



Location: LOW PORT PRIMARY SCHOOL: PARENT COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
Time: Wednesday 1th February 2017, 7:00 – 8:45pm at Low Port Primary School

Attendees

Jeremy Fuller – Chair
Jennifer Ovenstone-O'Donnell – Secretary
Alice Buckley
Rebecca Holmes – PTA Chair
Douglas Maxwell
Judith Paley
Richard Payne
Susan Saunders

Co-opted Members

Stephen Blake – St Michaels
Tom Kerr – Councillor
Tom Conn – Councillor
Lauren Smith – Class Teacher
Jane Livingston – Head Teacher
Kirsty Tully – Class Teacher
Kevin Ferguson – Active Schools

Apologies

Kelly Robertson, Andrew Macintyre, Fiona Maxwell

1. Welcome – (7:00, 5 mins)

2. Guest speaker: Kevin Ferguson (Active Schools Coordinator for Linlithgow schools) (7:05, 20 mins)

Context: As the Cluster Active Schools Coordinator, Kevin will talk about his role with the cluster and individual schools. He will also talk about how the Active Schools Coordinator role can offer schools support for volunteers and coaches to promote health and well-being.

Discussion: The primary focus of Kevin and the Active Schools program is physical activity and sport outside of regular PE lessons, particularly at lunchtimes and straight after school. Kevin is responsible for a cluster of 10 schools in the area. Particular focus areas are coach education, club development, competitive club sport, disability and inclusion, and related media communications. There is a significant focus on sustainability, as well as helping children transition from school clubs to secondary or outside clubs. The aim is to create a long established sporting club framework.

Mrs Livingston mentioned that Low Port has Netball year round as staff are prepared to offer this. Although all teaching staff offer extra curricular opportunities, these may vary in content and not always be sport related. Another challenge with offering after-school activities in LPPS is the available space within the school.

The number of parent volunteers is an issue. Volunteers are the lifeblood of sporting activity. Kevin assists volunteers with going through the accreditation process for engaging with schoolchildren-related sports activities. If parents/carers have an interest in participating in sporting activity, then approaching Kevin is a good way to

start. Widening the breadth and diversity of sports activity is something the school community is encouraged to consider.

Active Schools can be found on the WLC 'Active Schools' website
<https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/5599/Active-Schools>

- **Additional related item: Does the school participate in the Daily Mile initiative to encourage the pupils to be more physically active?** <http://blogs.bmj.com/bjism/2016/03/10/the-daily-mile-combating-childhood-obesity-one-step-at-a-time/>

Discussion: Kevin clarified that the Daily Mile does not count towards the regulatory requirement of 2 hours PE per week. Some schools had been previously misguided in thinking it did. An issue with the Daily Mile challenge is making it interesting within a small school grounds. Taking children offsite has its own challenges.

Outcome: LPPS used to do Peel walks, but this was stopped because of logistical issues. There is a baseline of Health and Wellbeing goals which meet the needs of children. A mile a day would take away from class work. There are no plans to restart this activity.

3. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising: 31 August 2016 – (7:25, 10 mins)

AREA FOR ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	Outcome
Send Tom Kerr details of the GroupCall limitation regarding sending emails to multiple contacts per family.	Jeremy Fuller	Outstanding
Engage Alpha School and West Lothian Council about moving the playground equipment installation forwards.	Jeremy Fuller	Email sent. Response received saying everything is in place, however final dates for the work have yet to be set. (i.e. no change in situation)
Confirm arrangements for the Parent Council to meet with the Pupil Council on 13 th January with Mr McRae.	Mrs Livingston	Done, see agenda item 6
Investigate lighting situation on route to out of hours club entrance.	Mrs Livingston	Done, see HT report (annex A)
Develop input for a Parent Forum Survey.	Alice, Judith, Jennifer, Rebecca	See agenda item 6

3.1 Groupcall Update - Jeremy

No immediate progress to report.

4. Head Teacher update – Mrs Livingston (7:35, 10 mins)

Discussion: (see Annex A for report)

Financial Review: Jane asked if parents were happy for camps to take place in both P6 and P7 and if these were felt to be worthwhile, considering time of year, travelling costs, and experiences offered.

Outcome: Most members raised hands for two camps and showed a preference for camps closer to summer. Jane commented that bus costs were high. The majority agreed that the quality of experience and activities outweighed the costs. There were also contingencies in place for those who could not afford to pay the whole fee. The uptake was nearly always 100%. Rebecca suggested that fund-raising for bus fees might be a possibility. In recent years the PTA had proven very effective in raising money.

5. Station Road safety concern - Prime Jeremy Fuller (7:45, 10 mins)

Context: The electrification of the train line and platform extension work has changed the pedestrian Station Road. Before the development, there were very few places that someone could conceal themselves from users of this walkway, due to the nature of the sidewalls. This is no longer the case. The new pillars, which support the extended platform, create a multitude of places to hide in the shadows. A member of the Parent Forum has raised a concern about how these pillars create an environment which is intimidating, particularly at night. This road is designated a school "safe route". The Parent Council is requested to discuss the matter.

Discussion: (See Annex B for information from Tom Conn)

The parent council was advised that representations had been made to network rail, however, the project is unfortunately not specifically a council problem. The 'statutory undertaker' for network rail, has permission for development rights. Planning officers can comment but complaints are not always taken on board.

Access is needed to the existing wall along the side of Station Road, to maintain and enable water seepage. What is needed is a practical solution for maintenance purposes, e.g. a three-foot high fence which can be unbolted for access. The 'undertakers' accept they need to do something, but have not come back yet with solutions. Development planners and Council Engineers have been working with them.

Station Road can be used for vehicle access so the lighting columns, placed beside the current path, should be removed for this. The parties that need to know are aware of the issues. A member asked if there could be CCTV cameras to cover the area as a deterrent. There are only cameras on the station platform just now.

The key message is to deal with the issues before the contractor leaves the site. It can be a major problem to get them back. The council would supervise the removal of lampposts on the road.

Outcome: The Parent Council will continue to monitor the situation. No further action is planned at this time.

Additional related item: Does specific information on safe routes to Low Port Primary School exist?

Mrs Livingston was able to provide the following information: - see 'Transport to and from Schools – Mainstream and Excursions' https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/2152/Transport-to-and-from-School---Mainstream/pdf/Transport_to_and_from_School_-_Mainstream2.pdf. The routes are not on a map. 'Safe routes' are walking routes, pedestrian access points and safe crossings. Section 8 explains what the council looks for in a 'suitable route'.

Outcome: No further action at this time. People with specific issues should raise them with appropriate councillor representatives.

6. Feedback from the meeting with the Pupil Council - Prime: Jeremy (7:55, 5 mins)

Context: A key piece of feedback from the Education Scotland visit last year was that the Parent Council could do more to obtain input from the schoolchildren on school matters. Representatives from the Parent Council met with the Pupil Council on the 13th January.

Discussion: (See Annex C for meeting report). The report in Annex C was briefly discussed.

The school received a bag of free goods from Sainsburys due to the amount of active-schools vouchers collected by families. The school also has 5 new PE mats for gymnastics and badminton rackets will be purchased. Cupboards are full.

Outcome: No specific further action identified at this time.

7. Development of Parent Forum Survey – Prime: Alice, Judith, Jennifer, Rebecca (8:00, 10 mins)

Context: The PC is creating a survey to gather input from Parent and Carers. This will be the first PC wide discussion of ideas for survey topics and questions developed by the PC sub-team.

Discussion: The PC sub-team looked at the Parental Engagement Framework (PEF) for areas to improve. Initial areas mentioned in the Framework are communications policies: how the school communicates with parents and visa versa and the importance of making policies visible to the parent body. Methods of communication also included calendars, blogs, newsletters etc., most of which LPPS already has in use. The survey asks if parents are happy with current methods and if they have any preferences.

Regarding the website, Mrs Livingston commented that the school may not have much say once the LPPS website has been transferred to WLC ownership. Many document folders on the current website are outdated but the school does not have the access rights to remove these.

Questions regarding barriers to parental engagement, e.g. busyness, confidence, time pressures, mentioned in the PEF, have been put in the survey. Other suggested questions include: What stops parents from getting involved? Do people feel the PTA and Parent Council are closed shops or too cliquey?

In addition to the survey, Judith suggested the idea of creating a poster to highlight the many ways parents are currently engaged with the school in order to celebrate parental engagement and thereby encourage more. Another suggestion in the PEF and recommended by Education Scotland was to engage parents as a resource, either as experts in their field, or those who had a special interest.

Outcome: Target is to send the Parent Survey out shortly after Easter. The next step is for members of the Parent Council to provide feedback to the sub team on initial material. Please do this by mid-February. Follow up meeting with Mrs Livingston to be arranged if required.

8. Feedback on Scot Gov school governance session – Prime: Richard (8:10, 10 mins)

Context: Richard will provide an update on the Scottish Government briefing he attended regarding their proposals for school governance reform.

Discussion: Richard felt the experience was somewhat confusing, due to the manner in which the information was presented. There was a big emphasis on closing the attainment gap, learning for all, and including parents.

Outcome: No further action.

9. PTA update – Prime: Rebecca Holmes (8:20, 5 mins)

Context: Update on latest developments in the PTA.

Discussion: As per the last AGM, given the reduction in volume of contributions to the ETF, it was agreed that the ETF Trustees would explore options for the future of the ETF. Whilst this is happening, the operations of the ETF have been moved into the same meeting as the PTA, creating the Social and Fundraising Group. This does not affect the constitutions of either group. There was general agreement to focus on good communication and Parent Forum engagement going forwards.

Sparkle Night will be on 3rd March. The PTA are looking for Dads to help with this event. Richard indicated that he enjoyed helping out at the previous Sparkle Night.

Outcome: No further action.

10. School Grounds update – Prime: Miss Smith & everyone with information (8:25, 5 mins)

Context: Update on activities related to the school grounds and any new developments from the Eco committee regarding plans for the bottle greenhouse.

Discussion: The Children are determined to keep the greenhouse. However, two days after repairs were completed it began to deteriorate due to night visitors vandalising it. It was suggested that fundraising could be undertaken for a better structure. However, it was clarified that the PPP would have issues with this, as it is already too close to the main building. The eco committee was open to suggestions. A suggestion was made to turn it into a wildlife hut or a trellis with climbers.

Outcome: It needs action; will be discussed again at the next meeting.

11. Update on regional PC meeting 28th November, Bathgate Academy – Prime: whoever went (8:30, 5 mins)

Context: West Lothian Council held a Parent Forum meeting where they discussed the questions raised in the Scottish Government's school governance consultation. Jennifer and Jeremy attended the meeting and provided an update to other members of the Parent Council. An email was subsequently sent to the wider school community, highlighting the ongoing governance consultation and encouraging Parent and Carers to provide their input before the 6th Jan, 2017 deadline.

Any other Business (8:35, 10mins)

Information about religious organisation affiliation

Context: An issue was raised about whether the school should declare to the Parent Forum if a qualified person is employed by a religious organisation, such as a local church, when that person assists the school with a non-religious activity.

Discussion: Points and counter points were raised about transparency, relevance, promoting religious tolerance and privacy.

Outcome: No agreement was reach on what, if any, action was required.

Next meeting date: Wednesday 8th March 2017, 7-8:45pm in G.P. Room

AREA FOR ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
Send Tom Kerr details of the GroupCall limitation regarding sending emails to multiple contacts per family.	Jeremy Fuller

Annex A

Head Teacher's Report

Staffing

There have been unusually high absences impacting on management time, Support for Learning, office cover and whole school staffing. Communication was sent out to all families to explain this and pre-empt anyone with concerns. As with any other workplace, we cannot disclose reasons for absence and may not be able to predict the length of an absence. Where possible we have tried to ensure continuity for the classes. Securing supply staff has been challenging but this is a national picture and not specific to Linlithgow or West Lothian Council.

Mrs Walls returning from maternity leave after February break as our PE specialist. Mrs Cameron will now provide other Reduced Class Contact Time across a range of classes.

Financial Review

We are currently reviewing the financial impact of upper school bigger events, such as camp. We are considering cost, quality of the experience, accommodation, etc. It would be useful to have parent perspective on –

- Is there a preference for 2 camps rather than one?
- Is there a preference for the time of year which impacts on cost? This was reviewed some years ago before I came and it was felt at that time that there was greater choice and enjoyment of activities in warmer weather.
- Consideration for travelling/bus costs, therefore looking into Scottish camps.

National Improvement Framework and Achievement of a Level for Low Port Primary School

The National Parent Forum of Scotland have produced a leaflet with useful information about the National Improvement Framework which we will share with all families. This leaflet includes some additional links which families may find useful.

All schools were asked to submit achievement of a level information to Local Authorities and to Scottish Government in June 2016. All West Lothian Council schools have been asked to share their own school data with Parent Council. Data is based on a range of assessment information and teacher professional judgement.

Grounds Update

We have heard that the go ahead has been given for the play equipment to go in and dates are now being considered.

Lighting Update

In November all exterior lights were checked and 5 were repaired. I am informed that all exterior lights are now working.

Resources

A range of resources have been purchased with support from the Social Fundraising Body. Numicon has been bought for all classes; library books and reading books have been purchased and our Fischy music used for assemblies has been renewed. Staff training for Numicon is planned for this term.

Annex B

Situation with railway station development on Station Road

(Source: Councillor Tom Conn)

The concerns at Station Road were raised sometime ago by the Town Management Group and a site meeting was organised with members of the Town Management Group and appropriate railway representatives.

A solution has never been brought back to the Town Management Group as to how these recesses are enclosed to prevent "lurkers" and the confidence of local residents of all ages to use this connection to the railway station and the town centre continues.

Given the advanced nature of the works and representations made to me recently I had contacted Network Rail to clarify what is intended at Station Road.

I received the following response;

"We appreciate there are concerns regarding the recess areas created as a result of the newly constructed piers at Linlithgow Station.

We are currently undertaking a review to determine if there is anything we might be able to put in place, which would also be dependent on securing appropriate planning consents and funding. We are still reviewing what limited options are available to us in terms of trying to find a possible solution.

The design of the piers has to ensure that while they support the new platform extensions, access to the existing retaining wall between each structure remains to allow monitoring and future maintenance. This means that in-filling the recess areas with any kind of solid material is not possible.

Please be assured, we are looking for any viable options in this matter and we will be in touch again once a decision has been made.

We are happy for the above to be shared on as the current view of the situation."

Annex C

Report from Pupil Council meeting, 13th Jan 2017

(Source: Jeremy Fuller)

Susan Saunders and Jeremy Fuller, from the Parent Council, met with Mr McRae's Pupil Council vertical learning group. Mrs Livingston kindly joined the session. The session started with three pupils presenting slides on Pupil Council activity, its constitution and near term objectives.

Jeremy provided a brief overview of the Parent Council, and then switched to a question and answer style dialogue with the children.

First question: what do you like about the school? Responses included:

- Pizza for school lunch
- A good range of subjects
- Assemblies provided good information
- Vertical learning groups.

Second question: what do you not like or think can be improved? Responses included

- **Size of dinners too small** – [*Comment from Jeremy:* When you see the age range in the room you can understand there would be different appreciations of what constitutes a right sized dinner. If a P7 stands next to a P1, one is about half the height of the other. Appetites within the school clearly vary substantially. After the meeting, Mrs Livingston clarified that at lunchtime if the children are still hungry there is bread and fruit readily available for them to eat.]
- **Need more Art and Science supplies** - [*Comment from Jeremy:* After the meeting Mrs Livingston indicated this was a bit surprising, sometimes the school has difficulty storing all the Art supplies.]
- **More playground equipment** - [*Comment from Jeremy:* a number of the children highlighted this. I indicated that we were doing everything we can to have the new playground equipment installed and that we shared the children's frustration in the lack of progress.]
- **More PE equipment** - [*Comment from Jeremy:* No specifics here. However, storage space permitting it does point towards Tesco activity vouchers/other funding etc towards new PE equipment is general appreciated by the children.]
- **Would like unused plain paper to draw on** - [*Comment from Jeremy:* This was my favourite. Apparently the children are frequently given scrap paper, which already has something printed on the other side, to draw on. I completely support this from an environmental and cost perspective, however it is exactly the same in my house. When I offer the kids old print out paper, I get that look that they are being sold short. What they are really after is a pristine new piece of paper. As one child in the meeting put it.... with a new piece of paper you can draw on both sides. You cannot argue with that :-)]
- **Broader engagement of the school community in the Pupil Council** - [*Comment from Jeremy:* Yes, the Pupil Council has exactly the same issue as we do on in terms of the challenge of being truly representative of the people we represent. To address this issue, pupils are holding surveys and "drop-in" sessions.

The session ended with the children asking many great questions about the Parent Council, how we meet and so forth.

Potential next steps

In terms of obtaining further input from the Pupil Council, it was suggested that someone from the Parent Council attend the feedback session for the results of the Pupil Council survey. This will be presented at a future assembly.

The suggestion of the Parent Council attending another one of the Pupil Council meetings was made. One of the pupils suggested that this would be good in about 6 month time.

[*Comment from Jeremy:* I would personally like to thank the children for their interesting presentation, feedback, questions and enthusiasm, and Mr McRae being a great host. Mrs Livingston, I hope you will pass on my appreciation. Also thanks to Susan for accompanying me to the meeting.]