

MINUTES

St Thomas of Aquin's Parent Council

Meeting on 20th March 2019

PRESENT:

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

Staff:

Christopher Santini (CS) – Acting Headteacher
Jo Ritchie (JR) - Business Manager

Parents

Jo Beech Brandt, James Boardman, Martin Clarke, Helen Field, Catherine Gray, , Monika Kraus, Tanya McLaughlin, Clare Mackay, Andrea Manning, Robert Marshall, Alice Musamba Purves, Shona O'Brien, Christine Rigouleau, Montserrat Santandreu, Denise Simpson, Lindi Smith

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

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 19th Feb 2019

2.1 The previous minutes need amending to show that Louise Skelly (not Louise McSorley) is a member of the Health & Wellbeing Sub-Group. This group will be meeting with Isabelle Jean-Pierre soon.

2.2 Diversification of the PC – FB and Stephanie O'Donohoe had met to prepare the parents' survey. They would be gathering information on under-represented groups of parents.

2.3 The headteacher advert had closed and interviews would be held on 2 April.

3. SLT Report

CS presented the SLT report which is attached in full at Appendix 1. In particular he noted re: staffing that:

3.1 Isabelle Jean Pierre had been appointed substantively to the post of Depute Headteacher.

3.2 Interviews for a CL in Computing Science would be held shortly – the vacancy had arisen owing to the retirement of Tricia Green who had worked at St Thomas' for over 20 years.

3.3 The Support for Learning post (arising owing to IJP's promotion) would be advertised and interviewed shortly.

3.4 Mr James Kennedy had recently been appointed music teacher.

3.5 A parent raised the issue of pupils wishing to study 2 modern languages at National 5 essentially having to 'crash' the second language at National 5 in one year in S4, as although the pupils have 'experience' of a second language in S3 they are only actually following a course in one. The parent stated that their child did not feel confident of their ability successfully to prepare for a National 5 in one year, so they had opted not to pursue the second language, which was a source of regret for the parent. CS explained that through the restructuring of the school curriculum St Thomas' pupils can now experience 2 Languages in S1-3 and study both French and Spanish in S4, S5, and S6 at national qualification levels. He commented that it takes time to restructure a curriculum and to support the Modern Language Faculty to deliver 2 languages and that the school is offering more access to Languages than before the restructuring. JB commented that the languages issue can be kept under review by the Outcomes and Attainment sub-group.

3.6 A parent asked about whether there would be an evaluation of the implementation of the Broad General Education (BGE). She had some concerns about time available for courses to be completed in time for exams – subjects with more timetabled hours in S3 are able to finish the curriculum quicker than those with less time. CS commented that this would be the first year that students who had undergone the BGE would be presented for exams and he thought that the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) would probably want to have 4/5 years of exam data before reviewing the BGE. CS commented that CEC looks at curricula across all schools and tries to ensure that there is equity of subject provision. JB commented that the BGE enforces breadth in S3 with specialisation not until in S4 and that this may make things more difficult for some pupils. Discussion about the impact of the BGE can be taken forward in the Outcomes and Attainment sub-group.

3.7 A parent asked CS about the allocation of pupils to key adult groups and was concerned that BME pupils seemed to be grouped together – CS assured her that this was not the case and explained that pupils were allocated in family groups so that siblings would be in the same group.

4. Behaviour of S3 pupils

CS was concerned about the disruptive behaviour of a small number of S3 pupils – there had been a number of complaints from local shops recently about the rowdy behaviour of pupils at lunchtime which was intimidating to other customers. The new school police liaison officer PC Matt McPherson had been working alongside the SLT on this. CS was asking for parents' support in encouraging pupils to behave responsibly at lunchtime. Most pupils' behaviour is exemplary, he said, but a small number were getting into trouble e.g. Sainsbury's had recently banned some pupils for throwing juice around. This

led on to a discussion about access to recreational drugs in the local community which had coincidentally been brought to the PC's attention by a concerned parent.

5. Access to recreational drugs in the local community

Parents expressed concern about access to recreational drugs in the local community and wanted to raise awareness about the issue to other parents. It seems to be relatively easy for pupils to purchase cannabis from dealers who are easily contactable in the neighbourhoods surrounding the school and is apparently particularly an issue for 15/16 year old boys. CS assured parents that there have been no incidents of drugs being sold by pupils on school premises. PC McPherson is aware of the issue, which very much affects neighbouring schools also, and there are undercover police officers working on the issue in the area. Parents commented that pupils sometimes pool lunch money to buy cannabis which is then shared, so it may not be immediately obvious to parents that much money is being spent on it. Concerns were expressed that the cannabis for sale is particularly potent and often mixed with other hazardous substances. Community police officers in the area have warned parents about the incidence of psychosis triggered by cannabis in young users. Parents and staff agreed that being aware and maintaining an open dialogue with our children about this issue is very helpful. It was agreed that the Parent Council would invite PC McPherson to a future meeting once he had settled into his new role to talk about the issue again.

9. Any other business

9.1 The school was undertaking a consultation on changing the house name of St Kentigern's to St Patrick's. More details in Appendix 1.

9.2 A parent was concerned that she had experienced difficulty contacting a member of staff to discuss a particular issue about her child. CS said that he would speak to her about this separately and commented that the communication policy was on the school website.

10. Date of future meetings

AGM on 30th May 2019

Senior leadership team report March 2019 Parent Council – 3/4 action point areas.

1. Staffing:

- Permanent Depute Head Teacher – Congratulations to Madame Jean-Pierre.
- Curricular Leader of Computing Science and ICT candidates will be interviewed in April/May
- Support for Learning Leader post to be advertised.
- Headteacher interviews to be held on Monday 25th of March.

2. 2019-20 Timetable:

Date	Action
November 4th week (S2 P&C Info)	S2 into S3 personalisation & choice parents' info. evening
January 2nd week (S2 P&C in PSE starts)	2 week S3 personalisation & choice window (S2 pupils)
January 4th week (S2 P&C in PSE completed)	S3 personalisation & choice completed (S2 pupils)
February 1st week	CLs sent S3 pupil names to lead on classes
February 1st week (S4 P&C starts)	2 weeks S4 coursing window (S3 pupils)
February 3rd week	S4 5 coursing parents' information evening
February 3rd week (S4 P&C completed)	S4 options completed (S3 pupils)
March 1st week	CLs sent S3 pupil names to lead on classes
March 1st week (S5-6 P&C starts)	2 week S5-6 coursing window
March 3rd week (S5-6 P7C completed)	S5-S6 options completed (S4-5 pupils)

April 1st week	CLs to look at class lists and identify rationale for over-subscribed classes. Liaise with DHT and PSLs
April 2nd week	S6-S3 TT completed

3. **Developing and enhancing pupils' high expectations:**

- **School uniform:** school tie, white shirt, black trousers/skirt, black shoes
- **The achievement of all pupils:** All pupils to be successful in their studies
- **Attendance after break & lunchtime:** Pupils to be on time for 3rd and 6th lessons.
- **In-school break & lunchtime:** Switch of phones and talk to one another.
- **Wellbeing of pupils:** Acting HT will work with parents and pupils to support risk taking behaviour.

4. **Change of House name:** St Kentigern's House to be change to St Patrick's House.

- The Feast Day for St Kentigern is on the 13th January and S4-6 pupils are generally out on prelim leave or sitting prelims and cannot participate in celebrations. The Feast Day also is 2 weeks from the School Feast Day of St Thomas of Aquinas.
- St Kentigern is very much associated with Glasgow and there is not as much relevance to our school than a National Saint like St Patrick, who was born in Scotland in 387.
- St Patrick's Feast day is in March and we would be able to ensure a whole school celebration with all pupils included.
- St Thomas' has very strong links with Ireland in terms of history, staff, pupils and the future links with an Irish secondary school.