

Bruntsfield Parent Council Special Meeting 14 June 2023 (Zoom Call)

Attendees:

Parent Council Members (Office Bearers and Coops): Dan Gerrard (DG) Parent Council Chair, Jenni Fuchs Madine (JFM), Kirsty McIntosh, Marilena Papadopoulou, Jay Feeney, Alison Redpath (AR), Stefan Santjer (SS), Ali McCallum, Shanda Doherty (SD), Lucy Henderson (LH)

Ordinary Members: Anna Docherty, Elma Charalampidou, Sorour Malaekkeh, Victoria Lopez-Craig, Szymon Kowalczyk, Petros Walden, Dasha Narog, Anna Wojtczuk, Jerome Veyret

Parent Forum Members: Laura Cotham, Gokay Coskuner, Kasia Wypiorczyk (KW), Katrina Bramley, Catrina Arbuckle, Rachel Greaves, Suresh Natesan, Alison Kerr, Aydin Coskuner, Valentina Guerrieri, Rob Wheeler, Emily Polack, Amanda Lake, Kathryn Hewitt, Arthur Bocian, Catching the moment photography, Afrooz, Kenzo, Lin, Jason, Alastair, Polly, EG, Dave, Bjorn, Sandhya

Staff: Stephen Gilhooley (SG)

Apologies: Jasper Stocker, Louise Gourmelon, Lina Marin, Cindy Coleman, Ariel Cao

1. Introduction (DG):

- The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thank everyone for attending. DG noted that the Summer Fair was very successful and thanked JFM and all the volunteers for their hard work as it was a team effort from 10:00 until the very end at 17:00.
- DG added that this is the last PC meeting of the year and thanked all the parents that have been involved on behalf of the Parent Forum.
- DG suggested to use the AGM to map down what the future academic year will be in terms of funding needs and events. That will add transparency and better understanding on what the PC does. DG also added that there will be lots of changes in the members of the PC and encouraged volunteers from the Parent Forum to step forward and join the PC.
- DG confirmed that next week he will be meeting the parents of the P1 students that are due to start at the school this August and requested to keep the conversation civil on the composite class that has been announced by the school for the next school year.

2. Treasurer Update

- SD confirmed that the Summer Fair have been a success and the amount raised was £5,229.77 which is a fantastic figure. SD added that utilising the school grounds allowed more space and the attendance was very good. The majority of money was raised in the entrance and the top three activities were the tombola, the bake sale and the international food market. The plants were also sold out.
- SD confirmed that the Ceilidh night was sold out and the Art Auction final figure can not be confirmed as there are several people that have not settled their payments and pick up their art.

- SD noted that the P7s got in touch for the yearbook and confirmed that they don't require any funds and that the Uniform storage have been purchased.
- Regarding the Clubs accounts, SD confirmed that £21k has been set out for the running costs of the school or any activities that would benefit the children.

3. Clubs Update

- SS thanked all the attendees for joining the meeting and confirmed that the Clubs are running well with circa 600 children participating in around 22 clubs and five active school clubs. SS added that he hopes that the children are enjoying them.
- SS explained that he is thinking of how Clubs will evolve in the next school year. SS noted that for the last 15-20 years Clubs have been run by the PC and its parents' volunteers. SS noted that this is a very time-consuming activity and proposed that in order for the Clubs to be run in the same manner in future that they should be turned into a Social Enterprise. SS confirmed his aspiration to create a Social Enterprise going forward not only for Bruntsfield Primary but to join forces with other local Primaries to achieve economies of scale. SS explained that the children need to be in the centre of this initiative, in order for them to gain confidence, learn a new skill, to align to the curriculum, be accessible for everyone and be priced as low as possible. In terms of the community aspect benefit, the use of the churches in the Holy Corner is a big benefit but also allows shows to be organised for the students to present what they learned and the community will have access to these shows. SS noted that the Clubs would not work if the school and the Clubs did not work together and ideally be aligned with the curriculum. SS also confirmed that he is looking to engage with CEC and relevant stakeholders. SS highlighted that from the parents' perspective there will be no change to anything and every effort will be made to maintain the prices because of the economies of scale. SS explained that at our school we have PSAs and teachers involved in the clubs and that this is a financial benefit to them and a reason to keep them in this profession as this offers them an additional income.
- SS introduced to the Group Polly that ran the clubs before SS. It was confirmed that pre-Covid the PC was considering a similar approach as the Clubs were too big of a task to be dealt by a volunteer as the work load is really massive. They were considering employing a person to run the Clubs and reached out to other schools to get them involved. It was also confirmed that in the past the Clubs were responsible to have teams like a swimming team, netball team and a choir and that they were entering competitions. It was noted that the creation of a Social Enterprise seemed like a good idea and essential as it is very unlikely to get a volunteer to run the Clubs.
- SS noted that he had a long think about the evolution of the Clubs and presented his proposal to Gillespies and is due to present it to Tollcross, Sciennes and South Morningside. All of them have clubs and face challenges. By teaming up under one umbrella will lead to new club offerings for example other schools are offering netball, basketball, chess, coding and other languages like Italian. By doing this as a joint venture that would naturally resolve to more choices and more opportunities for our children.
- JFM confirmed that the PC was considering a paid position for the Clubs pre-pandemic to outsource this. The proposed solution is a huge benefit as it will allow the PC to focus on events and work with the school more on their needs.

- SG confirmed that he is supportive of what SS is proposing and he has discussed this topic with him thoroughly and SS answered all the questions SG had. SG has been impressed by the range of clubs that are in offer and noted that SS was able to set up a special discreet email to support financially families that can't afford to participate in the clubs. SG noted that the Garage band volunteers have formed this group to a club. SG noted that Clubs are well organised and they work well with the school. SG added that the teams will need to be nurtured and there are plans in the pipeline. SG closed his comment by reaffirming his support to SS's proposal.
- KW commented that she is running a Social Enterprise for two years and noted that she is more than happy to offer to SS her experience and knowledge and show him how to set up the Social Enterprise.
- SS noted that setting up new clubs need to be sustainable and the children should benefit from that. SS added that the school has limited available space but there will be no changes for the locations of the clubs. The Clubs that are out of the school ground will still aim to pick up the kids from the school and drop them off at the Clubs' location.
- A parent queried whether under this new model if the students from different schools will be mixing. SS noted that this needs to be formally agreed is a club's location is inside the school's grounds. For the clubs that are in locations out with the school locations, these will be open to all schools. Some of the tutors are teaching clubs in other schools too, so these clubs makes sense to be combined.
- A parent noted that in the past, money were going back to the school and whether this will stop. SS explained that the money needs to go through the accounts, then the money will be used to cover equipment and material needs for the clubs. If there is any surplus then it will be given back to the PC to be invested in the school.
- A parent noted that this new format could attract complaints about people missing positions. SS explained that generally there is no issue with positions and only a couple of Clubs have a waiting list. SS added that this initiative is aiming to make Clubs more accessible and give the children the same opportunities.
- SS confirmed that there needs to be a direct link with the Social Enterprise and the PC. SS added that his aspiration is that parents will be able to book a place to a club through an app and give them the ability to inform the tutor/teacher that their child will be absent.
- DG thanked SS for his hard work and stated that he is supportive is his proposal and he is wishing him good luck.
- SS added that general comms will go out on this and asked parents to get in touch with him as it is very important to have their feedback.

4. Events Update

- JFM thanked AR and LH for their help during the Summer Fair and also thanked Amrita who coordinated the tombola by approaching local businesses for prices and made this possible. JFM noted that Amrita has kept a log of the contributors.
- JFM confirmed that ahead of the AGM at the end of September the following events have been scheduled. The P1 Teddy Bear Picnic is planned for the 25th of August and the P1 induction on the 21st of June still require 4-5 volunteers. The Winter Fair is agreed for the 25th of November and the initial planning with start at the end of August.

5. Parent Council vacancies

- PC vacancies that need to be covered for the next term: Events Treasurer, Clubs Coordinator, Chair, Class Rep Coordinator, and Events Coordinator. Please volunteer if you are interested and you want to contribute. All roles' replacements are to be appointed at the next AGM.

6. Head teacher update including parents' questions

- SG commenced his update by reminding to parents that he is always accessible and encouraged them to come and speak to him or send him an email if there are any questions as he is happy to answer any questions that parent might have.
- SG confirmed that everyone had a really good fun having a picnic in the school yard today and it was nice to see happy faces. There is a Pirate theme on Friday and the school is preparing to host next Wednesday the new P1 students and their parents.
- The P2 and P4 shows were presented and filmed in really good quality and the final show will be the P7 which is full of laughs and it will be good fun for tomorrow.
- The P7 camp was successful, it was separated in two groups and SG joined the first week that had a canoe expedition.
- SG confirmed that there are plans for next year to organise a one-day adventure for the P6 at Ratho to build new skills.
- SG thanked all the PC for organising the Art Auction and the Summer Fair both events were amazing, he enjoyed getting sponged by the students it was good to get the children involved.
- In terms of staffing, three new probationers will start next year. The Pupil Support Officer is developing the nursing room and will organise an open door invite for the parents to see the room and meet her.
- Ms Dobbie is retiring after 30 years and will be missed.
- SG noted that the class teacher will be announced at the end of this week including the composite's class.
- SG is looking to refresh the curriculum, review the vision and values of the school, the indoor learning environment, work closely with the learning community and with Boroughmuir High School and continue to work on equality.
- SG confirmed that a junior library will be developed along with a cooking space and the aim is to offer the children dynamic fun and create a high attaining and achieving school community.
- SG closed by thanking all the parents that have supported the school as the ultimate goal is to work together and share the same vision.
- A parent requested more information on the new P1 and P2 classes being mixed, why the composite classes are happening and what these classes are. SG explained that composite classes are set up because we don't have enough space. CEC is organising this and added that the school was informed that a composite class will happen in mid-May. SG added that it not only Bruntfield that will have a composite class. SG explained that in each class there are levels, usually three levels. The school will make sure that there is a strategy, classrooms are going to be close with their peers, the shows will be together and take breaks together. SG noted that the competence of the teacher is very important therefore a very good teacher will take over the composite class.

- Another parent whether this composite class will continue in the following year and whether the main reason for this decision is the lack of space and resources. SG explained that this is not necessarily because of space constrains and added that the school has no bearing on how this decision is being made. The real benefit this is going to be a class of 25 children were most classes are 33 all the way through school. SG added that this decision from CEC was not only made for our school.
- Another parent commented that this has caused a massive grief that they were not aware of this and highlighted that there is a need to know what this means. The parent added that parents are feeling very shaken by not knowing who is affected by this decision. SG explained that they had to leave this announcement as late as possible as the school had only three weeks to look at it properly and decide what to do. Doing the right thing at the right time is important as it is to ensure that no more changes would have to happen.
- Another parent noted that she appreciated the email by SG but the fact that this information was provided so late, it created the feeling that the school was not working together with the parents and some parents expressed their concern over this. There are also concerns on how the kids will settle and adapt to this change. SG noted that he is very confident that the group will work well together and he acknowledge the trust element. SG explained that he did not want to make a rushed announcement and therefore no comms were made prior to the email. SG confirmed that the students will have a transition period where they will meet their teachers and have fun with them.
- Another parent noted that they understand that this decision was imposed to the school by CEC and queried who from CEC was the decision maker so that they can reach out to them. SG noted that the relevant department for schools at Waverley Court discussed this matter and provided to the school one more teacher for the composite class. SG can not confirm what will happen in future as the classes are going forward but ensure the group that there will be lots of strategies in place to deal with this.
- Another parent noted that there was an anticipation that classes would be mixed but the issue was more on the composite class and added that she would be keen to hear from parents currently in P4/P5 on how this class is working and get some feedback so that they can support their children.
- Another parent added that it would be useful to get a heads up and extra clarity on Tuesday because not everyone will be able to attend the school induction.
- SG confirmed that on Tuesday, he will make a presentation on what this change will look like.

7. Close

- The chair thanked everyone for their time and closed the meeting.