

Minutes Moorfoot Primary School Parent Teacher Association Meeting (PTA)

Meeting Tuesday 23 June, 2020

The meeting was held via Zoom due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Attending: John Dagger headteacher (JD), Clare Howard chair (CH), Sarah Anderson secretary and others (total around 15)

All attending agreed that they were happy for the meeting to be recorded, however it was agreed at a later stage that the recording would be used only to inform minute taking. The recording will not be shared more widely.

The chair welcomed all present and outlined the agenda as follows:

1. Update from John Dagger regarding plan for school to reopen in August 2020
2. Report from chair following Midlothian Council meeting for all school PTAs
3. Questions/observations submitted ahead of Moorfoot Primary PTA meeting
4. Wider role of Moorfoot parent council
5. JD added budget and Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to the agenda

1. UPDATE FROM JOHN DAGGER

JD acknowledged the challenges of lockdown faced by teachers, parents and children. Every situation is different but there are many common challenges. What the school has done in the face of the challenges is appreciated.

Still waiting to hear whether the school will follow a full-time or blended curriculum by August. It is still worth reflecting on what a blended model may look like. [** The Scottish Government has since announced that schools will open full time in August 2020, subject to Scotland's Covid-19 status*]

Luckily, Moorfoot Primary School is small, so it could take quick steps to get all children ready for some kind of online learning. It has been good to see what teachers and children have posted, and how they have interacted.

It has been challenging for some teachers who have been looking after their own children and working in the hub schools, but overall they have done quite well.

Google classroom may be easier for the upper school and this is something the staff will look at when they come back together.

Staff also examined blended learning during their in-service days.

2. MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL PTA CHAIRS MEETING

CH: An online meeting for Midlothian PTA chairs the previous week did not provide any additional information to JD's report.

3. QUESTIONS/OBSERVATIONS SUBMITTED AHEAD OF MEETING

Parents: Some children had not seen their teachers at all in the cases where they would normally receive virtual one-to-one teaching. This was seen as insufficient.

JD: It has been difficult e.g. P1 only has 13 pupils, but some classes have 24-25 pupils and one teacher has also been in the hub for 2.5-3 days a week. All teachers have put in a sterling effort and

we have to give them some leeway. It has been an emergency situation and schools did not have long to plan for it. Hubs will continue to run within their own schools, so teachers will be able to respond to their own children in a much more manageable way.

Parents: Online engagement from teachers is very helpful: could more be done in relation to that? National plans don't mention virtual teaching, but perhaps there could be a middle-ground e.g. where teachers check in morning and evening [with pupils].

JD: This is interesting but Midlothian Council would not allow the school to use videoconference platforms to contact families and some parents could not do check-ins as they are working. Midlothian Council should look at this.

[Additional note, on a later Midlothian Council Chair call, the Council noted that they had taken on board the idea of a morning virtual check-in with pupils and may consider this in the future should the need arise]

Parents: Video instructions from teachers have been as valuable as a whole-class setting. Video clips from teachers are more useful than typed comments.

JD: Thinks that a lot of Moorfoot teaching will move forward in this way. Teachers were initially reluctant to film themselves but have realised that it is quicker and easier than having to type it and re-explain when people have questions.

Parents: Multiple platforms are a challenge. Parents would prefer to use only one.

JD: Seesaw has always been preferred but older children need to transition. Some parents would rather use Microsoft Teams, others prefer Zoom.

Parents: If a topic is introduced on Monday, can it be carried through to Friday?

JD: This makes sense: will make that point to teachers.

*Action JD to speak to teachers about carrying topic from start of week through to end.

Parents: If we are in a blended teaching situation, it would be useful for parents to have additional information to see what level a child is at and to have strategies to provide clues using the same language as the teacher; if there are several years in a class it is difficult for parents to know what to pick.

JD: This makes sense and would serve the school well, whether in a blended setting or not.

* Action JD to speak to teachers about clarifying what parents should be concentrating on with individual children.

Parents: How will staggered drop-off work for parents needing to get to work?

JD: There will be no bell. If blended school days, there will be 35-40 pupils each day. The kitchen gate will also be opened so there will be two entrances. Parents will be asked to arrive between 8.45 and 9.10 a.m. Don't think we need to ask people to come for particular time slots but as close to nine as possible.

Parents: How will school match days for blended learning to days that parents are working?

JD: Guidelines provided is that the school assign days, other options could become unworkable, although we appreciate that this could be a challenging aspect for parents.

Parents: If/when we find out there's blended learning is it possible to issue list of children or will that go directly to the child? Parents are managing emotional needs because they haven't seen anyone for weeks.

JD: We would never issue details of children to parents, we will just tell you about your child.

Parents: Will children be required to wear clean clothes every day?

JD: We would be asking for clean, comfortable, smart clothes every day. In the blended model there is no P.E.

Parents: Are packed lunches permitted?

JD: Yes, coat, bag and packed lunch will go into a tray. This has worked fine at the hub and packed lunches are also available in kitchen. This is all in the blended model so subject to change.

Parents: Will siblings be matched?

JD: The split has been worked out from siblings first, then transport groups: 20-30 children come on the bus so it is easier to allow for social distancing if not all of those children use the bus every day.

The school expects to put out model A and model B in August.

JD also apologised for the late notification of class and teacher allocation. Parents have since received notice of which class their child will be in and who their teacher will be.

4. WIDER ROLE OF PARENT COUNCIL

Parents: How can the Parent Council support this process going forward? What would be most useful for parents and for the school?

JD: We could make powerpoints or hold a zoom meeting to support e.g. how to move from early to first maths or how to explain fractions.

Parents: How will it work for children who get additional learning support?

JD: There will be a new support teacher, Kimberley Soutar from August, but we need to use her time carefully as we only have a small window of support. We will look at Kim moving to cover Tuesday and Wednesday each week so that all children can see her.

Parents: Mrs. Harvie has been fantastic at communication for learning support but there are children who will need a different level of support, however, [Midlothian] Council are saying we can't communicate directly with teachers. Could there be a private agreement between parents and the school?

JD: Cannot answer that.

Parents: Is there any chance of group work?

JD: If you mean at-home group work, yes definitely.

CH: Midlothian Council is concerned about parents having to get back to work so putting emphasis on independent learning. The possibilities for this vary quite a lot.

5. BUDGET/PUPIL EQUITY FUNDING

JD: Asked for support to utilise pupil equity funding (PEF) which equalises the gap between the most and least supported parents to invest in “Accelerated Reader”, which helps children learn how to read and teachers assess progress. The school needs about £1300 from the PEF budget as well as help from parents to code the library.

Parents: We support this, especially if it is possible to do this outside of school hours [school is open until around 5-6pm.]

CH: Is there anything outstanding regarding fundraising?

Parents: There are vouchers which were gathered for an Easter hamper and will be kept for Hallowe’en.

CH: Thank you to everyone for taking part and we look forward to further information from the school. If there are additional questions, please email clamarhow@gmail.com.

DONM: End of August.