

Minutes: Tynewater Primary School (TPS) - Parent Council (PC) Meeting 105

Tuesday 12th March Online

***Action point (*AP)**

1) Welcome and apologies

- a. Apologies: Lisa Green, Aurora Mancini (treasurer), Jane Brown, Liza McMillan, Nicola White (NW)
- b. Present: Emma Diffley (ED, Chair), Julia Critchley (JC, Secretary), Louise Ferguson (LF, Headteacher), Janet Donaldson (JD, Deputy HT), Anna Davanna, Laura Mackay, Mairi Milne, Sana Malik, Laura Else,

2) Minutes of last meeting/Outstanding Actions

- a. The minutes of the previous meeting (104) were accepted.
- b. Outstanding actions:
 - i. AP from meeting 101: Headphones - PC has agreed to fund headphones for the school - £452.40
 - ii. AP from meeting 101: Garden tidy - Jackie McNairn, with help from the children and some parent volunteers, has been keeping on top of the weeding and maintenance of raised beds. There no longer seems to be a need for a weekend garden tidy. New herbs are required for the herb bed. **AP - ED will arrange.**
 - iii. AP from meeting 104: Marathon - we were to organise teams, however ED reports there has been a lack of interest this year.
 - iv. AP from meeting 103/104: Irresponsible parking in school car park and cars/buses with engines running. This has improved markedly since the staff/JRSO interventions. However occasionally buses are still sitting with engines running and parents/carers have started to park irresponsibly at pick up again. **AP - LF will send out reminders and the staff and JRSOs in high viz will return to car park duties.**
 - v. AP from meeting 104: Tombola at Pathhead Village Fair - ED is co-ordinating. Donations and helpers required. **AP - School and PC will both put out requests.**
 - vi. AP from meeting 104: summer fair committee - to be discussed within agenda items.

3) Chair person's report

- a. ED updated the PC that Sarah Whigham is standing down from PC and thanked Sarah for all her efforts to support the PC.
- b. ED attended the recent parent council chairs meeting. Focus was on the cost of the school day. Other schools appear to be securing funding to help parents with these costs but due to the nature of the meeting it was difficult to ascertain what sources of funding were being accessed. Gail Currie is forming a focus group to discuss the cost of the school day and help point schools/PCs towards potential sources of funding.

4)Treasurer's Report

- a. AM sends her apologies.
- b. Recent spending on headphones
- c. PC has funded multiple class trips, all classes except P2 have managed a trip.

5) Headteacher's report

Good News Stories

- Primary 2 performed a lovely assembly on Earth Day all about how to look after our environment
- Primary 7 Transition visits are underway and children are looking forward to spending time at the high school
- P5-7 Orienteering opportunity - children had lots of fun learning a new skill. Thank you to Mr and Mrs Chepelin for organising this. Information will be shared about out of school events for this.

- P3 and P6 visited Dynamic Earth yesterday and had a wonderful time
- P1 have been working hard on the infant garden with help from members of the Horticultural Society. Mrs McNairn and lots of different pupils have been working on the raised beds as well.
- Primary 7 Active Schools rugby is starting on Wednesday
- Six pupil Leadership Groups running this term – P7 Art Group, P7 Football Club, P4 Reading Club, P4 Active and Gymnastic Club, P6 Athletics Club and P6 Coding club.

School Improvement Plan Update

At the inservice day we will complete our broad audit related to the organisers in 'How Good Is Our School 4' to complete our School Improvement Report for 2023-24 and to begin planning our Improvement Plan for session 2024-25. We have made very good progress this year in our Improvement Plan and it is assumed that our Broad Audit will reflect this. Feedback from parents will be sought at Parents Evening regarding our progress this year and to inform plans for next year.

School Day

Currently our school day runs from 8.45-3.30pm Mon-Thursday and 8.45-12.25pm Fri. This is significantly longer than any other primary school in Midlothian.

For example:

Lasswade PS - Monday to Thursday 8.50am - 3.20pm Friday 8.50am - 12.25pm

Cornbank St James PS - 8.50 am– 3.15 pm Mon to Thur and 8.50– 12.25 pm Fri

Rosewell – 8.50-3.15 Mon-Thurs (45min lunch) and Fri 8.50-12.25pm

Lawfield – 8.50-3.20 Mon-Thurs (45min lunch) and Fri 8.50-12.05pm

Teachers are contracted to work 35 hours per week – 30 of these are in school and 5 of these are 'balance time'- time allocated for teachers to attend training and engage in professional learning, attend parents evenings, write pupil reports etc. Currently with the structure of our asymmetric week, our children are in school for 30hours 40mins.

Our bus children currently get ready to leave 10minutes before their peers to be ready to be on the bus and away at 3.30pm. This means they are missing learning time at the end of each day. If we all finish at 3.20pm, bus children can be in class until the end of the day and pack up with their peers to be on the bus for the same time making it more equitable for all. This will also reduce the amount of learning assistant time required to support children onto the bus.

All five learning assistants currently supervise afternoon break for 15mins – this is 5 hours of LA time per week that could be reallocated and put to better use. I am proposing that we do not have an afternoon break and instead change the end of our school day from 3.30pm to either:

- 3.20pm on Mondays-Thursday and keep Fridays as a 12.25pm pick up with a 50minute lunch break
- 3.15pm Mon-Thurs and keep 12.25pm on Friday and have 45minute lunch break

This means that children will be in school for 30 hours per week, will allow teachers to have their full allocation of their planning time at the end of the school day and enable our bus children to remain in class until the end of the school day. These plans would have no implication for rural transport buses or afterschool club (ASC).

Discussion following HT report

This proposal generated much discussion. Generally it was agreed that if teachers class contact time is 30 hours then the children should not be in class for in excess of 30 hours. Various options of later starts, earlier finishes, shorter lunch to retain 3 breaks were discussed. General consensus at the meeting was that the proposed 3.20 finish was a sensible option and not that big a difference from the status quo. The reassurance that it would not

affect the cost of ASC, that the bus children would no longer have to leave early and that the finish time was closer to that of the nursery were very strong points in favour. Those present felt quite strongly that it is important not to shorten the lunch break. The feeling was that the benefits of the afternoon break probably do not outweigh the disruption to learning it causes getting ready to go out and come back in/get settled and also agreed that the 5 hours of LA time that is used to facilitate that break could be better spent..

6) Summer fair update

NW sent her apologies and an update:

Plans are going well for the summer fair on Saturday 22nd June. We have the following arranged for everyone to enjoy:

- Bouncy castle
- Face painting
- Games, including coconut shy, human fruit machine, hook a duck, lucky dip, lucky squares, pin the tail on the donkey.
- Stalls selling home baking, plants, jewellery, crafts, balloons and more.
- Food vendors including ice cream, coffee van, gourmet burgers and pizza.

The biggest area where we need support is getting volunteers to attend on the day and Nicola is going to produce a sign up form, with QR code, to be shared both online and printed to put into schoolbags home. Please can you help as much as possible with asking people to give up 1 hour on the day to look after a game or stall - or to help with set up the day before, on the day or to tidy up afterwards. We also will be asking for filled jam jars and home baking. We have decided against a raffle or tombola, as the village day is so close before the fair and the PC are helping with the tombola there already.

We are very grateful to have a number of generous sponsors, who are supporting the bouncy castle (Davanna Electrics), face painting (Gordon Vets) and prizes (Noble Amusements, Crumbs, The Forresters, Muir Homes and their contractors). A huge thank you from Nicola to Emma for her help - plus Debs and Hollie who are helping with the organisation of the fair, and thank you to all of you who have said they will help in any way on the day or before.

If you haven't let Nicola know that you're able to help - whether on day or with organising - please do get in touch ASAP. Posters will be being produced this week and shared both online and round Pathhead.

AP: school and PC will share requests for volunteers

7) Communication/Weekly report

- a. There have been complaints from parents that they are missing important event due to poor communication from the school. However these complaints have been directed at PC members in person or via messaging apps. The school has not received any such complaints directly
- b. Further discussion of the topic wondered if parents lose track of emails/attachments and then get frustrated when they cannot find information in their email inboxes. There were a number of suggestions of ways to better organise ones diaries to avoid forgetting/misplacing important school events.
- c. LF highlighted that all information that is sent out to parents is also available on the website which could be an easier place to look than searching through emails. There is also a calendar of key dates on the website.
- d. **AP: LF will send out reminders that the information is all on the website. LF agrees to circulate the key dates at the start of each term.**

8) School trips/camps

- a. JC raised ongoing lack of school camps/trips compared to the variety on offer pre covid. During discussion clarity was requested regards 'cost of the school day' and what that means for schools planning trips/camps how restricted schools are in whether they can ask parents to contribute. It was noted that other midlothian primary schools seem to be going on more trips/camps
- b. Tynewater has the barrier of lack of public transport. Other schools have bus routes or can even walk to the high school campuses where sports events are often held. Other schools have easier access to mini buses.

- c. LF is going to come back to the PC with more information regarding the policy for poverty proofing and the cost of the school year. There are various grants available and many families are unaware they are eligible.
- d. Those present agreed that it is desirable for P7 to have a good camp experience. For more than 2 nights, ideally 4 to make it worthwhile. The P7 cluster camp is happening this year but is unlikely to continue in subsequent years. The staff are looking at options/costs for the current P6 to have a P7 camp. A 4 night camp will cost in the region of £400-500.
- e. Camps were discussed at length. Whether 2 camps (one in P5/6 and another in P7) was better. Whether 4 nights in P7 was too long. Some children may have never been away and therefore not want to go on such a long camp. But having 2 camps even if shorter would greatly add to expense for families. A compromise was suggested where in P5 or P6 children have a 1 night sleep over experience somewhere local such as Vogrie or Jump in. Low cost, no coach required and nearby to alleviate anxiety.

9) Parent Helpers

- a. The recent cancelled trip to active schools (AS) golf tournament was discussed. The children were accidentally told about the trip before a decision had been made. Unfortunately with a lack of parent helpers and the high cost of a coach the decision was made not to go and then the children were upset
- b. The cancelled Golf trip raised discussion about agreeing spending of PC funds when school requests money. Agreed that school should assume smaller sums of money up to approx £150 will be approved. The PC chair can use the messaging app to ask for objections within a time frame and then assume approval and authorise the money.
- c. LF/JD stress that school requires more parent helpers to facilitate school trips & attendance at active school events. The PC members present argued that more time is generally needed to arrange time off work etc. Unfortunately AS do not always give much notice. Parents more likely to volunteer to help when advanced notice is given and if they know their child is attending the trip/event.

10) Parent Consultations

- a. This year there are consultations in October and May with reports in June. It is felt that the May consultation and June report are too close together and that the gap between October and May is too long between consultations.
- b. Last year saw an increase to 3 parent consultations in the academic year plus the report which was felt by the staff to be too much. Staff/school chose to return to 2 parent consultations
- c. Proposal for 2 consultations next year, in October and March, with a report in June. This will go out to consultation with wider parent body.

11) AOB

- a. Tea towels - AD has identified a company to use for class tea towels. She has been liaising with staff and has 9 tea towel design kits ready to go. Each class will create a tea towel with their self portraits and names. These will be available for parents to purchase for £5 each and receive by the end of term.
- b. Chairperson - ED updates the PC of her decision to stand down from her role as chair at the end of this academic year. Huge thanks to Emma for all her years of hard work and dedication to the school and PC. The PC will be looking for a new chair, be assured ED will give excellent handover, please get in touch if interested.

Future dates:

Tuesday 4/6/24 (18:30 online)