK in 280+ schools. They are working in 10 schools in Edinburgh. AG explained that early intervention was important in offering support to pupils and the work of Place2Be was 1:1 with individuals, in small groups and with whole class groups. There is also a self-referral drop-in service for pupils in S1-S3. AG also works with teaching staff to help them support pupils and she meets regularly with guidance staff to receive referrals. Parents of children who are referred to P2B are always informed and their consent sought. In addition, there is a counsellor specifically for the parents of any child known to the service. The services offered are completely confidential and available for a period of 4 weeks up to a full academic year. Parents asked how the service could be publicised to parents and CS reported that it was detailed on the website and that S1 to S3 pupils had all been given a letter about P2B to take home. AG said she will put posters up around school – she reported that the service was working well but that there was capacity for more pupils to be seen.

### **4. Minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2016.**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

### **5. Feedback from Parent Council sub-groups**

5.1 Curriculum - James Boardman (JB) fed back from the curriculum sub-group. 4 members of the PC had had two useful meetings with CS already. JB said that good structures were in place for coursing, tracking and monitoring. Meetings would continue.

5.2 Finance – this sub-group had not yet met. There were 3 volunteers including Tom Francis Freeman, who said that it was important to be clear what the remit of this group was. A date has now been set for the group to meet and go over the budget with CS.

5.3 Faith and Well-being – Denise Simpson (DS) was leading this group. The group had started to think about its remit and had been in contact with the Diocesan Office – a meeting with Margaret Murray from the diocese was due to be held. DS said that the role of the faith sub group was to provide a space to hold the spectrum of views of parents on faith issues and to feed those back to the Parent Council. If any parent wishes to contact Denise to discuss faith issues they may email her on [denisesimpson19@btinternet.com](mailto:denisesimpson19@btinternet.com). The minutes of the faith

<p>sub-group meetings are attached.</p> <p>5.4 <u>Constitution / how we work together</u> – a separate meeting would be held on 30<sup>th</sup> November to discuss constitution issues and how we work together as a PC. JK would email out an invitation to this meeting.</p> <p><b>6. Parent Survey</b></p> <p>There had been some responses to the parent survey but JK was keen to increase the number of responses and so the survey will remain open until December 10<sup>th</sup>. Members were encouraged to get as many parents as possible to participate in the survey. The survey can be found online at <a href="https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/RMVTBY6">https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/RMVTBY6</a>.</p> <p>The issue of parentmail came up again – FB had found it difficult to progress the discussion about this with CEC. PM suggested making contact with the digital learning team at CEC.</p> <p><b>7. Report from the Senior Leadership Team</b></p> <p>7.1 CS reported that this report would be from the SLT in future rather than just him as the Acting Headteacher.</p> <p>7.2 <u>Counselling services for pupils</u> – as requested at the last meeting IJP gave a detailed presentation on what counselling services were available for pupils. These included Place 2 Be, the school's own counsellor, who is available for 1:1 sessions, access to other services through GIRFEC (Getting It Right For Every Child) e.g. Richmond Hope's bereavement services, the school's community police officer, and the community learning officer who works with children with challenging behaviour, the educational psychologist, CAMHS. There were also several other organisations in the community that school / pupils could access depending on neighbourhood areas. IJP also mentioned the concept of 'the key adult' – which needed to be implemented. This is an appropriate adult for all young people to discuss their learning needs with. Other schools are already implementing this and there are a variety of models available including timetabled periods, suspended timetabled periods, horizontal / vertical groups. The intention is that this is the same member of staff for each child from S1 to S6 that they really get to know the pupils, help with targets, discuss reports and results etc. A model has been presented to staff for their feedback by the SLT – it will then be presented to the Parent Council.</p> <p>7.3 <u>Improvement plan</u> – CS is going to evaluate the improvement plan with staff every 6 weeks.</p> <p>7.4 <u>Staffing</u> (i)CS reported that appointments in English and Geography / Modern Studies had just been made (ii) an RE candidate was visiting the school shortly (iii) CS reported Lucy Lucacz would shortly be retiring and thanked her for her 38 years of service to the school.</p> <p>7.5 <u>Website</u> – CS thanked a number of people who had been instrumental in getting the new website up and running including Lee Wilson, Gaye Cleary, Jenny Payne, Jo Ritchie and Mr Ritchie. Going forward, faculties would be responsible</p>	<p><b>ACTION:</b></p> <p><b>ALL</b></p> <p><b>FB</b></p> <p><b>CS</b></p>
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for updating their own areas of the website.

7.6 Attainment insight data – CS presented a report on the school's attainment insight data and gave an explanation of the school's performance against its 'virtual comparator'. The virtual comparator consists of a sample group of school leavers from schools in other local authorities who have similar characteristics to the school leavers from the school in question – PM commented that for a school to perform well against its virtual comparator was a significant benchmark of very good performance. CS reported that St Thomas' outperformed its virtual comparator at every SIMD level (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation). He commented that a high proportion of our staff were SQA exam markers. Parents congratulated the school on this excellent performance. A parent asked whether detailed leaver destination data would be available – CS said this data would be available in February 2017.

7.7 Budget – CS reported that as at April 2016 the school overspend was £105k – this had been reduced by £45k. Faculties had been asked to take a 50% reduction in their budgets in 2015/16 – CS reported that he had increased their budgets to 75% of the pre-cut position in 2016/17. This meant that the remainder of the deficit was being borne at a whole school level. CS had identified further possible savings and expected that the school overspend would be reduced to £80k by April 2017. JK commented that there were further questions particularly in relation to the overspend that she hoped that the finance sub-group would explore with CS.

7.8 Awards ceremony – MG reported that the awards ceremony had gone very well and extended his thanks once again to Nick Barley for being an excellent guest speaker. MG thanked everyone who had helped to organise the awards ceremony and commented on how well the pupil leadership team had performed. She said that other achievements would be celebrated at monthly assemblies.

7.9 Internal audit – Jo Ritchie reported that the internal auditors had visited the school. Feedback from the audit was that the school did well on financial control, HR control, IT, child protection and data management. Parents congratulated the school on the good feedback from the audit.

## **8 Fundraising report**

8.1 The calendar had just gone to print and it was hoped that sales would be successful.

8.2 There would be a fundraising event – a Christmas Fayre – on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> December.

## **9 Any other business**

9.1 P7 Information Evening – JK and FB would be attending the information evening for prospective parents and pupils on 31<sup>st</sup> October to speak about the work of the Parent Council.

**10 Date of next meeting:** Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2016 at 6:45pm.