

MPiP Minutes: Wednesday 13th January, 7pm, School Staff Room

1. Apologies:

Donna Sim, Kathryn Michie, Joanne Evans, Elaine Yeats, Alastair Beaton, Rebecca McLennan, Lesley Buchan, Hazel Fraser.

Attendance:

Leah McKinnon, Ruth Scott, Gary Donald, Joanne Lord, Carol Harper, Jane Brown, Helena McKerron, Jill Good

2. Minutes of Last Meeting and Updates

The minutes of the last meeting were approved with no updates or amendments.

3. Matters Arising

- Malcom Grant from Active Schools Aberdeenshire gave a presentation on this programme. Active Schools is a national program designed to encourage sport and physical activity in P1-S6 children. The aim is to encourage and support pupils to reach their full potential through physical activity and sport. Active Schools Aberdeenshire has a number of volunteer coaches who run various sports classes including football, yoga, basketball, karate, table tennis and tennis. Anyone who is interested in volunteering as a coach will be given relevant training and all transport costs are reimbursed. Information about the services provided can be found on the Active Schools Aberdeenshire website and Facebook page, and all information relevant to Meldrum School children will be on the school website.
- A parent has emailed concerns regarding the new morning system in the early stages playground. Her concerns relate to congestion around the school gate after the first bell which can cause problems for people trying to exit and enter the playground. A suggested solution was opening the second gate in the playground and having one gate for entry and another for exit. Another concern was congregation around the school gate as parents watch and wave to pupils. The suggestion solution was to allow parents to congregate at the bottom of the playground. Alastair gave this response, presented by Carol Harper in his absence:

‘To date only two parents/carers have contacted me directly regarding the Infant Playground protocol we put in place from 26th October 2015 following discussion and agreement with MPiP at our August 2015 meeting. Both raised their concerns/reservations at our parent interviews on 6th October last year and neither has been in touch with me since to discuss or share any continuing reservations/issues. We currently have 156 P1-3 children assembling in the Infant Playground of a morning and since the introduction of the new system, which was initially suggested and supported fully by MPiP in August, only two parents have voiced concern.

The steps taken by the school this year, with the full support of Parent Council, have addressed the concerns expressed by many parents in August 2014 and August 2015

namely: 'the playground is chaotic in the morning with parents crowding the lines and lots of noise' (MPiP minutes of 26.8.15). Furthermore, all infant staff and the school's SMT have noted and commented upon the positive, tranquil and purposeful start to the children's learning day that has arisen since the new protocol has been implemented.

Parent Council may wish to consider issuing advice to parents on how best to support the school's infant playground policy.'

Leah McKinnon and Carol Harper met with an Aberdeenshire Council representative some time ago and were informed that the second gate would need work to bring it up to a usable level. LM to liaise with Aberdeenshire Council about this. The suggestion of allowing parents to congregate at the bottom of the playground was deemed to be unpractical as pupils would be turning round in their lines to wave to parents. Jane Brown noted that ensuring the P1-3 children enter and exit the school building safely and happily has been a challenge for number of years due to the increasing number of children and the layout of the building and playground. Various ways to improve this have been considered in the past and recent changes have addressed many of the concerns raised. MPiP is to issue advice to parents regarding safety and consideration outside the gate in the morning and at pick up. Also to be mindful of keeping dogs away from the school gate.

- Charities, individuals and community groups are eligible to apply to ScotRail's 'ScotRail in the Community' fund for grants of up to £5000 to support and develop plans for Cultural and Arts community projects. Would Parent Council like to discuss any thoughts on such projects/initiatives within our community? Malcolm has already been in touch with Craig Buchan re a bid for school football, but has advised that only the Parent Council is allowed to put in an application due to the annual budgets criteria that is contained in the application form.

4. Head Teacher's Update

School Roll

The school roll currently stands at 363 pupils in Primary and 87 pupils in Nursery. We're expecting the Primary roll to increase to around 365 in the next week or two. Come April and the start of the summer term, Nursery will be all but full, with just a couple of Enhanced Nursery Places for children with Additional Support Needs available. After a quiet spell, we look once again to be taking referrals for Extended Nursery Provision, and it's likely that we'll have two or three children accessing our full day provision in the term ahead.

Staffing

As mentioned in Friday's newsletter (hard copy went out to all families when we reopened on Monday) our new School Administrator, Mrs Michelle Meyer, has now taken up post. For the first time since early September we're back to a full Office compliment.

Over the course of the session we will be welcoming back Mrs Mackay and Mrs Elder from maternity leave. Mrs McKee will return from her maternity leave early next session. All three teachers have expressed a wish to return to work on reduced hours/job share basis. The Authority is keen to know schools' staffing positions for session 16.17 within the next few days, so we're already looking to see if we can accommodate the above teacher requests. With P1 registration for next session having just started on Monday 11th January, it's proving quite difficult to confirm our likely staffing when we're not yet in a position to gauge our projected school roll for August 2016!

Buildings

Work on the conversion of our Computer Suite to a 16th classroom was finally completed in late December – some 16 weeks behind schedule.

Visitors to the school will be aware that we continue to have major problems with the opening and closing of the main door at the school office – these issues have been on-going since early December and are still in the process of being resolved.

Although we've not heard from the Authority so far this term, we still anticipate that our Sensory Room will be kitted out towards the end of this month. The provision of a Sensory Room is one of the key resources being provided by Aberdeenshire Council to all Enhanced Provision schools.

General Info

As detailed in the January newsletter:

* Registration Week for children starting Primary 1 in August 2016 will be from Monday 11th January to Friday 15th January 2016.

* Nursery Enrolment for session 2016.17 runs from Monday 18th to Friday 29th January.

School Transport

I've added this to the Parent Council agenda for MPip information re the school's on-going issues with Burns Coaches and the Public Transport Unit (PTU).

Throughout December I was in regular communication with families in the Bourtie/Airyhillock area regarding issues with school transport. During the first 10 days of December Burns Coaches operated their Winter Route on five separate occasions.

The Winter Route was drawn up in consultation with PTU, parents, Burns Coaches and myself in response to service issues over the winter of 13.14 and was to be put into use 'as a last resort' when snow and ice made it dangerous, unsafe and impractical to undertake the normal bus route.

Last winter (14.15) Burns Coaches consistently operated the Winter Route and Meldrum School was frequently, and almost exclusively, the only school to post 'changes to bus route' bulletins on the Aberdeenshire Adverse Weather web page. I raised my concerns about this with the PTU on several occasions last session.

In August 2015 I raised my concerns with PTU well ahead of winter to get clarification for both school and parents of conditions when it would be necessary to operate the Winter Route. PTU agreed to meet with Burns Coaches and the school before the October holidays to iron this out, but no meeting took place – the Transport Officer in charge left the Council before the October break and was only replaced in early December. Throughout December I was in regular contact with the new Transport Officer, Sean Jamieson, not only to seek clarification of when the Winter Route should be operated, but also for details of pupil pick-up points on the alternative route. Despite having met with Mr Jamieson in person, I'm still waiting for clarification on both my points. I also raised the issue that secondary school children from the Bourtie/Airyhillock area attending Meldrum Academy continued to be transported to school as normal both this winter and last.

I've raised this with the Parent Council as the situation is extremely frustrating:

* Given the lack of clarity as to the Winter Route's alternative pick-up points, children frequently miss school altogether forcing parents to make alternative childcare arrangements, cancel their work commitments or delay their working day to transport their children to school themselves.

* Burns Coaches' decision to operate the Winter Route (essentially when parents and school feel it unjustified) is also extremely time consuming and impacts on the Senior Management Team's workload two hours before the start of school – I immediately update the School Emergency Telephone Line, post an update on the Council's Adverse Weather website and contact Carol Harper (DHT), who then posts an update on the school website.

As a school we would welcome MPip's support in raising the profile of this situation with the Public Transport Unit, help both parents and school receive total clarity on pupil pick-up points when the Winter Route is operated, and clarify exactly what conditions should prevail before the contracted bus operator initiates the Winter Route.

* For info Burns Coaches called at 7.48 this morning to again operate their Winter Route. One of the parents affected advised that she had already been out along the route earlier in the morning and she thought things were fine.

Restorative Approach (JB)

Jane Brown reported that the Restorative Approaches (RA) development plan is currently on schedule. This term:

- MPiP Year Group Reps will have the opportunity to take part in an RA awareness session in February
- The School House Captains and Vice House captains will be trained to deliver RA sessions to classes across the school
- Teachers are working with their classes to develop Class Expectations which link to the United Nations' Children's Rights
- Class Expectations will then be compiled to create School Expectations which will replace Golden Rules around February midterm.
- During February In-Service, teachers will begin to develop a new curricular experience for children across the school which will take the place of Golden Time from Term 4 onwards. This new experience will be focused on relationship building sessions within classes, year groups and across the school.

5. Treasurer's Report

Income

£675 from Cauliflower Cards.
£2325.39 raised by Christmas Fayre.
£323.50 from Halloween parties.
£168.15 from EasyFundraising.
£425.60 from Rag Bank.
£440.60 from Spree books.
£104.60 House Colour Tshirt sales.
£339.45 Aberdeenshire Council funding.

Expenditure

£55.70 Footballs for the school teams.
£142.61 Snacks for Christmas parties.
£227.25 New books for school library.
£68.00 P7 school diary for 14/15.
£982.65 Class allowance.
£189.10 Photocopying (2 years).
£291.54 Playground equipment.

Current balance of £7619.13.

6. Fundraising Update

Donna Sim (Fundraising Co-Ordinator) was not present at meeting so no update available.
LM discussed the possibility of another Boden Shopping Event, she will coordinate a date for this.

7. Group Rep Update

No one available to provide update.

8. AOB

MPiP are seeking a new Group Rep Co-ordinator

There is still no Vice-Chair of MPiP, and no volunteers as yet. Leah McKinnon intends to step down as MPiP Chair in August after 3 years in the role. It would be helpful to have a Vice-Chair in place soon to learn the role and be able to take over as Chair in August.

If anyone would like any information about either role, or about any other aspect of MPiP, please contact mpipmeldrum@yahoo.co.uk

Next Meeting Monday 8th February, 7pm, School Staff Room