

St Margaret's Parent Council Meeting - Monday 27th March 2023

Attendees: Collette Moran (Secretary), Lorna Boyd, Jilly Burns, Kirstin Shemilt, Stuart Young-Murray, Lynn Thomson, Stephen McCullagh, Paddy Conway (ADHT), Anne Crookston (DHT) and Isla Wright (HT). Sorry I missed placed my list of attendees so am unable to provide a full list of all who attended.

Apologies: Lisa Loran (Chair).

Opening Prayer – Mr Conway.

An email communication was sent late afternoon from the school to confirm the meeting would commence at 6pm rather than 6.30pm. Apologies were given to those who didn't see this in time. It was confirmed all future meetings will commence at 6pm and it was acknowledged by those attending the meeting this was an acceptable start time going forward.

Head Teacher (HT) update – see attached.

Mrs Wright was delighted to confirm the appointment of Mrs Boyd was appointed as Deputy Head Teacher with responsibility for Student Support. Please see the HT Update for information on further staffing changes.

Mrs Wright talked through the school budget and PEF funding for the current year. The amount the school has been allocated has decreased slightly in comparison on the year before. Mrs Wright will provide a breakdown of the 2022/23 PEF spend at the next meeting. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are currently evaluating the successes and impact of PEF and will hopefully be able to a more accurate figure for PEF for 2024/25 at the next meeting.

Course Choices and Options

We have now completed the course choice process which allows the timetabling team to put together the whole school timetable for next session. Mr Conway stressed the ambition of the timetabling team to ensure all pupils get the subjects they want although in rare situations this cannot be achieved.

The timetable change will commence on 29th May as the SQA exam period comes to the close.

Mr Conway stated the number of people taking Advanced Highers is at a record high. In addition, Mr Conway confirmed the schools' ambition to increase the offering for Level 6 pupils e.g., music sound production. SLT are delighted at the number of pupils pursuing Advanced Higher courses as this demonstrates high aspirations and ambition. Mr Conway informed the group that Principal Teachers are being asked to ensure, as far as possible, that Higher courses are supported with a suitable National Progression Award (NPA) or SCQF qualification. This will ensure pupils can have success at a range of levels in the Senior Phase. SLT are also working on a wider achievement programme for S6 pupils looking at UCAS and application preparation. This will include paired reading and working in the primary schools to build leadership capacity. Mr Bennett is working on a programme looking at offers of extended work experience for S5/6 pupils.

The school are striving to match the curriculum with skills shortage. A parent commented from their own work experience that there is a shortage of vets across the industry. To ensure we are providing young people with careers opportunities Mrs Wright to make contact with parents with links to careers and industry to build links with the world of work. This will allow St Margaret's to build an employability network which we can grow and develop in school. Mrs Wright will add this request to the Round Up and put it out through Group Call. Mrs Wright will make contact with Mr McCulloch regarding his link to careers in vet medicine as a starting point.

Mrs Wright confirmed, as a school, we were delighted with the turnout at the curriculum evenings and welcomed having our families back in the building to meet staff and discuss next step for our young people.

Parents commented: for many parents it was the first time they had been in their child's school since before the pandemic and they were delighted to reconnect with staff and the school. Thank you to everyone who made this event happen, it was welcomed by all parents. Comment was made of how busy the event was and as a result some parents were unable to talk to their chosen subject teachers. It would have benefited from more staff attending to ensure parents/pupils although Isla Wright confirmed that due to the date changing availability of some teachers was an issue.

SQA Exams and Study Leave

Full study leave will commence on the 29th of April. As with previous years, during this exam diet period our Senior Phase pupils will be given time to study for and sit their SQA examinations, complete national courses and awards as well as being offered a programme of in-school learning and revision opportunities. Also, our Easter School programme for April has a wide-ranging offer to support our young people moving forward into the exam period.

Tree of Knowledge will be working with our S4 and S5 pupils to ensure they are going into exams with confidence and enthusiasm. Mr Bennett will host the New Horizons sessions for S6 to ensure they also are confident and exam ready.

Health and wellbeing Update

S2 Pupils will undertake the Tree of Knowledge workshop 'Planet of the Chimps' during the study leave period. 'Planet of the Chimps' introduces students to think about emotional intelligence through Dr Steve Peter's 'Chimp Paradox' which allows young people to explore how they think and feel in different situations and how this can lead them to act, react and behave. These workshops will be a useful addition to our overall strategy for wellbeing.

S1 pupils are also gearing up for their residential (Aberfoyle) by Mrs Irvine; this will be in the last week of term and will include teambuilding skills and outdoor education experiences.

We are organising a trip for the S3 pupils as a celebration of their Junior Phase experience and look forward to finalising this shortly to allow me to share this with pupils.

Make a Meal Monday project will be a piloting for 8 families (targeted through Pupil Support Workers) to encourage family learning around cooking and nutrition. Families will have the opportunity to work with Mr Ferrante in Health and Technology to create a meal for a family of four after school, then families will be given the ingredients to try at home. We hope we can develop a comprehensive programme of similar opportunities should it be successful.

Mrs Wright is acutely aware the cost-of-living crisis is affecting many families and help with the cost of trips can be discussed at any time. Several parents commented they have family passes that could be utilised to keep costs down.

Activities week

Anne Crookston confirmed the last time this took place was in 2018 due to the pandemic. Activities Week will take place week beginning 22nd May. Over the course of the week, we will suspend the 'normal' timetable and pupils will instead be engaging in a range of games and activities throughout the week. Pupils will be given the timetable the week before.

Other points noted:

A parent asked if the school was able to provide visual boards for pupils transitioning to S1. Mr Conway confirmed this has previously been provided for pupils and are more than happy to do this in the future.

AOB

Several parents requested an update on the situation relating to pupils having access to toilets. Mrs Wright confirmed Toilet Attendants will be in post after the Easter break. New procedures about accessing toilets are helping to identify underlying issues on why some pupils may wish to leave the classroom to support pupils.

A parent commented that canteen prices have gone up and the variety of vegetarian options has reduced. Mrs Wright agreed to investigate this.

The issue of whether pupils are able to go off campus was raised e.g. can pupils go to Lidl. Mrs Wright stated the current policy is being reviewed after the Easter break and will be communicated to all concerned thereafter.

It was noted that the Treasurer and Vice-Chair posts are still vacant and needs to be resolved at the next parent council meeting.

It was agreed that the ASN slides presented at the last parent council meeting would be circulated to all members of the parent council.

Closing Prayer – Mr Conway.