Gracemount High School Parent Council Meeting

Minutes of meeting Tuesday 17 September 2024

Attendees: Katrina Coutts, Alison Sutherland, Rachael Laing, Louise Herbert, Linda Wardrop, Suzy Ross, Pamela Hamilton, Ross Hunter, Sylvia Simpson, Lydia Kowalczyk, James Anderson

1. Appointments/Chair's Report

The following appointments were agreed: -

- Alison Autherland as Treasurer
- Pamela Hamilton and Louise Herbert – Secretary shared
- James Anderson - Vice chair
- Katrina Coutts – Chair

2. Treasurer's Report

Balance is £1432.71

- Purchased a £64.99 urn for the awards evening
- New cups
- Awards evening nibbles

New balance of £1278.57

3. Headteacher Update

RH shared his update and this covered the following: -

School improvement plan - The school Improvement plan will focus on 3 key areas that we can work together on that will make a difference. The new version will be shared on the school website.

Budget – the education budget under pressure and the carry forward money from last year has been removed from all schools. This means we no longer have approx £63.000. The school Business Manager is working out how to address this shortfall.

Study school programme – We're entering the 3rd year of Saturday school programme. This has extended and will now run from October rather than December. The cost is approx £8k a year.

Duke of Edinburgh Programme – The £8,300 Duke of Edinburgh programme funding continues this year from Changingideas.org and 40 students will benefit.

Health and Wellbeing initiative – We've been allocated £30,000 to support a health and wellbeing initiative. This initiative is being trialled in our school and the Parent Council will help to decide what this will look like.

Staffing – RH thanked SR for giving up her time to undertake recruitment training so parents have representation at staffing recruitment panals. Anyone else interested in this should contact the school for more information. Future training dates are on 18 September and 23 October.

- Dee Scott is leaving so Amanda Lyons and Tanya Peters are joining us as the new deputes in November following Lewis Whale leaving earlier this term.
- Long term absences in Art, PE, Modern Studies. These are being managed through internal cover and supply which can put us under pressure budget wise.

Monitor and tracking system – a new system is being used in all Edinburgh schools. Senior target setting reports have been shared on paper this week but these will move online going forward and login details will be given to parents.

GL assessment – A new initiative will roll out to current and future s1 pupils to give a predictive level of attainment so we can push top performers - Gracemount Up Programme. This will help to identify the cohort of young people that can be pushed and will enhance the info already shared by primary schools. Broughton High school have used this for a while. It involves a one-time generic assessment and gives a predictive measure for all subjects. Once all the details are confirmed information will be shared with parents. Amanda Lyons to lead this and will write to parents and hold assemblies for S1 once finalised.

AS asked how we track for pupils who fall between high level and lower level. How do we fill the gap? RH keen to tighten up on how we track going forward across all subjects and explained that pathways are different for different people. It means no door is

closed and by 6th year they can get the higher via another pathway route. RH shared an image of the pathways and this will be updated by Dec/Jan.

Celebrating success – schools can no longer use class charts due to data protection changes. We're now using SEEMIS and merits and de-merits which link to commitments and care and effort.

- De-merit if late to class (more than 5 mins) 5 or more in one week then text home.
- Remove and restore - D merit
- Toilet - not in use yet but may be soon.
- Sharing merits in house teams - 5 or more in a month then a text sent to parents to share success. Headteacher award if pupil in top 2 highest merit of each month. RH meets with them to congratulate them. Every merit is added to house teams.
- In school - Bronze, silver, gold and platinum - something for the school you get an award for how many hours you've done that.
- Out of school merit - regularly in a club etc.

This new approach is now live, it's pupil led and the pupil parliament have decided on categories etc.

Celebration evening – there was a big discussion on pupil rewards and certain decisions that were made about awards that were given out last term. RH said that he has reflected on the fair feedback and that the process is now being reviewed to ensure that the system is merit related and will consider how awards for excellence and effort are decided. The proposal will be shared with the Parent Council in due course.

Attainment - National data is released via insight and this helps the school look at targets.

- 73% pass at National 5 (77% was national average) This info has been shared with departments and an action plan is being put in place.
- Higher was 62% pass (national was 74%) so slightly disappointing.
- Pupils who do 4 or 5 subjects find step up to higher easier than those who do less. We've got work to do to improve attainment. If you get a C band 6 then jump to higher is maybe not the course for you. Consider a pathway instead.
- Bands 1-4 grade is guaranteed to be able to sit higher.

Road safety – a parent is concerned about safety on the main road beside Gracemount shops. There are limited places to cross and the lights are not working well so concerns

have been shared with Ian Murray. Ross to pass on emails so the PTC can write to Ian Murray too.

Toilets – Concerns around the toilets continue and there was an incident of serious vandalism, which involved the police, in the boys. Teachers are continuing to monitor the toilets, but they are still a concern, and the design of the building doesn't help as the toilets are quite hidden. Vape sensors will be fitted in due course. The school are trying their best to manage the toilet issues and all suggestions are welcome.

Alcohol at celebration evening – a parent has asked if it was right that we served alcohol at the celebration evening as not everyone is comfortable around alcohol. We discussed serving a non-alcoholic beverage instead and we'll take this into account next time.

Raising Teens with Confidence Course – Rob Hart was absent so details around the Raising Teens with Confidence Course will be shared at a later date.

4. Parental Engagement Home Learning Update - Lydia

Lydia is Parental Engagement Lead and came along to update us on the planned focus for home learning this year. Developing a reading culture is a key incentive for the English Department and a key focus is to raise the profile of reading with families and to find out what support families need to do this.

This led to a wider discussion about i-pads not being available for all pupils to take home and how parents are not clear what home learning pupils have been asked to complete.

We also discussed what the desire for homework is as this can vary in each family.

A survey will be sent out to parents to ask for their views on home learning and this will help us better understand what home learning should look like and how we can take this forward. We'll revisit this at our next meeting.