

MINUTES

St Thomas of Aquin's Parent Council

Meeting on 19th February 2019

PRESENT:

Jo Kennedy (JK) – Chair
Fiona Bradley (FB) – Vice Chair
Dee Armstrong (DA) – Secretary

Staff:

Christopher Santini (CS) – Acting Headteacher
Isabelle Jean-Pierre (IJP) - Acting Depute Headteacher
Peter Green (PG) - Acting Depute Headteacher

Parents

Simon Armstrong, Andrew Barnett, Jo Beech Brandt, James Boardman, Kitty Bruce Gardyne, Julie Dewar, Helen Field, Andrew Gillies, Catherine Gray, Tamasin Gray, Jason King, Pauline Lockhart, Colleen McCrone, Callum McCrone, Jennifer McKenna, Tanya McLaughlin, Louise McSorley, Catherine Midgley, Jonathan Midgley, Alice Musamba Purves, Naomi Neilson, Shona O'Brien, Stephanie O'Donohoe, Dorcas Owen, Denise Simpson, Lindi Smith

In attendance: Alexia Gaitanou – Place 2 Be

<p>1. Welcome – JK welcomed everyone to the meeting and there was a round of introductions.</p> <p>2. RSA Schools Art Award Success</p> <p>CS was delighted to report that our pupils had done very well in the recent Royal Scottish Academy Schools Art Awards:</p> <p>1st Prize in the Intermediate Section – Millie McArdle Humphreys 2nd Prize in the Senior Section - Asya Yildirim Highly commended awards also went to Max Kulczycki, Eve Woehrling and Lauren Stephens</p> <p>Congratulations to them all!</p> <p>3. Minutes of the meeting held on 19th September 2018</p> <p>3.1 Correction to the list of attendees – James Boardman was present at the last meeting.</p> <p>3.2 There is no more information on new homework apps at the moment.</p> <p>3.3 There is no update as yet on the ICT subgroup – CS will be meeting with members of the attainments and outcomes group to consider how ICT will fit in.</p>	<p>ACTION:</p>
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3.4 The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

3. School based counselling - Place 2 Be

Alex Gaitanou spoke about the school's counselling service, Place2Be. A TES article on school based counselling that Alex circulated is attached at Appendix 1. Alex reported that Place2Be works with individual pupils, parents and staff and 398 counselling sessions were offered last year. When Place2Be surveyed pupils using the service they reported that some of their concerns included relationship problems with friends and family, their looks, sleep problems, not doing well at school. Overall pupils felt optimistic and resilient and did not report very much bullying. St Thomas's is one of only two high schools in Edinburgh offering Place2Be. A key part of the work involves offering staff different perspectives on ways through some issues and different ways of thinking about pupils' problems generally. Alex is involved in training key adult teachers. CS values the service offered by Place2Be and wants to allocate funding to it for the next 3 years from Pupil Equity Funding.

4. Updates from sub groups

4.1 Health and wellbeing – this group will keep school based counselling on its agenda. This sub-group has now been formed and has started to meet and is asking the key question – how do we know our children are flourishing at school? Members are Jo Kennedy, Andrew Gillies, Louise McSorley and Tanya McLaughlin. Any other parents interested in joining are very welcome – contact us at stthomasofaquinpc@gmail.com to find out more.

4.2 Attainment and outcomes – this group started 18 months ago and has completed a piece of work looking at capturing outcome and achievement data. It is now actively looking to recruit new members and will be looking at outcomes across all ability levels in an inclusive way. It is planning to link in with discussions about how ICT is used in the school. The next meeting is on 22nd March at 9am – contact us at stthomasofaquinpc@gmail.com if you are interested in joining.

5. Diversifying the Parent Council

The Parent Council is continuing in an active drive to more accurately represent the diversity in the school. We are now offering refreshments at meetings to try and lure you along! In addition we have emailed an invitation to the meeting using the school email system which gets sent to all parents. In the survey to parents that we are currently preparing we will be asking what barriers there are to you coming along to meetings and getting more involved. It was agreed that the International food event that was held last year would this year be merged with the school's Languages Day event.

6. SLT Report

The SLT report is attached in full at Appendix 1. In particular, CS noted:

- interviews for the permanent Depute Headteacher post would be held in early March

- a new Music teacher had recently been recruited who has experience of staging performances and leading choirs

7. Treasurer's Report

TG gave the meeting details of the small grant bids that had been received. As suggested by a parent present, It was agreed that we would look into donation of a centrifuge from a university before deciding to purchase.

8. Update from Council on Recruitment of Permanent Headteacher

Lorna Sweeney, who line manages secondary school headteachers at the Council, attended the meeting to discuss this item.

The advert for the post was ready to go live in MyJobScotland on Friday 22nd February and would be open for 3 weeks. In view of the difficulties in the past with attracting sufficient candidates, Parent Council members had agreed to fund an additional advert in the Times Educational Supplement. This would cost £799 and funds would be allocated from those raised by the Parent Council. The schedule for the process is:

Closing date 17th March
 Long leet meeting 19th March
 Long leet interviews 25th March
 Short leet interviews 2 April

The interview panel would comprise 2 parents (Jo Kennedy and Fiona Bradley), Lorna Sweeney, a Quality Improvement Officer, a peer headteacher (Michael McGee from St Augustine's), 2 city councillors (probably Ian Perry and Alison Dickie) one of whom would chair the panel, and a Church representative (Monsignor Tony Duffy from St Cuthbert's). Pupils would give candidates a tour of the school.

The draft TES advert will be circulated to those interested in commenting before Friday 22/2/19. Those present were asked to put forward their ideas for questions for the interview to JB and FB by 6th March.

9. Any other business

9.1 Several parents offered to support sports coaching in the school. The Health and Wellbeing Group are taking this up with Madame Jean Pierre.

9.2 A parent commented that the S3 trip to Rome had been cancelled and asked if there could be another trip organised for S3. This would be fed back to CS.

9.3 A parent commented that it was not possible to choose both History and Geography in S4 and above. This was referred to the Outcomes and Attainment subgroup.

10. Date of future meetings

Wednesday 20th March 2019 @ 6pm Thursday 23rd May 2019 – AGM	
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Senior leadership team report February 2019 Parent Council – 3 action point areas.

1. Staffing:

- Permanent Depute Head Teacher advert closes February 19th 2019.
- Permanent Music Teacher for Performing Arts interview took place on Tuesday 19th
- Fixed-term Geography teacher in place – Mrs Moreno until June 2019.
- Phased return for Graphic Communication Teacher - I have written to parents whose pupils have been affected and a plan is in place to support the teaching of SQA courses.
- The Temporary Modern Language Teacher in place – Mr McCombie. Ms Main returning in August.
- Pupil Support Officer Candidate: Mrs R Murray in place.

2. Learning and Teaching: St Thomas' learns

- Mr P O' Connor – operational lead on learning and teaching which includes monthly meetings of the learning & teaching group and sharing good practice at staff meetings.
- St Thomas' Learns – Draft name for the rebranded school newsletter which is developing into a termly L&T newspaper. Easter version being completed as we speak.
- Sharing classroom experience – a collaborative approach to achieving the very best learning experience for pupils. For May colleagues will share their good practice and identify areas they wish to improve upon. SLT and Mr O Connor will plan timeslots so colleagues can visit colleagues to experience peer learning and teaching episodes.
- International links – I am looking to put in place an International Education co-ordinator role to lead learning out with the school context. The school will build upon the Erasmus links in Paris made by the school cluster and Madame Jean-Pierre, as well as looking to link with schools in Hong Kong and Ireland.

3. Tracking and Monitoring:

- CEC are supporting all secondary school with a tracking and monitoring system called Edict.
- The system will support the school in tracking and monitoring S1-S3 pupils within the curriculum for excellence levels and support pupils and parents with data on identifying progress and next steps.