

**MINUTES OF NORTH WEST SUTHERLAND SCHOOLS PARENT COUNCIL
MEETING**

Wednesday 24th February 2021
Virtual Meeting via Google Meet at 6.00pm

1. Attendees

Graeme Smart, Aileen MacDonald, Katy Lee, Iona Shaw, Krysha Davis, Sophie Beveridge, Katie MacFarlane, Billy MacFarlane, Ashley Milne, Linda Tebay, Carol-Anne Forsyth, Leanne McKee, Joshua Keitany, Heather Paterson, Selena Campbell, Denise MacDonald, Yvonne MacRae

Apologies

None noted

2. Minutes of last meeting

Approved by Sophie Beveridge, seconded by Graeme Smart.

3. Matters arising from minutes

None

4. Head Teacher's report

Please find the formal Head Teacher's report attached as appendix 1.

A discussion followed around the teacher staffing allocation based on pupil number and the algorithm. The use of such a formula means it is very challenging for schools with small pupil numbers such as Kinlochbervie High School to offer the breadth of subjects they would like to.

Graeme confirmed that the High School staffing meeting will be on the 11th March and he hopes to be able to update staff and parents after this time.

5. Nurseries

a. Durness

Nothing raised.

b. Kinlochbervie

A transition plan for nursery children going into P1 next school year was requested. Staff ensured that if Covid-19 regulations allow during the Easter to Summer term those children will be allowed a formal transition in the Primary School as has happened in previous years. However, both outdoors and virtual transitions were considered as alternative options.

Aileen has spoken with the nursery Area Manager and confirmed that Kinlochbervie Nursery is expected to remain open next year with an expected role of 2 or 3 children; this includes children from age 2 years.

c. Scourie

Break times were discussed. As P1 are now finishing at 3pm they are no longer having an afternoon break with the nursery children, a shared

afternoon break this will resume when the school day returns to a 3.30pm finish.

6. Primary Schools

Both parents and teachers stressed the importance of next step transitions for all pupils changing classrooms / teachers / moving up to High School from P7 / those leaving High School. Staff will work with pupils to prepare them as best they can.

Parents from all three Primary Schools commented that children are happy to be back in school following their time of home learning.

a. Durness

Nothing raised

b. Kinlochbervie

Nothing raised

c. Scourie

Outdoor learning / woodland days will continue, weather permitting. Scourie Lodge continue to allow use of the grounds and one allocated toilet for school use which is cleaned by a member of school staff.

7. High School

There are only a few pupils in the school building at present, those doing practical work and children of key workers. Graeme praised the online engagement of the majority of pupils.

Senior pupils, over the age of 16, need to collect their Covid tests and sign consent forms. This can be done on their first day back in school.

UCAS deadlines have been delayed to allow senior pupils more time to complete them, staff will assist when possible.

The biology / chemistry teacher will remain in post until the Summer and then the position will be advertised.

8. Treasurers report

| | |
|--|----------|
| High School | £978.67 |
| Scourie Primary | £284.42 |
| Durness Primary | £1067.00 |
| Kinlochbervie Primary (approx. figure) | £1141.50 |
| <hr/> | <hr/> |
| Total | £3471.59 |

It was also agreed that £200 will be given for stylus pens for Chromebooks.

Iona updated the group about the estimated cost of a Highland Stoneware gift for Christine Mackenzie and it was agreed that she should order a plate as a thank you gift for her many years of service to the parent council.

It was agreed to keep parent council funds separate but split any contributions towards purchases equitably between the schools.

9. Fundraising

It was agreed that further fundraising will be postponed until Covid-19 restrictions are eased. The primary schools and associated nurseries will all make tea towels at a later date. The primary schools have all raised some funds recently and fundraising was not felt to be a priority at this time.

10. Correspondence

Highland Council Parent Forum will email Sophie directly as Chair. A recent questionnaire about our parent council scored highly on our partnership with the schools.

11. Any other business (AOB)

There was discussion around how to attract and keep families in the local area. It was felt that promoting the positive things that are happening in our schools and communities would be a progressive step towards this. Social media can be used positively to do this.

There was debate over whether performance of the schools in national league tables may deter some families from moving to the area. Graeme questioned the statistical validity of school league tables as he felt it is unfair to compare academic performance of our classes to larger schools due to our small cohort. Every pupil has a massive impact on the results and thus league table position can vary considerably from year to year.

Staff felt that pupils are encouraged to progress to positive destinations post-school and this was more relevant than league table position.

12. Date of next meeting

26th May 2021 at 6pm via Google Meet.

Meeting closed at 7pm.

Appendix 1

North West Sutherland Schools Parent Council

Head Teacher's Report. February 2021

Staffing:

Staffing returns for all primary schools and ELC's have now been completed and we will meet with Highland Council's workforce planning team in the next few weeks to discuss staffing in all schools for next session. This is always a complex process but I do not anticipate any change in our staffing needs in the primary schools next year. We will still have one primary class and a Nursery in Durness, an early years/P1 class and a P2 – 7 class in Scourie and two classes, P1 – 4 and P 5- 7 in Kinlochbervie with the nursery in Kinlochbervie remaining with highland council and managed by the schools. In terms of personnel it is not possible at this stage to say who will be teaching each class. Highland Council only issue fixed term contracts at the moment and although we would like to keep the staff we have it is likely that there may be some changes next year. As soon as we can we will let parents and pupils know who will be teaching each class.

High School staffing is always a more complicated business and I have argued for many years that a staffing allocation by formula based on our roll does not allow us to offer the range of subjects we currently offer. We will have fewer than 40 pupils in the high school next year which under current arrangements entitles us to approximately 7 teachers. Even allowing for part time staff and teachers with dual or even multiple qualifications it is not possible to operate with so few. I will continue to argue for more and until now at least we have always been successful in getting enough staff to allow us to operate in the way we wish. I will of course let parents know as soon as we have a final position on staffing for next session.

Music:

As you know Sarah Lockhart has taken a career break to work with the Youth Music Initiative and Creative Scotland. We had secured the services of Mr Ross to cover in her absence but for a variety of reasons out with our control he is no longer able to do so. Music in the junior phase will be covered by Kim Richards who returns from her maternity leave as our Art teacher this week. Kim is well equipped to cover this position at least until we return to full time in school. Senior music students will be taught through the Highland Virtual Academy and details of classes have been shared with the pupils.

Art:

Kim Richards returns this week from her maternity leave and will take over classes on line from next Monday. I would like to offer my enormous thanks to Julie Philip for all her work with our pupils during Kim's absence. The senior Art students in N5 or Higher

classes will also be in school on Tuesdays for the next few weeks to allow them to be supported with practical work.

CDT:

Mr Cunningham will be in school on Wednesdays to work with his Practical Metalwork class.

Covid 19 Arrangements:

From 22nd February all pupils in Primary 1 – 3 and all ELC children across Scotland returned to school full time. Because of the size of our school and the nature of our classes we have reopened Scourie and Durness fully and Kinlochbervie is open for P1 – 4. We will continue to provide childcare for the children of Key workers and for vulnerable children in Kinlochbervie Primary and in the High School.

For all other pupils on line learning will continue until at least mid March and very probably beyond for some. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our staff for the highly professional way in which they have coped with on line provision in this period of lockdown. I know from conversations with parents and with my senior managers that what is being provided by staff is of a very high standard. I would also like to thank all parents for their support in ensuring that the high level of engagement we have had was sustained and continues. Finally, my thanks to the pupils who have engaged so well with on line classes and with home learning. I look forward to welcoming all pupils back as soon as possible. It has been a real pleasure to see so many back this week and I hope it will not be too long before they are joined by their older schoolmates.

Pupils and staff who are in High School are asked to wear face coverings when moving around the school and in classes. Senior pupils who are in school for practical subjects will be asked to carry out self testing for Covid 19 before they come to school. Full instructions on how this works have been posted on the Google Classroom used for senior registration and test kits can be collected on the first occasion pupils are in school. Staff who are in school regularly are also being encouraged to test twice a week.

Across all schools the precautions we had in place prior to Christmas will still apply. Face coverings should be worn on transport, hands should be washed or sanitised on entering the building and if moving between rooms. Paper towels and disinfectant spray should be used to wipe down surfaces before use and sharing of equipment should be avoided. Staff will maintain 2 metre social distancing from other staff and where possible from pupils. High school pupils will also maintain 2 metre distancing from each other and from staff.

Obviously the current situation has had a huge impact on much of what we would normally be doing. Transitions from Nursery to P1 and from P7 to S1 have simply not been possible this year but please be assured that as soon as it is possible to do so we

will arrange for pupils to visit and if at all possible we will reintroduce our “all together days “before the summer holiday.

High School staff are working currently on ensuring that they are aware of the constantly changing requirements of SQA courses and I have stressed on several occasions at assembly the importance of pupils keeping up with classwork in certificate classes. It is highly likely that teacher judgement will play a part in grades this year and therefore vital that any pupil studying for a certificate level course does everything possible to ensure that the grade they are awarded reflects their ability.

Graeme Smart

23/02/2021