

Associated Schools Group Parent Council

21.03.17 – 7.00pm IT Room, Kinlochbervie High School

In attendance – Christine Corbett, Christine MacKenzie, Kerry Eastcroft, Richard Flannery, Iona Shaw, Linda MacDonald, Selena Campbell, Anne Morrison, Jacqui Ann Munro, Fiona Newton, Audrey Morrison, Stefanie Breckenridge, Maureen Foley, Anna MacPherson, Carol Anne Forsyth, Julie Allan, Linda MacDonald, Helen Parker.

Graeme Smart - Head Teacher

Apologies – Aileen MacDonald (Depute), Tricia Morrison, Dawn MacKenzie, Tracy MacKay, Katy Lee, Denise MacDonald.

Minutes of last meeting – Approved R Flannery, Seconded Anne Morrison

Matters Arising – Cape Wrath Challenge meeting has been arranged for 24.4.18 at 7pm in the High School IT Room. High School parents are doing the catering again this year and volunteers are required to assist.

Head Teacher's Report – attached. This was circulated to all present.

Matters Arising from head Teacher's Report - The website is up and running but is still under development. The front page will have links to each of the schools in the group's own website. The website will contain curricular and parent information. There is also an ASG Facebook page which will be used for more immediate information such as school closures but parents should rely on the website for more detailed information.

The Kinlochbervie Primary Inspection report should be published sometime after the Easter holidays and will be circulated to parents then.

School Governance – The Scottish Government is changing the way schools are administered to a more centralised system which gives more power to Head Teachers. Rather than Highland Council schools in this area will be managed by the Northern Alliance which covers the area from Campbelltown in the west to Aberdeen in the east. This is still in the consultation stage and Mr Smart has worked with other head Teachers to prepare a response to the proposals. A copy of this response will be available on the website. The school has found the present system supportive and its local knowledge gives it an understanding of the challenges faced in this area. The fear is that this will be lost once governance passes to the new HQ in Aberdeen.

Vision and Values Working Group – this is on hold at the moment. Katy Lee, Aileen MacDonald and Heather Paterson are going on a course about an initiative called "Rights Respecting Schools" what they learn there will influence the wording of the vision statement. A vision statement will then be prepared to cover all schools in the group. Staff, parents and pupils will be asked for input in the process. It is important that there is consistency between the schools and the Wednesday sessions when all schools come together are important in cementing this.

Homework Working Group – There has been ongoing discontent about homework, particularly in the High School. It was felt that in the primaries, on the whole, homework was consistent. Once pupils move to High School homework drops off in the early years and pupils are then overwhelmed when it ramps up in their exam years. Homework also gives parents a chance to gauge how their child is coping with a subject and they can raise concerns with the school rather than waiting till a parent's evening when things can be rather rushed. It was felt that more emphasis should be placed on study skills which would be useful in life whatever path they chose to follow. Parents present were keen to volunteer for the proposed working group. Mr Smart will discuss homework policy with staff and then set up the group in the near future.

Treasurer's Report – The annual administration grant has been received from Highland Council for all four schools and deposited in the High School Parent Council Account which covers the ASG. Scourie £53.84, Durness £55.84, KLB Primary £64.84 and KLB High School £158.64. This brings the balance in the ASG Parent Council account to £1,675.19. Figures were not available from the primary schools. A consensus could not be reached as to how to handle Parent Council money going forward. There were different proposals. Keep a single bank account for the ASG Parent Council with each school's money ring fenced. Close all bank accounts and have monies held in the High School Fund or have money kept separately in the funds of the various schools. The primary parent councils no longer exist as separate entities so they should not need separate accounts. As the ASG becomes more established and parents have more confidence it will become clearer as to the best solution going forward. New signatories were needed for the current High School Parent Council Account which is the account registered with Highland Council for the ASG and forms were circulated to those willing to become signatories.

Correspondence - None

AOB – Mrs Meg Macrae is retiring after 35 years in Durness Primary School. Both Mr Smart and the Parent Council were keen to thank her for her contribution to the work of Durness Primary and the schools group as a whole. Durness Primary will organise a presentation and the other ASG schools contributed towards this.

The post has been advertised with a closing date of 2.4.18. Mr Smart was confident it would attract applicants. Until the new person is appointed Mrs Macrae's work will be covered by Katy Lee and Aileen MacDonald assisted by Susan Bewley and Gail Ross.

Work Experience – There has been a change to the operation of work experience across Highland Schools. It is no longer organised by schools. It is much more up to the individual pupil taking responsibility to research and arrange a placement with the backup of the school. Mr Smart felt that if a pupil had a career in mind it would be more helpful to arrange a placement in that field and one pupil had already successfully done so. Mr Smart felt that sending a whole class out on work experience when the pupils had no firm career plans or the available placements were limited in their scope might not be the best use of time. Parents felt that they and the pupils had not been fully informed about these changes and were concerned that for some the opportunity has been lost. They felt that work experience was valuable to pupils in teaching life skills even if it was not career focused. Time is short now to arrange placements so Mr Smart will speak to pupils ASAP and put out information to parents so that everyone who wants to is able to access this opportunity during their time at the school.

Kenya – It was asked whether pupils would be involved in future trips to Kenya. This project is currently funded by the British Council and is only open to staff. There are social media links and pupils are in contact with their Kenyan counterparts. It is hoped that there will be opportunities for pupils in the future if funding can be found.

College Placements on Friday – Due to the travel involved both in time and expense this is not something that can be offered to all pupils. One pupil has been able to access this opportunity but only because their parents have committed to facilitating it.

Pupil Equity Funding – This is based on the number of pupils accessing free school meals. It is worth over £1,000 per pupil to the school so it is important that anyone who thinks they may be entitled to free meals applies. There was a problem with applications not being dealt with within a reasonable timeframe. One parent had waited over a year for a response.

DoE – The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme is up and running, there was a lapse while Mr Cunningham recovered from an operation but expeditions will be taking place before the summer break. Pupils also have the opportunity to work for John Muir Trust Awards which are outdoors and conservation focused and Saltire Awards which are geared towards volunteering in the community.

Parents Evening – High School Parents Evenings need some thought put into the appointment system as it didn't work well at the 3,4 and 5 parents evening. Bottlenecks at core subjects such as

English and Maths caused the system to breakdown with some parents waiting over an hour after their allotted slot. Mr Smart will look into what can be done to streamline the process for future events.

Date for next meeting – Wednesday 23rd May 2018 7pm KLB High School

Meeting closed at 8.40pm