

Meeting Minutes

South Morningside Parent Council Meeting

27 April 2020 at 6.45–8.20pm via Zoom

Attendees

Parent Council Parent Members

Olly Headey	Alice Nelson
Brendan Paddy	Emily Hargreaves
Jill Dallas	Jeremy Balfour
Shelagh Halford	Alison Reeves
Andrew Leiper	Joana Valdez-Tullett
Ellie Trotter	Lizzi Kenrick
Colin McRae	Chris Hebden
Eilidh Stimpson	Fraser Walker

Parent Council Staff Members (non-voting)

Michael Urquhart	Yvonne Moore
Susie Morgan	Karen Richmond
Pam Ferguson	

Councillors

Cllr Melanie Main	Cllr Neil Ross
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Parents/Carers/Guests attendees

Chris New	Bobby Pathak
Reuben Carr	Lesley MacNiven
Jacob Ahlqvist	Louisa Dall
Andrea Sneddon	Andrew Lang
Louise Wright	Iain Ring-Macleod

Welcome, attendees and apologies

Olly welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Review & Approval of Minutes of 2 March 2020 meeting

The minutes of the 2 March 2020 were approved with one correction – Olly and Brendan will continue in their Co-chair roles in the next academic year but will stand down **after** next year.

Review of matters arising & actions from last meeting

See separate document.

Headteacher's Update

Mr Urquhart sent an update report and was happy to take questions.

Andrew asked about the implication of the potential slippage of the Canaan Lane site development. Mr Urquhart said it had already been delayed once and three month slippage had been built in for delays. If the Council is forced to delay for a further year, it would fall into proposal 2 (to create a superschool). The new intake will commence from November so a decision needs to be made by then. Andrew asked if the new school was advertising for a new Head Teacher. Mr Urquhart said that no internal mail was currently going out but that normally positions would be advertised at Christmas. Cllr Ross commented that he had today spoken to the Director of Resources at Edinburgh City Council who had said that they are awaiting Scottish Government guidance on allowing construction projects to restart.

Reuben asked what action was being taken, assuming social distancing measures will be required at the school. Mr Urquhart said it not come up on any communication but that he is expecting the school to be closed until the summer. If schools were to open, only 1/3 of teachers would be available due to medical issues/childcare. If they opened up with current ratios, would only be able to accommodate P7s let alone anyone else. He said this was not on the radar at the moment whilst trying to establish hub schooling. He said they are planning for an August/ September full or partial opening. Mr Urquhart said the current focus was on setting up hubs. Cllr Main said education staff are very busy trying to make sure hubs are working. The recovery plan for Edinburgh is now starting to be looked at but that we are nowhere near the recovery stage. The discussions are about what extra capacity might be needed and who might take this forward. Cllr Main said the Scottish Government guidance is changing daily. Work and financial projections have been done regarding opening up the schools using social distancing but it's at a very high level at the moment.

Alice asked about the transitions to P7 and enhanced transitions to high school. Mrs Morgan said that with the P7 transition a lot of the work is behind the scenes so the plan is to move all of that on to an online platform. Normally, it's in layers so class teachers meet with guidance teachers. This will happen online. With enhanced transitions, the Support For Learning teachers will meet the teachers in the transition school. Mrs Morgan said that she goes to an ASL meeting at which the transition arrangements for children who need additional support will be discussed. She added that enhanced transition visits probably won't happen due to the current situation. A big party for the P7s will be planned once the schools go back.

Andrea suggested that Boroughmuir could ask older pupils to get in touch with some P7s to answer questions about the school. Mrs Morgan said this was a great idea. She added that a leaflet has been prepared which has very reassuring messages.

Jeremy asked if schools were to open before the summer, how long would the school need to formulate a plan with Waverly Court and if they don't go back, quite a number of parents have been in touch with him to ask if it's possible to keep the same teacher during the cross over for a portion or whole of the year. Mr Urquhart said that at SMPS, 9 teachers will leave regardless so 1/3 of classes will need to have a new teacher anyway. He said it was too early to think about that. The notion of rolling the school forward may be looked at but it's too difficult to say at this moment.

Brendan thanked Mr Urquhart for the update and thanked the school for the efforts made to make sure that everything is in place for the children. He said parents were very grateful. Brendan acknowledged and appreciated that there had been some feedback from parents who may be under some stress themselves. He said if there was anything that could be done to help mediate that, to let the Parent Council know. Mrs Morgan said that she was going to be gathering feedback, hopefully using MS Forms and was grateful for any feedback received.

Mr Urquhart said that an audit of pupil engagement was being carried out. Some children don't have internet access at home and sometimes it's a shared access. He added that teachers will have access to the school on Thursday for a few hours so they are looking to get some ipads and other equipment. Conversations with samples of parents were taking place and they were monitoring children not engaging with learning so will be looking to see what they can do to support those children. Andrew suggested people may have spare equipment at home which could be reconditioned for children who do not have any. Mr Urquhart said this was a good suggestion and Mrs Campbell was going to lead on it.

Lesley said she was helping mediate a forum about mental health issues. She said there was a lot of anxiety felt in families balancing work and home schooling and a lot of advice is about ensuring children's mental health doesn't suffer. She asked what the school's standpoint on this was as on the one hand, the advice is to do what you can but everyone's situation is slightly different. She asked if there was any other way to support parents who are working full-time or who are feeling isolated and not supported. For older children it's quite challenging. Mr Urquhart said they were aware of that as the 3 department heads. He said a chat function is being used to allow older children to communicate with their friends so it was even more important we identify those children who aren't engaging. He said teachers hope to speak on a 1-2-1 basis with every child before the summer holidays. He added Deputy Heads are already making contact with families the school has concerns about and disadvantaged pupils are being targeted. For the P3-4 who don't have access to the social media aspect of Teams, the school is looking at how they can facilitate communication between pupils so they feel part of the school community. Story time is coming and there is an assembly on Friday. Mr Urquhart also said the school has been told to cut back work on improvement plans and focus on mental health and wellbeing.

Louisa asked if there was a plan to change classes when schools go back. Mrs Morgan said what they have done over the last couple of years is mix the children at the end of P5. She said it was still something they need to think about and haven't made any decisions. Mrs Morgan added that she couldn't see it as being a positive experience going back to classes if they were mixed up but they may look at this half way through the year.

[There was an internet outage at which point some attendees lost connection and re-joined later in the meeting]

Questions on Subgroup Reports

Fundraising

Jill said we won't have a summer or possibly even winter fair so it would be good to think about fundraising alternatives. With the activities which have already raised money, we're OK to put forward a sensible/normal budget for next year so funding may not be required at the same level. All committed spend for next year is covered.

Comms

Eilidh said that Comms were posting useful information for parents on homeschooling on Facebook and that a pin was posted at the top of the page for parent recommendations.

Clubs

Louisa updated that a few clubs are running via Zoom. However, Clubs would need to look at Edinburgh City Council advice about using Zoom going forward. A question was whether from a fundraising perspective, SMPC will still be able to charge for clubs. In terms of pupils who can't access clubs, the Clubs subgroup are working with Mrs Campbell regarding access to clubs outside of the curriculum.

Mrs Morgan said it would be quite challenging now to use Zoom due to security concerns. Zoom bombing is an issue particularly if there are concerns about the firewall. She said it would be better not to use it and to look for another platform. Mrs Morgan said she would check what acceptable platforms are with the digital learning team. She added it would be better to say 'no' to Zoom in the meantime and look for another platform, e.g. Teams. Alison added that data protection implications would need to be thought through.

Supporting pupils, parents and teachers (Scottish Government guidance)

Chris New thanked the teachers for putting together the home learning packs. He said the material which had been put together was very comprehensive. However, he said that what has been missing is the direct interaction between teachers and pupils and between pupils. He added that, in summary, a lot of the Scottish Government document provides a lot of aspiration and opportunity in relation to digital learning and he wondered whether are there any plans for these platforms to be rolled out to the whole school and if there are, what are the barriers to getting this in place and if so, what support can parents and the parent council offer?

Mrs Morgan said this was very much the school's biggest challenge and that they are trying to find an appropriate way. She updated that some of the more senior years (P5-7) were using onenote and MS Teams but that smaller children (P3-4) don't have logins and that this is part of the ICT strategy. She said Mrs Moore has worked tirelessly to try to make this as accessible as possible. The school are aware it's not ideal but are trying to make it as interactive as possible at the moment.

Mrs Moore said thank you to the parents for supporting teachers. She said she was working with P3 & 4 but that logins is not something she can set up from home. Mrs Moore said that if access is granted to the school, she can look at doing this. In between that, they have been trying to do webinars. They are looking at other platforms but they need to be age appropriate and suitable for children to interact with relatively independently. Louisa said that the videos have been brilliant.

Mrs Moore said they were trying to reassure people the school were trying everything they can. She said that children need the chat and social interaction and that they will update as soon as they have a solution that is age appropriate.

Chris New said that in terms of interaction, it good to see videos online. He said what would be good is for the videos to set the context for the work that's set to enable parents to teach it in the way that it's intended. He added the more context and interaction the school can provide, it sets the context so parents can support that context at home.

Mrs Moore said one teacher has put a Powerpoint of maths and has managed to put a little emoji of herself and when a child clicks on the emoji, the teacher talks. She said this was helpful for the child and also the parent.

Mr Urquhart said we need to be careful and introduce things like videos slowly to allow teachers to gain in confidence using new platforms. He also questioned the value of changing the digital platform 7 weeks before the school holidays.

Louisa said one teacher had made a video of her reading, which was very well received. She said it isn't really about the platform, it's about the interaction. Olly said that one teacher at Boroughmuir was doing 3-4 minute podcasts to introduce a topic.

Shelagh, Bobby, Andrew and Fraser fed back that learning journals for nursery and P1-2 were excellent with lots of interactive material including videos and stories, which the children were really enjoying. Mrs Richmond said it was good to be able to connect the younger children through learning journals and create a sense of community. She thanked parents for their contributions.

Situations vacant

- 1) Secretary

Bobby said he was happy to volunteer for the Secretary post.

- 2) Chair shadowing

Olly said there was an opportunity to have a year-long handover for anyone interested in the Chair position.

AOB

Cllr Main said that city mobility plan on how public transport/active travel is catered for has been extended by another month. She said we may not be aware that the transport corridor for the SMPS ward not mentioned in the plan so she is holding an online meeting and wondered if someone from the Travel group might be interested. A date is to be confirmed.

Date of next meeting: 15 June 2020