

Deans Community High School

Parent Council Meeting Notes

Monday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022

### **Attendees**

Angela Ritchie (Chair), Pauline Allison (HT), Dawn Fleming (DHT), Gillian Campbell, Eddie Carson, Sandra Fannon, Ann Edwards, Laura MacMillan

### **Apologies**

Heather Marriott, Janice Ritchie, Caroline Bennett, Patricia Miller, Lauren Riddell,

### **Agenda**

1. Welcome
2. Apologies
3. Review of the minutes from the previous meeting
4. Parental engagement
5. VSE report
6. Head teachers' update

### **AGM**

1. Chair's annual report
2. Election of parent council office bearers
3. AOCB

### **1. & 2. Welcome & Apologies**

As above.

### **3. Minutes from the previous meeting were accepted by all attendees**

### **4. Parental engagement**

Following our last meeting in which we discussed rebranding and promoting the parent council, a proposed leaflet was circulated for feedback. Consensus was that the layout and content were clear, with some feedback to enhance the content to be incorporated. It was agreed that this leaflet could be used as part of the rebrand, including it within the school website alongside some text which promotes the work of the council and the GIRFEC poster.

AR suggested that a collage of photographs that represent the GIRFEC indicators is created including stakeholders of parents, carers, school, outside agencies (for example health and wellbeing; career pathways).

GC will speak to the Health & Wellbeing group about supporting collating photos that could be used in the collage.

GC & AR will have a follow up conversation to discuss this further. PA suggested that the DMG staff may be able to help with putting together the poster and we can potentially look to have a banner created that could be put onto the fences outside the school to further promote the council.

## **5. VSE Report**

The report from the VSE assessment which took place over the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> November was discussed. The assessment was split with one of the days spent observing S1-S3 classes and the second day observing S4-S6. In addition to the observations there were discussion groups between senior leaders, students, and teachers who are involved in the improvements to learning and teaching programme.

Every member of the teaching staff was observed. A 6-point scale was used to rate the observation, ranging from “unsatisfactory/weak” to “Excellent.” None of the observations were scored at the bottom end of the scale, however there were some at the top end. Using the average rating, and comparing this to the last VSE assessment carried out 2 years ago the school moved from “Satisfactory” to “Good”

In September 2019 the school started the 3 year “Improvements to learning and teaching programme”. which although has had to be adapted due to Covid, this has played a part in the improvements that were seen in the VSE.

General quality and consistency in approach to learning and teaching have both improved. Collaborative learning evident amongst the staff.

What has been clear in the last two VSE reports is the strong ethos, strong relationships between the students and staff. Students are enjoying and are more engaged in their learning.

The key areas of development identified were:

- The level of pace and challenge is different between the S1-S3 and S4-S6 groups. The Principal Teachers are looking at this within their departments.
- Differentiation, where every learner is able to understand their lessons and can move at their pace: support is available if they are struggling and if they are doing well, they can participate in work which is more challenging. This is something that we’re continuing to work on this
- Developing the digital learning aspect: The S1-S3 group were less keen on continuing with digital learning, preferring face to face learning, whereas senior students were happy to continue with digital learning.

PA discussed the report with the Education Quality Assurance Committee who were pleased with the improvement, and comfortable that the school leadership team know what they need to take forward and how to do this.

EC queried the table on page 4 of the report which suggested that the school's scoring had decreased in all areas except numeracy, however the Authority scores overall had moved forward more than the school. Were there any actions that other schools were taking that we could learn from?

PA explained that there are many contributing factors to the scoring, and that West Lothian score is an average therefore some schools will always be below this and some above. The key focus is on the progress that the school has made from previous scores. The virtual comparator is also a helpful benchmark as this is a virtual school which is created with the same number of students, and the same demographics and characteristics such as number of students with dyslexia or English as a second language.

The school have both quick fixes and longer term programmes in place to support the improvement of scoring, with the quality and consistency of learning and teaching at the core. Examples include twilight classes, working with cluster primary schools on reading and literacy to identify the student's current level and the areas to work on when they transition to secondary.

## **6. Headteachers' update**

- **Staffing**

Sarah Duncan finished on Thursday to take up her new PTC post in Edinburgh. Majority of classes are able to be covered by the other music staff with some BGE classes on a rotation.

- **Course Choice**

Course choice process has now begun, with information available to parents and students in digital format. S2 Careers week is taking place this week. S2 pupils will be hearing from employees across a range of different occupations and be given time to think and reflect on possible career options. Mrs Bleach and Mrs Fleming will be hosting two online Q & A sessions for parents this Thursday.

- **School Repairs/Refurbishments**

- Repairs required to underwater tiling in the swimming pool have now been completed and the pool is back in use.
- New dining tables have been ordered for the dining hall. These are folding tables with seating attached. The dining hall flooring will be replaced over the summer holiday.
- At the request of the Student Council, additional bins have been purchased and put in place in the playground and the school street.
- There are no updates in COVID guidance for schools. The school continue to see some cases amongst students and teachers however the numbers are small.

## **AGM**

### **1. Chair's annual report**

The Chair's report was circulated for review prior to the meeting. This provides a summary of the key focus areas and actions taken throughout 2021, and the aims of the Parent Council going forward.

### **2. Election**

Due to the number of regular Parent Council members who were unable to attend the meeting the decision was made to postpone the election for Parent Council positions until the next meeting. PA will include a note in the schools' weekly update to promote the date of the next meeting and agenda to encourage more parents to attend.

### **3. AOCB**

PM raised a question via email on the possibility of tutor teachers distributing lateral flow tests as an alternative to the central collection point at the office, at specific times of the day. This would reduce the likelihood of students forgetting to collect kits. PA confirmed that there is a requirement for the batch numbers of the tests handed out to be reported, and to achieve this they need to be distributed in this central, controlled way. However, if students forget to collect kits they can ask PA for them.

AR raised that two previously regular attendees of Parent Council Meetings have advised that they cannot attend meetings on a Monday. It was agreed that from the next meeting, they will be alternated, being held on a Monday one month, Tuesday the next, and so on. In addition to enabling the attendance of at least one of these members, it may also encourage new attendees. The next meeting will be held on a Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March and the following meeting on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> March.

AR asked how the school deals with situations in which a student has 2 exams scheduled on the same day, which no break in between. PA advised that the SQA will allow the school to slide the start time of one of the exams. The students would need to be supervised whilst they had a break and they would sit the exam in another room within the school (as opposed to joining the other students sitting the same exam late.)

AR asked for members to continue thinking of alternative names for the Parent Council and forward any ideas on. Some initial thoughts were Parents' Get Together, Parent's Panel and Parents' Forum.

AR asked if we could invite guests to the meetings to talk about the work they are doing, in the same way the Parent's Council did previously when meetings were held face to face. PA will ask the chair of the Student Council if she will attend the next meeting to provide an update on what they are working on.

**Next meeting: 7pm on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022**