



ABOYNE PRIMARY PARENT COUNCIL MEETING
THURSDAY 20th APRIL 2023, ABOYNE PRIMARY SCHOOL

PRESENT	Sarah Sargent, Gemma Massie, Julie, Caroline Linklater, Colin Hutchison (Head Teacher), Natalie Pinnell (Chair Person), Hollie Davidson, Richard Galloway (Teacher Rep), Becki Redmond, Mairi MacDonald (Secretary) Grant Thompson, Ben Read.	
APOLOGIES	<p>Clr Sarah Brown, Geva Blackett, Josie, Sara Henry, Eilidh Connolly will be joining us online.</p> <p>Apologies from Leona and Lucy Wisely.</p>	
AGENDA		ACTION
1.0	<p>Chairs Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>Natalie Pinnell: Thank you everyone for coming on such a beautiful evening. Welcome everyone to the meeting. The nature of this meeting is to encourage open, supportive communication and work together to make any improvements we need to make.</p>	
AGENDA		ACTION
2.0	<p>Approval of Previous Meetings Minutes</p> <p>Approved</p>	
AGENDA		ACTION
3.0	<p>Head Teacher Update</p> <p>It seems in many ways just five minutes ago that I submitted my first Head Teacher report to you, back at your AGM meeting in September of last year.</p> <p>But on reflection, it also seems an eternity ago, especially when I started to reflect on what a busy and momentous year it has been in the life of Aboyne Primary School.</p> <p>I said in that initial report that the first three weeks of the session had flown past – you can imagine how it feels knowing we are almost at the end of a whole session now.</p> <p>And looking again at that report, I said then that I was intent on getting to know the children in our school and as much of</p>	



the parental community as possible. I feel I have done that quite well since last August and to start off this report, I want to put on record my thanks to the parent council for working so closely and so supportively with me in the months since and to the wider Aboyne Primary School parental community for their ongoing support of the school.

Of course, that support and backing was never more important than in the run up to and after the inspection from Education Scotland in January. There is no getting away from – indeed, as I reported to your last meeting, I would not want to shy away from - the findings of the inspectors. There were a sobering read for everyone connected with Aboyne Primary.

But it also gave an opportunity for all of us working in the school to pull together and demonstrate the commitment to getting the school back on the right tracks and moving forward with confidence from that inspection process.

And I am really pleased with how that journey has been progressing. The action plan put together with support of officers from Aberdeenshire Council has steered the school in the right direction and many identified areas of improvement have been met already or remain on track.

The consultations we carried out with parents have proved invaluable in terms of shaping our positive relationships policy, which staff have developed and

which is almost at the point of completion. It will be shared with yourselves before the end of term and ready to be in place for the start of the new term in August.

Similarly, the incredible work Miss Stewart has been carrying out regarding a curriculum rationale for the school, incorporating feedback from parents and pupils, is almost complete and will likewise be in place for the start of next



session.

We also consulted with you to gauge your thoughts on a school uniform policy and we had an excellent response rate to that which I am happy to share with you now. Of the 177 responses we received, 155, or 88% said they were in favour of having a school uniform policy. Reassuringly, 158 respondents, or a whopping 90% of you said you were willing to back the school and have the difficult conversations with your children to insist they adhere to the policy when they come to school.

As a result, we will be sending out the guidance on expectations of school uniform very soon, hopefully by the end of this week. Prospective P1 parents have already had an indication of this as part of their induction / transition process but everyone in school will receive the guidance and links to purchase appropriate uniform ahead of next session. This policy will also cover PE kit as almost three quarters of the respondents indicated they wished children to come to school dressed for PE rather than changing here.

I mentioned the P1 transition process and that has had a new look and feel to it this session. Thanks again go to Miss Stewart for her hard work, supported by Mrs Ellington from nursery and Mrs Leggat, the current P1 teacher, in making this process work so smoothly. We had a hugely successful open afternoon in the P1 class just over a week ago, next week nursery visits to P1 take place and the week after there is a Teddy Bear's Picnic which should be great fun for the new P1s. Their buddies from the current P6s, next year's P7s, are also in the process of being matched up.

I mentioned Mrs Leggat being part of that transition process for the new P1s. That is the only staffing information I am able to share with you at the moment, I am genuinely sorry to say. It was important for the new P1s to be able to meet their teacher at an early stage and, with numbers coming up meaning we will have just one P1 class next session, we had to identify their teacher early and I was delighted Mrs Leggat



agreed to teach P1 again.

Staffing at Aberdeenshire Council level has not been finalised unfortunately, even at this late stage and I am still waiting final confirmation of the teaching allocation for next session which means we have been unable to match teachers to classes yet. This will however be done well in advance of you being informed and the children enjoying their move up session on June 30th.

I know of course you all want to know one more piece of staffing information, regarding the permanent HT post but again, I am afraid I am not in a position to make any comment publicly about this at the moment. You will appreciate there have been many long and thoughtful conversations between myself and council officers but I hope you will understand I cannot discuss or make any comment about them for the moment. I also have to take a back seat from the actual recruitment process so all I can say about that is the closing date for applications is next Monday, June 19th.

Looking ahead to August, the projected roll in the school is calculated at 234, which does mean that it is likely we will be dropping down to 10 classes, As I mentioned, class configurations and final staffing figures, including allocation of probationers and the green light to recruit for vacancies, is currently with council officers but we are expecting confirmation imminently.

There is so much more I can reflect on from this year and that it is important to highlight with you. Mrs Lobban has been working hard with her pedagogy working group to develop the learning and teaching across the school and monitoring of this has been taking place through classroom visits and observations. Tracking of pupil data has been ongoing and I have today submitted the Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels for 2023 to the council and in turn the Scottish Government. These are published later this year in December.



	<p>Our new look Sports Day was a huge success last month and again, thanks to all the parents who came along to spectate and afterwards enjoy a picnic with the children. I think that is a sterling example of how we have adapted and improved events and systems at Aboyne Primary School and made sure they are in place for next year and many more years to come.</p> <p>Staff training has been ongoing throughout the year – staff had inputs on Big Writing and providing feedback to pupils and formative assessment at InService Days, Trauma informed practice is taking place before the end of</p> <p>term so staff are well versed in time for August, inputs on creating an inclusive classroom to support learning, the list goes on.</p> <p>I finished that first report back in September last year by stressing to you all that I wanted an open doors policy at Aboyne Primary during my time here and would try to communicate as regularly and as proactively as we could. I would again like to think I have managed that and want you and all the parents to know that as always, please contact the school directly if you have anything at all you wish to discuss. I do intend putting out a final newsletter to parents in the last week to bring the curtains down on what indeed has been an incredibly busy and momentous year in the life of Aboyne Primary School.</p>	
AGENDA		ACTION
4.0	<p>Inspection</p> <p>NP: Tracing progress of inspection report. Gant charts. Is there any progress in this area? Colin: Improvement plan will be submitted to the council with updates in there and various points from the plan.</p> <p>Attainment reports – where are children across the school? CH: achievements of p4-7 is submitted and is readily available.</p> <p>NP: retention of staff – one or two classes down from last year. We've lost certain members of staff who have attained permanent positions in alternative districts. From a parent council perspective is there something we could be doing to encourage the provision of permanency because a lot of turnover has been through provisional</p>	CH



	<p>teachers. What if anything can be done that we can support with? CH: tricky to answer with regard to funding from council. An issue throughout Scotland. There's a struggle to get permanent positions. Seems to be the way council is handling things. CH: would love to have every member of staff on a permanent contract, but outwith his remit. Ben Read (BR): If we did want to influence that, how would we do that? CH: the council makes the decision. BR: Councillors might be able to get involved. BR: in terms of looking at permanent contracts we could be speaking with local councillors, we have Geva Blackett and Sarah Brown on here. Sarah Brown (SB): I've heard Deborah Masson discuss this. The council is an employer and there is a condition that they have to let people move. What as parent council can you do to help? There's no reason Gena Blackett and I couldn't raise that question, particularly as the school is just getting the plan together – improvement outcome. Geva Blackett (GB): my suggestion is that we email the head of education saying we appreciate we're near the end of term, but what's happening please. Hopefully if we ask a straight question, we'll get a straight answer. CH: I think this is more about in general a lot of teachers are provisional, and have fixed term contracts. NP: without permanency you can't have reliable staffing. GB: Can we have details of how many peoples' contracts are about to run out? CH: I'll get back to you on that. ACTION required.</p>	
AGENDA		ACTION
5.0	<p>Playground Development Update Becki Redmond (BR): We've had a quote for £16,331 following a discussion with Dermot. If we can confirm promptly they will see if they can squeeze us in over the summer. NP: will leave it to CH and BR to organize this over the next couple of days.</p> <p>NP: benches – discussion that there weren't enough benches out the back for packed lunches. When we left, we realised that there are many benches out the front. We suggest that some be moved to the back. Gemma: two have been moved from the front to the back.</p> <p>NP: in the last meeting we also discussed litter pickers. I believe Cllr Brown was going to do something about this. CH: something is being done about this. NP: the plan with bins, one for each house, so we can win points for houses. I would love to get that in place, as there's a lot of litter lying around. Are we just doing trash bins, or trash and recycling bins? CH: maybe one of the kids groups could look at this? Rota kids, or another group. NP: the bark. In the last meeting we discussed that we need to fill up the bark areas. Spoke with the council and they agreed. Two areas of the playground, and the area behind the wall. Roots and hazards. Council has identified the areas. Funding is a huge issue. A lot of the requests with regards across the Shire are being ignored. Rather than fill it, they have suggested that we remove the pieces of equipment. There have been incident caused as a result of these pieces of equipment. Julie: Why has it taken a serious incident for anything to be done about this? When was the bark last filled? 11th May, my son had a fairly serious accident, was hospitalised until 30th May, Calum tripped on an exposed piece of wood. His kidney was pushed up</p>	<p>BR CH</p> <p>CH</p>



under his ribs and was split by his ribs. What I can see is that that area has not been maintained. Calum is 5yrs old. I have asked sara and geva to look into maintenance records. It's important to understand what procedures are in place, so we know the playground is a safe place for our kids. If we put equipment there that is not safe, then that is a big issue, which we need to address. As a parent of a child who has suffered, would the money be better spent maintaining what is already there? NP: Becki Redmond has worked hard to source a provider who has clarified that the council will maintain whatever is put in place. Sarah Sargent (SS): We need that accountability in place, so we can see what is agreed.

Julie: Why is that part of the playground not cordoned off? There's also a manhole which is a trip hazard near the nursery. BR: the new piece of equipment only requires the bark which the council is going to put in there. We're waiting for confirmation that they accept legal responsibility. Julie: Why have parents not been told about it? Why have parents not been warned that there's a hazard in this playground? CH: I reported the incident and filed the report. I've never been asked to share that report. Julie: We shouldn't need to be asking to see the report. CH: Nothing came back from Aberdeenshire Council saying it was unsafe or had to be cordoned off. Policies were followed. Julie: Why has there not been an independent assessment made? I asked for Geva and Sarah to look into this. It obviously is a risk. If that is not safe, it shouldn't be used until it is safe? SS: can I just check, the bit he tripped on, was that because there was no bark? NP, BR: Yes. CH: As far as I'm aware, policies and procedures has been followed. Grant Thompson (GT): I'd like a copy of their policies and procedures. Do we need to go for a freedom of information request? SS: If it's a formal information request. I'd like to know more about the frequency of occurrence of these kinds of events. Cosequences of such an accident needs to be assessed. CH: I can find out the reporting channels for you.
ACTION

GT: somebody needs to make a request to have an environmental health officer to come out and make an assessment. Has this been done? CH: No. GT: Geva, would you put in a request for the official environmental review? GB: I'm shocked and upset that I didn't hear about this. I know only what I've heard from Julie. It's up to Julie where this goes, because it's her child. Julie: Philip and I have no issue with sharing the information, if it's constructive. We want to know what's going to be done. Calum has been poorly. We've just started to think that we want to push forwards for some answers. We just want to make the playground safe for the children, and if it has been neglected, how, and why has this happened.

GB: When the head of education gets back to us, we'll take it to Julie to make sure that no other child gets hurt like this again. The first person we have to come back to is Julie, and then Colin as head teacher. Ben Read (BR): The problem is that if we don't take any action and another child is injured.

Colin: I think it's important that we get clarity on this. With the councilors help it's important that we get clarity. NP: What was agreed re



maintenance? This should be a parent, councilor and school issue. I'm not fine with it, and Julie is not fine with it. Let's all see what we can do. NP: any other comments with regard to the playground? Julie I would like that piece of equipment to be cordoned off. I'm not happy that my other child will be allowed into that area. BR: This was brought up 4 ½ years ago. When we had spoken to the council at the time the council indicated that it was a financial cost which they couldn't cover. We were told they didn't have money. CH: I'll be raising this with the improvements officer tomorrow. I'm under pressure from parents, and counselors. I'll be taking this up with Deborah Massie.

Are there hazards outside in the back garden? There's been no communication out to the parents. We as parents don't know if that area is a hazard. CH: We were not in a position to close off that part of the playground? It's not the same talking about falling. It could have been communicated. A good portion of the parents probably don't know. CH: Nothing came back to say that that part of the playground could not be used. We're four weeks down the line and there's been no communication. CH: I'm struggling to understand. GT: I'm seeing a system where which is unsafe. Duty of care by law. Designing a playground by best practice. BSIEM1176 standard. I would need some convincing that best practice is being followed. NP: I've passed on all the information. What is the duty of care? Who is responsible?

Eilidh Connolly (EC): I'm sorry to hear what happened, and hope that he makes a recovery. I want to go back now and ask if the playground project is going to move forwards? NP: We're OK to move ahead with the playground project, once we're clear that they will take responsibility for the new equipment. The equipment Becki has sourced has a confirmed 25 year guarantee. The older equipment might not have such a long term guarantee. We're waiting to hear what the council is supposed to have done, and will you do what it takes to make sure we're covered. GB: I think what Colin has told us is that he has done everything he could. I will ask head of education to communicate with parents of the questions asked. Who will maintain it, and what their responsibility will be. CH: We need clarity. We don't want the school to be held responsible for maintenance. I would suggest that we pause until we get clarity. NP: We could do with an urgent review from a senior person from environmental health. There are significant issues in the playground. CH: I will follow that up tomorrow with my manager. GT: I have a son here. As a parent, if equipment needs to be taken out of circulation, so be it. Julie: Have we priced how much it would be? Becki R: it was too much. Julie: how much? GT: Discussion re specification of depth of bark. Becki R: to clarify where the new equipment is due to go. Bark needs to be 300mm deep. Council will need to top the area up to 300mm. the council will pay for that. Sarah S: That's why we've had to be so careful about selection of approved suppliers. Becki R: the council choose to use bark as their preferred topping option. Unless we choose to put something else in.



AGENDA		ACTION
6.0	<p>Fundraising Update</p> <p>Thank you to Thistle & Clay for the donation of the raffle prize. Thank you to p7s for selling tickets in the playground.</p> <p>NP: End of term discos are being arranged by parents. Anybody who wants to volunteer to help with additional fundraising, please do volunteer. Thank you to committee, and to Sara Henry who has done a marvelous job at fundraising.</p> <p>CH: I did mention about supporting classes with resources etc? Busses are ridiculously expensive for the trips coming up. Could some of this fundraising money be used? Sarah S: That was what it was originally for. NP: some of the classes haven't spent their allocation. We are planning on following up with those who haven't used it. But if you want to use for buses, then we could agree to that.</p>	
6.0 cont.		
AGENDA		ACTION
7.0	<p>Any Other Competent Business</p> <p>PVG. I've had confirmation that we don't need PVGs to get parents back into the classrooms. If Colin would let the teachers know. Sarah S: Who did you get confirmation from? NP: Sisclosure Scotland. Eilidh C: do we need for school trips either? Colin H: No, we don't need PVGs for this either. Eilidh C: Great, I will be volunteering going forwards.</p> <p>NP: all of the parent council posts are now available.</p> <p>Grant T: I asked about resilience. Sarah B: I replied. NP: Investigate school holding spares for plumbing etc. NP has response from Sarah Brown. FES facilities management. NP: I will forward the email to you Grant. Thank you Sarah for doing that. Ben R: There are 230 kids in the school, and only a few parents here. What can we do to get more parents here? Becki R: I've been on the parent council for over a decade. I have 4 weeks left. This has been an issue the whole time. It fluctuates, sometimes 20 parents, sometimes only committee members. It would be brilliant to have more parents here. It's our voice. We get a chance to ask questions and change things.</p> <p>Colin H: thank you for coordinating the communication. I think this helps. Sara H: On the point of trying to get other parents involved. Other than holding children hostage. Paper in their school bag asking for help might be an option, letting parents know that we're trying to help their kids. Your school needs you!! Social media. Ben R: Maybe let parents know what we're doing, contribution to school trips? NP: Can we access the</p>	



	<p>information re parents who indicated they would be willing to help? Colin H: Yes. Becki R: When sharing the good news stories, let parents know that this trip went ahead because of money from the parent council. It's an easy hook to say, we need volunteers for these things to happen. "This is what we've done".</p> <p>NP: maybe next year we could have a dedicated communications person. If we had someone.</p>	
AGENDA		ACTION
8.0	<p>Date of Next Meeting Thank you everyone. Is everyone happy to close? Meeting concluded.</p>	