

## DOUGLAS-EWART HIGH SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL

Monday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2018 from 6.30pm (DEHS teaching staff from 7.30pm)

### MINUTES

**Present at 6.30pm** – H McColm, J Sloan, C Adams, K Hyslop, L McQuat, S Sneddon, L Moore, K Haggmann, R Christie, A McClymont, A Perry, D Chang, A Burnett, P Simpson, H Smith, F McElrea, H Cannon, K McCormick

- 1) Welcome** – Helen welcomed everyone. As her term as Chairperson is about to end and she no longer has a child at the school, she was delighted that our vice chair, Jill Sloan, is overseeing the recruitment process. Helen invited Jill to chair the first part of the meeting. In the absence of a secretary at present, Helen took the minutes for the meeting.
- 2) Discuss Head Teacher applications** – Jill introduced John Thin (Schools Manager) & Maureen Smith (Quality Improvement Manager). The Head Teacher post was advertised from 1<sup>st</sup> August until 9<sup>th</sup> September and generated a number of applicants. These were all considered by Education Officers. Based on the standard of Headship criteria, three applicants have been invited for interview on 3<sup>rd</sup> October. Unsuccessful applicants have been informed; should they wish to know why their application wasn't taken forward, they can enquire. Should the post be re-advertised, they are welcome to reapply. Parent Council representatives will be part of the interview panel along with a Headteacher of another school and an Education Dept. Quality Improvement Manager. The panel will decide if they wish to invite any applicants to a final interview, date TBC. The final interview session is much longer and gives the opportunity for more parents, pupils and teaching staff to meet the applicants over coffee.

Maureen explained that the interview panel would meet an hour prior to the first interview to discuss the questions and format. The interview gives the opportunity to see the person behind the paper application so it is important that the right questions are asked to get as much information from the candidates as possible. We were asked to consider what we were looking for in a Headteacher. The interview should meet both the Education Department's criteria and the Parent Council's needs; we need to work together to get the right Headteacher for our school. As Stranraer Academy has recently appointed an acting-head for the rest of this academic year, there will be no conflict over applicants between the two schools.

At any stage throughout the process, even at the final interview, the decision can be made not to make an appointment. The selection panel at the final interview will be made up of the 3 Parent Council members, 2 of our local Councillors and be chaired by the Chair or Vice of Council Education Committee – this Councillor has the deciding vote (should it be required). Maureen will be attendance to facilitate the interview process but has no vote. The final interview will include a tour of the school, a presentation to 12 stakeholders (4 each of parents, staff and pupils) and a formal interview to the selection panel. There is no restriction as to the number of applicants that can be taken onto the final interview.

The revised recruitment procedures for promoted posts mentioned at previous meetings are being taken to committee again in November for consideration so they will not be in use for this interview process. Should an applicant be offered the post, they generally have approx. 8 weeks notice to give to their current post. Maureen encouraged all parents whether on the interview panel or not, to support those who are. Everyone was encouraged to contribute their thoughts to the question making process.

Maureen was asked why a member of staff (or senior pupil) wasn't included in the final interview panel. She explained the policy they follow has been approved by the Teaching Unions therefore they are unable to deviate from it. She assured members that the feedback from staff and pupils from the morning session would be shared with the panel prior to them being asked to vote.

All discussions at interview **MUST** stay confidential between the interview panel. The panel will not know who they are interviewing until that morning and they will not be able to reveal the names of applicants.

Discussion took place as to areas we would want questioned. Everyone was asked to give this some thought and email Jill with their suggestions by 28<sup>th</sup> September at the latest [jill.sloan412@btinternet.com](mailto:jill.sloan412@btinternet.com) Also, let Jill know if you would be willing to be involved in the interview process.

**John & Maureen were thanked for attending and left the meeting.**

**Joined meeting at 7.30pm** - Mr Cowie, Mr Davies (new Head of English Dept), Councillor McColm

- 3) **Apologies** – Fiona Simpson, Fiona Donald, Cheryl Garrity, Marian Byrne, Lynn Fisher, Joyce Cochrane
- 4) **Approve minutes of meeting held 17<sup>th</sup> June 2018** – approved by D Chang, seconded by H Smith
- 5) **Matters Arising: Transport (bus) update** – Helen read the latest communication from Douglas Kirkpatrick. Minor alterations to the 2 buses serving Port William/Whauphill/Wigtown will be made on 1<sup>st</sup> October to address changes to pupil numbers. This information will be conveyed to pupils beforehand. It was noted that the Port William bus had already broken down twice in the first 2 weeks back and the Creetown bus once. Concern was again raised that there is a shortage of buses in the Machars to cover for breakdowns. It was confirmed that Stagecoach are responsible for the safety of the children to and from school; so again concern was raised that when children are reallocated to other buses (e.g. during breakdowns) the youngsters whereabouts and safety is questionable. Helen will relay our ongoing concerns to Douglas and invite him to come to a Parent Council meeting.

## 6) Correspondence

Maths in the Workplace – Mrs Waddell (Head of Maths Department) is looking for volunteers to come into school to speak to S3 pupils about how they use Maths in their daily work. A few Parent Council members are willing (depending on the date required) but more volunteers are sought so that the year group can be split into smaller groups and hear from a variety of people in various careers. Anyone interested in volunteering is encouraged to contact the school and leave a message for Mrs Waddell.

Cheryl Garrity (Co-opted Parent Council Member and Business Studies teacher) emailed to confirm that £253.75 had been raised for our fundraising account by raffling 5 hampers at the Celebration of Success event in June. She recommended that this be done again. Cheryl also confirmed that she and Mr Miller (Physics teacher) would be willing to make a promotional video for the school to be used, there hadn't been enough time to do it justice prior to the Headteacher advert closing date. They were also keen to progress with a school Facebook page. Members were asked if they wished these staff to proceed with making a promotional video, it was a resounding "Yes, please"! Helen will confirm this to Cheryl and ask them to consult with Jill regarding ideas.

- 7) **Statement of Account** – Our new treasurer, Karen Hyslop, confirmed there was £507.70 in the general account. She had a bank form to get the signatories updated on the account. It was noted that last year we had donated to towards engraving costs for the senior prize giving. Mr Cowie will confirm if such a donation would be welcomed this year.
- 8) **Head Teacher's Report / School Improvement Plan and Finance Plan** – Mr Cowie introduced Mr Davies, the new Principal Teacher of English. He had been an English teacher at DEHS 4 years ago and left to take a promoted post at Kirkcudbright, he is welcomed back to DEHS.

A Management Review regarding promoted posts will be taking place. We currently only have 1.6 fte equivalent for Senior managers (i.e. Head teacher and 0.6 Deputy) which is less than it should be so a review is welcomed. It is hoped that we will have a proper management structure in place for the next Headteacher.

Mr Cowie highlighted a staffing issue in PE Department. One staff member is off on possible long-term illness, another will go on maternity leave in January. With no PE teachers available in the authority, the school will have no option but to reduce the PE provision for the junior school, this will obviously have an impact on timetabling and require provision of alternative classes. Mr Cowie had asked the authority if he could use sports coaches to cover but was informed he would need a qualified teacher present too, which seems a waste of resources. After discussion, it was agreed, after both Councillors present strongly advised, that Helen will write to Cllr Jeff Leaver (copying in our local Councillors & MSPs) asking how we can tackle this situation. She will also ask Cllr Leaver to ask the GTC how they are tackling the shortage of teachers. Could some flexibility be built into the system? Just as pupils are being advised of various pathways to reach same destination, surely in times of need and when a shortage of teachers, a similar pathway scenario should be in place for teacher training i.e. if no Higher English but have a degree in the subject to be taught, they should be eligible for post grad/fast track teaching course.

The school was awarded Netball Scotland's School of the Year award. Lucy Gaw received the award at a presentation at the school today. A great achievement for all.

The School Improvement Plan this year is looking at the challenges in sustaining the inclusion of all our young people in school and how to avoid excluding youngsters from participating. Mr Cowie has seen an increase in Mental Health problems within the school and so money is being spent on training staff in various areas e.g. coaching, mentoring, STEM, PSE development. It has been identified that there are insufficient outside agencies to help our youngsters therefore 3 staff members will be trained to help support pupils with issues such as impact of bereavement, attachment, additional support and social & emotional difficulties. A Youth Work Services person will also be based in DEHS one day per week to offer some counselling. Concern was raised that Mental Health issues and counselling require professionally trained skills and while the desire to help our youngsters was admired, if such services are offered by semi-skilled people, great care must be taken not to make a situation worse. Recognising problems in school and flagging them to the appropriate professionals was suggested.

Mr Cowie reported that statistics have shown in recent years, the S6 cohort have under achieved and this may lead to transition problems the following year. So funding has been allocated to keep them on track and encourage them to reach their potential. A team of 3 staff will be Personal Development coaches to work with S6 pupils. A Youth Worker will also work with the Senior phase. Mr Cowie, confirmed that staff were happy to do extra training to provide new services for our pupils as they want to help them. Mr Davies agreed that the staff were very focused on finding solutions to problems.

Mr Cowie informed the meeting that the school will be interviewing for a Developing the Young Workforce staff member for the junior phase. Mrs Hornell currently performs this role for the senior phase and this will be covered by another staff member during her maternity leave.

The recent Senior Prize Giving was well attended and well received. A great celebration of pupils achievements.

Mr Cowie was informed that some pupils were finding the transition from S3 to S4 very stressful due to sharp increase in workload. Once furnished with the details, he will look into the matter. This led to discussion on homework. Mr Cowie confirmed that if a teacher gives homework it should always be marked or feedback given back to the pupil so they understand how they could have done better. As part of the Improvement Plan, staff are looking at the junior phase to try and provide a better interface from S3 to S4 to ensure maximum progress. A parent asked if the topics being covered in each subject & any timescales could be provided so both parents & pupils throughout the school knew what was expected. Mr Cowie thought this information could be added to the website and asked Mr Davies to raise it as an agenda item at the next Principal Teacher of Curriculum meeting.

Parents had noticed the improvements made to the school website. Mr Cowie confirmed it was work in progress. Staff were thanked for their willingness to continue to update and improve the website.

**9) Councillor's report** – Cllr Hagmann reported that budget cuts were looming (of possibly £30million) and encouraged everyone to take part in the consultation process when it opens. She has been involved in the Borderlands Growth talks. Cllr Hagmann is putting a forward a motion to phase out single use plastic in the region. Mr Cowie stated this could have a negative impact at DEHS, as we have 400 people using the canteen (the best used school canteen in the region) the additional cost of replacing plastic items could be a problem. Cllr Hagmann advised members that Poverty Alleviation funding would be available to groups within our region shortly, look out for adverts regarding it on Facebook. Cllr McColm advised some primary schools will see minor changes to capacity due to the expansion of nursery provision. The region will need more nursery providers to meet demands.

**10) A.O.C.B** – The First Minister's Reading Challenge has been extended to High Schools, Mr Davies was asked if DEHS would be taking part. He confirmed it was being looked into and hoped it would.

Helen reminded everyone that we need a new secretary. She is happy to do the minutes until November's AGM, but we will need someone thereafter. It doesn't have to be a parent, it may suit someone who has an interest in education, perhaps someone looking to enhance their CV, in addition the secretary is paid £50 per meeting. Everyone was asked to think about suitable people prior to our next meeting.

**11) Date of next meeting** – as we are unsure as to when we may need to meet again to discuss recruitment, a date for the next meeting has not yet been set. It will be confirmed in due course.

**Meeting closed at 9.05pm**