

MINUTES

St Thomas of Aquin's Parent Council

Meeting on 19th September 2018

PRESENT:

Jo Kennedy (JK) – Chair
Dee Armstrong (DA) – Secretary

Staff:

Christopher Santini (CS) – Acting Headteacher
Isabelle Jean Pierre (IJP) – Acting Depute Headteacher

Parents

Josephine Beech-Brandt, Raymond Bienek, James Boardman, Kitty Bruce Gardyne, Julie Dewar, Jason King, Andrea Manning, Robert Marshall, Callum McCrone, Jennifer McKenna, Sean McKenna, Tanya McLaughlin, Louise McSorley, Shona O'Brien, Stephanie O'Donohoe, Dorcas Owen, Montserrat Santandreu, Lindi Smith, Cluny Sheeler, Denise Simpson, Louise Skelly

Apologies: Fiona Bradley, Fr Kevin Douglas, Cllr Claire Miller, Christine Rigouleau, Simon Armstrong

	ACTION:
<p>1. Welcome</p> <p>JK welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the new school year and there was a round of introductions.</p> <p>2. Minutes of the AGM meeting held on 24th May 2018</p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting were approved.</p> <p>3. Issues raised by S1 parents</p> <p>A number of discussion items were put forward by parents who were new to the school:</p> <p>3.1 Parent Pay – it remained unclear to some parents how ParentPay worked. CS said that information on it had been sent out but that the school would also put this information on the school website.</p> <p>3.2 Homework apps – parents commented that it would be easier to keep track of homework if some of the available homework apps were used. CS explained that unfortunately Edmodo was no longer able to be used because it failed to meet GDPR conditions. The City of Edinburgh Council was currently looking into alternatives but no decision had yet been made. In the meantime pupils and parents are encouraged to use the pupil planner.</p>	<p>CS</p>

3.3 School start and finish times – a parent highlighted some research which suggested that a later start to the school day was beneficial for teenagers. CS said that he was open to considering timings but that we needed to take into account issues like travelling time for both staff and pupils and he commented that the entire parent forum and staff unions would need to be consulted about such a significant change. CS pointed out the under GIRFEC some pupils already have a 'soft start'. Another parent who was familiar with the research commented that there was debate about the issue and that there was research that suggested that early bedtimes and restricted use of electronic devices in the evening had more of an impact on teenagers.

3.4 Website – there were some gaps in the information on the school website. The key dates information was missing and information about open evenings was inaccurate. CS said that staff sickness had led to a delay in getting the website updated. He would try to get the key information added ASAP.

3.5 Use of mobile phones at school – a parent had commented that she felt mobile phones were used too much by pupils at school during breaks and wondered about a ban on use during the school day. CS said that members of the SLT were on duty during every break period and regularly encouraged pupils to interact socially with each other rather than spend time on mobiles. Sometimes mobile phones are used in the classroom as a learning aid with teachers' permission. CS said he was against a blanket ban and wanted to be flexible and pragmatic in this digital age. He reassured parents, however, that abuse of mobile phones e.g. taking photos without consent was taken very seriously. It was agreed that it was important to distinguish between the presence of technology and bad behaviour. CS suggested that an ICT sub group could look at this issue with him and invited parents to participate. Additionally he is looking for support from parents to develop an IT vision for the school.

4. S6 study space

A parent had written to the PC to raise the lack of study space for S6 students who were between lessons. CS said that there was a timetable showing S6 students when the sports hall was free and that there were 14 spaces in the library. Those who had free periods at the start of the day were allowed to arrive at school later. JK suggested that we invite the Head Girl and Head Boy to the next meeting and ask them to comment on it having gathered views from their peers in the meantime. Another parent whose eldest child had left S6 in the summer commented that anxieties about lack of study space had not been borne out and that it all worked out OK in the end.

5. SLT Report

The SLT Report is attached in full at Appendix A. Some key points noted were:

5.1 The interview panel for the Depute Headteacher post was due to be held on 11th October. Fiona Bradley would be the parent member on the panel.

5.2 During a wider discussion about staffing a parent mentioned her concern that films were being used in the classroom when teachers are absent. CS reiterated that he expects meaningful work to be set in all lessons and that films should only be used in exceptional circumstances. He wants to hear from parents if they feel

CS

<p>this is continuing to happen.</p> <p>5.2 CS presented attainment data in a new format that had been agreed with the curriculum sub-group. CS was that attainment as a whole was very good and JK congratulated all staff on behalf of the PC for such a good set of results. She commented that the school offers a wide variety of subjects at all levels and noted that it's possible to get high grades and that this is achieved year on year. Having this clear data will inform parents. There were problems on one or two departments to do with a change of the format of the exam – the school was aware of those and had a plan to address them. JB, a parent member of the curriculum sub-group, said that achievement in school was not limited to SQA attainment and added that all children's achievements across the board need to be considered. JK reiterated that wellbeing, equality and inclusion were important and noted that a group including herself, IJP , Andrew Gillies and Place2Be were working wellbeing at the moment.</p>	<p>CS</p>
<p>Parents asked for the new exam results data to be put on the website.</p> <p>6. Multicultural Event</p> <p>The fundraising group was arranging a multicultural food based event for 11th October. The purpose of the event was to reach out to families from all cultures. CS would promote the event via the school email system and DA would email parents via the PC mailing list.</p> <p>7. Sports sub group</p> <p>It was disappointing that the sports sub group had not been adequately involved in the sports fayre event at the start of term. The two parents, Colleen McCrone and Naomi Neilson, who had been working hard on the sports sub-group both have other commitments that will limit their time for it going forward. Other parents were invited to please join to push this issue forward.</p> <p>8. Date of meetings for the rest of the year</p> <p>Thursday 6th December 2018 Tuesday 29th January 2019 Wednesday 20th March 2019 Thursday 23rd May 2019</p>	