

Minutes of Loanhead PS Parent Council Meeting

Wednesday 17-May-2023 7:15 - 8:30 pm

Loanhead Primary School

Chair: Ian Carpenter

Minutes: Lynn Waight

Attendees: Ian Carpenter, Poppy Kyles, Alex Kitchen, Rhona Mag Fhogartai, Gemma Stevenson, Denise Claxton, Lynn Waight, Laura Page, Melanie Caldwell

Apologies: Karen Hinton, Laura Burnett, Ashely Allen, Libby McAdam, Claire McLean, Raul Pardinaz-Solis

At the beginning of the meeting Mrs Caldwell was congratulated by the group on her recent retirement announcement. Everyone wished her well!

Additionally Mrs Caldwell came with a thank you for the PC, on behalf of the pupils, for the Coronation celebration day which was organised by members of the PC. She brought a selection of beautifully hand drawn thank you cards from many pupils and classes in school. The group really enjoyed looking at and reading these cards, this led to a reflection on the day and discussion around how many of our children reacted to the events of the day and how much enjoyment was seen on the day.

1. Review of previous minutes

School Travel:

At the last meeting we discussed inviting the Midlothian Council's Travel Plan Coordinator to a meeting along with the Junior Road Safety Officers (JRSO) from Primary 6 and Mr Forbes. It was agreed to pick this up next term with the new JRSOs and their coordinator from school. Also in the new school year will help to organise a poster competition for the pupils, to design safe parking posters to be displayed around the school grounds and car park.

An email to St Margaret's chapel, asking if our parents and carers can use the car park at the bottom of the safe route, behind the chapel, during drop off and pick up times, has as yet gone unanswered.

There was again discussion around the safety concerns which arise as a result of double parking and parking on the surrounding verges. Acknowledgement that anecdotally, less parents are using wrap around care since the pandemic, perhaps regulating in more parents and carers than ever before bringing a car to school.

It has been explained to the PC previously that the reason there is limited parking is the school was designed to be a 'Green School', encouraging families to avoid using private cars etc to get to school. However the council routinely uses the community rooms in school to run courses, which attract attendees from across Midlothian and so bring cars and park at the school. This additional traffic is noticeable on these days and seems to go against the Green School ethos. MC explained that community rooms and spaces are at a premium across Midlothian so all are fully utilised.

It was suggested that parking could be discussed at the P1 Transition meeting with parents, to make them aware of the problems and to encourage safe parking in the area. Perhaps the JRSOs could help deliver this message. MC agreed this was a good idea and hopes to include the topic at the meeting.

Budget cuts:

At the previous meeting we discussed Midlothian Councils budget cuts. Although further decisions on outstanding proposals will be made in June.

One proposal agreed was that all schools are to make a 1% budget saving, we asked MC what this would mean for Loanhead's PS. She confirmed this cut was to come from the Devolved Budget, which is the entire school budget, and that 1% equated to approximately £10,000 of the schools budget. These savings would be made by making many smaller savings; staff, lighting, maintenance, papers, pens etc. Mrs Donnelly will agree the budget on her return and decide where the savings will come from. For example the school buys hundreds of writing pencils every year, we asked if donations of pencils could be made, MC said that donations could be accepted.

The Chair proposed an additional PC meeting in June following the meeting of Midlothian Council. This will be organised when we have the date of the council meeting.

Packed Lunches:

At the last meeting it was highlighted that there appeared to be inconsistency in P1-P5 children being offered a school packed lunch on all day trips. MC will follow this up. Additionally it was raised that some P5 pupils aren't getting their packed lunch on a Friday, MC will check with the kitchen staff.

P6 PC representative:

This role is still outstanding. Close to the end of the school year, this will be left until next school year, hopefully all the class rep roles will be filled next school year.

2. Update to the PC Constitution

The Chair raised the issue of updating the Constitution, the current version is simple, this can have benefits but he felt we are missing some key information. IC shared some of his

suggested updates and will draft a new version to be shared and approved at the AGM. Also suggested this document should be reviewed annually at/before each AGM along with the amount of the spend allowed by the Chair without vote.

Current suggestion for the update include:

- Apologies do not need to be given exclusively by email as it currently states.
- Communication, both, within the group and how the PC communicates with the parent forum.
- Definition of committee roles.
- A social media responsibility.

Please share any suggested updates or inclusions via the group WhatsApp chat or email to LoanheadPSparentcouncil@gmail.com

3. Treasury Report

Bank: £1101.81

Cash: £375

Recent expenditure: School trips (£4 per pupil), lunch for the Coronation celebration day.

Upcoming expenditure: Nursery graduation (~£90), transport for the nursery trip (numbers still to be confirmed), Primary 7 leaving trip (£465), £25 per class for help teachers to equip the classroom for the new school year,

Estimated remaining balance following planned expenditure: ~£138

Upcoming sources on income: Summer Fair (see later item), also a possible adult social fundraising event in the summer break.

Mrs Caldwell was asked how the funds raised at the Christmas fair were allocated, she explained that due to the increasing cost of buses most went to subsidise transport to various trips and events, for example sporting events upper atrium pupils attend representing the school.

Low balance of the PC funds means we may not be able to support play therapy next school year. This service cost £1500 for the year. It is well used by the pupils, unfortunately the school is not in a financial position to fund this service. The school will have to book the service early in the new school year, this year it was paid for in 3 instalments of £500. Perhaps a payment schedule can be arranged again.

4. Head Teacher Update

Budget:

An update from the Head Teachers meeting was discussed earlier in the meeting.

Staffing for 2023/24:

For the next school year there will be 7 teachers and a Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT)

There are currently 29 pupils registered for the incoming Primary 1 class, this means there will be two teachers for this class.

It is highly likely that there will not be a teaching assistant in every class.

5. PC Supporting Trips

It was raised that the choice of trips for classes was diverse and the cost to parents varied accordingly, from £3 to £10+. MC confirmed there was not a limit to the cost of a trip, it was up to the class teachers. Suggestion that trips could be staggered across a term/year so parents with multiple children are not being asked to pay for multiple trips at a time. As such, it is recognised that the financial outlay for school trips can be difficult for some families, any shortfall is covered by the school out of their budget, this led to discussion around anonymously sponsoring a pupil to attend a trip, essentially an anonymous donation to assist in covering any shortfall which might occur in paying the overall cost of a trip. Could Parent Pay be utilised for this?

Following on from this, members of the school community have enquired how they could assist the school or PC, out of the resulting discussion it was suggested we could publicise to the school community that donations to the school or PC are always welcome, giving information how this can be done. It was agreed that although we would be providing information that has been requested, that it would be worded sensitively.

The biggest outlay to any trip is transportation. Unfortunately transporting a whole class by public transport is difficult, as you can't always be assured space for the whole group on the same bus. Small groups are more manageable, for example the Nursery took small groups on a short bus journey during a trip to Pentland Plants.

The availability of mini buses within Midlothian Council was raised, there are few drivers with a relevant licence who are also available or willing to drive for a trip.

Coaches have to be arranged through a Midlothian Council tender process, there is no freedom to negotiate on the provider or cost.

The discussion also included making use of local attractions or businesses for trips, not only to keep travel costs down but also in consideration of the carbon footprint associated with travelling long distances.

The PC will consider how we can continue to support funding for school trips.

6. Play Therapy

Discussed during the Treasurer's report.

7. School travel

Discussed while reviewing minutes from the previous meeting.

8. Summer Fair

Support in general has not been forthcoming for the Summer Fair.

From the many letters and emails sent to businesses across the area only a few replies were received.

The Nursery will again look after the hot dogs and hot drinks stand in the dining hall.

Communication to go to parents letting them know how they can help:

- Volunteers are required to help run stalls
- Raffle prizes
- Wine and empty (lidded) wine bottles
- Home baking
- Toy donations
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It was noted that more parents or carers may be able to help if the fair was held within school hours.

9. Nursery to Primary 1 Transition Parent Event

The PC will provide a take-away letter to be included in the pack for new P1 parents, IC has drafted this.

Poppy will represent the PC at the meeting of parents and carers to give a presentation on the work of the PC.

10. Date of the next meeting

We had previously agreed we would not meet on the last proposed meeting date for this school year - 15-Jun-23. However, as discussed earlier in the meeting, an additional meeting may be

held to discuss the outcome of the meeting of Midlothian Council when further budget cuts are expected to be announced.

First meeting of the new school year will be **Wednesday 23-Aug-23**. It is proposed this is a relaxed, possibly more social meeting, to welcome new parents and to discuss matters in advance of the AGM.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 31-Aug-23 at 7pm in the staff room of Loanhead Primary School.

11. AOB

Thank you to Loanhead Parish Church, after we received a further donation to be used to purchase fruit of the atrium fruit bowls.