

## **LENZIE ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL**

### **Minute of Meeting held 07-November-2023 in the Conference Room, Lenzie Academy.**

#### **Present:**

Siobhan White (Chair), Niel Farquhar (Depute Head Teacher), Carol Nurbhai (Clerk), Jack McLean, Laura Beastall, Tanya Thorsan, Pauline Sands, Fiona MacLeod, Catherine Fraser, Mel Quince, Farhana Haseen, Gillian Cay, Sazzadur, Mr McDowell (Teacher), Mr Canning (Teacher)

#### **Apologies:**

Nina Teasdale, Marjorie Buchanan

### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

Siobhan White (Chair) opened the meeting and welcomed everyone who was in attendance. She thanked Mr Farquhar for deputising for Mr Paterson who was visiting the S1 year group on a residential trip at Lockerbie Manor.

S White advised there were no actions outstanding from the previous meeting in June for which she would forward minutes.

### **2. Chairperson's Report**

Following the Parent Council AGM in August, S White wrote to the Council Leader regarding issues with the school building (in particular front door security, HFT, Pupil Hub) which have not been resolved and no timescale has been given for action to be taken. S White also requested an update regarding plans for the proposed new LA school building.

At this time there has been no response and we are no further forward with tackling some of the most urgent maintenance issues.

There was a general discussion between meeting participants about concerns that maintenance priorities would potentially get worse at such times as work on a new building commences.

LEIP funding has been granted for a new building, however the remaining funding has still to be confirmed. It is hoped that any new building would be ready in time for 2027 session, however this is not a confirmed target.

Council has still to fully approve and further decisions are expected after 14<sup>th</sup> December '23 and then following the Council budget meeting in February '24.

Issues with the current building include some which are approaching health and safety issues. Mr Farquhar listed a number of current challenges: the hot water situation in HFT has taken a backward step and issues have returned despite resolution earlier in 2023; problems with magnets on the front door raise security concerns; some areas of the school have leaks from the roof.

**ACTION: S White to check with B Paterson regarding outstanding issues**, which, if any, have had budgets agreed for the work and whether any new items require to be added to the list.

On a positive note, the 'Vanilla' update which occurred over the summer appears to have had an impact and wi-fi across the school has been better. There have also been some new screens installed in a number of classrooms.

F Haseen asked about the potential for interruption to learning while new school premises were being built. Since the locations for a new building were not known then no definitive answer could be provided. However it was anticipated that pupils would remain in the current building and learning be maintained as is presently the case until the new building was complete.

Whilst discussing the issue of building security, the recent incident which required police attendance at the school was raised. Police were called by shopkeepers in Moss Road due to a group of youths (not dressed in LA uniform) that appeared to be looking for a pupil in the area around lunchtime. There was no reports of this group having access to the school premises.

Staff reacted quickly and prevented any further pupils from leaving the school grounds. There was no apparent wider threat to the school or pupils. No evidence of any subsequent issues.

A number of parents at the meeting raised concerns about some of the messages/ rumours that children were reporting on their return home.

S White completed her report by advising she would be attending the next Parent Forum meeting at the end of November and would be able to report back on any relevant matters at the next PC meeting.

### **3 Head Teacher's report**

Mr Farquhar delivered the report on behalf of Mr Paterson

#### **3.1 New School Update**

We found out on Monday evening that the school had been included in a £2bn LEIP (Learning Estates Improvement Programme) announcement from the Scottish Government. East Dunbartonshire Council Assets have indicated that they will meet with the school over the next few weeks to discuss how matters will be taken forward. We'll hopefully be able to update the Parent Council more fully on developments at the next PC meeting.

#### **3.2 EDC Quality Review**

A team of eight external visitors came into the school from Monday 30 October until Wednesday 1 November '23 to evaluate the quality of provision provided by the school. The process is collaborative in nature and is designed to help the school prepare for an Education Scotland inspection, which will be due in the near future. The team broadly replicate the approach adopted by Education Scotland inspectors.

#### **The Team**

- Kevin Kelly (Quality Improvement Manager)
- Mary Kerr (Quality Improvement Officer)
- Nichola Roberts (Quality Improvement Officer)
- George Cooper (HT Bearsden Academy)
- Maureen Daniel (HT Kirkintilloch High School)
- Steven Sinclair (DHT Douglas Academy)
- Eleanor Mackay (DHT Bishopbriggs Academy)
- Claire Morgan (DHT Boclair Academy)

## **Procedures**

Throughout the visit the team:

- Engaged with SLT to discuss the school's 'Scoping Paper' that was provided in advance of the visit.
- Observed 50 lessons across S1-6. All departments were included in the class visits.
- Met with a number of pupil focus groups (12 in total)
- Met with staff in a number of focus groups (8 in total)
- Met with 'Partners' who work with the school e.g. School of Rugby, Skills Development Scotland, EALs staff, Educational Psychology, MCR staff).
- Spent time in The Hub and the PI Room.
- Engaged with SLT in areas that they were leading on e.g. Ms Munro and Ms Steel on 1.3 (Leadership of Change)
- Engaged in an 'Attainment Review' with the HT and Senior Phase DHTs to discuss the schools SQA results.
- Met with the HT to discuss the strengths of the school and areas for consideration moving forward.

## **Outcome**

- There will be a written report made available to the HT in a few weeks.
  - On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday Mr Kelly met with the HT to outline what the team had heard, seen and observed throughout each day.
  - The messages after school each day were hugely positive –
1. Relationships within the school were hugely positive and cited as a real strength.
  2. The ethos and culture was viewed as outstanding.
  3. The main strengths of the school cited in the Scoping Paper at the beginning of the visit were evidenced very quickly on Day 1 and were evident throughout the three days that the EDC team spent within the school.
  4. High quality learning and teaching was observed across all three days.
  5. The team commended the commitment and skill of our teachers and support staff.
  6. Young people were very engaged in their learning and had great pride in their school.
  7. All young people felt included and well supported within the school.
  8. The school's system to support young people with additional support needs or who faced short-term challenges were highly commended.
  9. The school's attainment profile was very strong and the school's plans for future development were commended.

## **3.3 EDC Learning Festival**

The October Inset day on Friday 13 October was given over to an EDC Learning Festival. All secondary school teaching staff met in Boclair Academy to meet colleagues and attend three workshops on pedagogy delivered by school staff from across EDC. We had four staff delivering to fellow practitioners. The event was certainly ambitious and staff seemed to evaluate the event positively.

### 3.4 School Events

- **The S1 Family Open Evening** was a high success. We had 187 returns and all were universally positive regarding the experiences that parents/carers had been involved with.
- **S5/6 Assessment Block** – this has just finished and we'll await feedback after staff have marked and moderated pupil work.
- **UCAS applications** are now coming in and being checked. Early entry had 16 pupils who have applied for medicine, dentistry, vet medicine and Oxford (Physics). We anticipate all UCAS forms will be sent away by early-mid December and offers should come through for many by January-February. Some universities delay until March e.g. Edinburgh.

A question was raised as to why assessments immediately followed the October break as it was felt this did not allow any rest period for those pupils.

N Farquhar answered that teachers were careful to remind pupils to have a break while also continuing to study appropriately. N Farquhar added that it was challenging to set assessment dates as required to ensure that sufficient of the course had been covered to provide a useful assessment whilst also allowing time for some revision. There is also consideration given to providing guidance and intervention following the assessments.

A study block will be in place for the January assessments which will begin on 8<sup>th</sup> January until 25<sup>th</sup> January. It is intended that the exam schedule will be shared with pupils before the Christmas holidays. Exams will be monitored by external invigilators.

The point was made that some pupils are facing assessments after all school holiday breaks (October, December, Spring) and therefore all of these holiday periods are in the midst of studying and that this was quite intense given it would be the case for 2 or 3 years for these pupils, with a knock on effect for their families. There was a concern about burnout.

Teachers advise pupils that they manage their time throughout the course of the school year to allow for a balance between study and leisure time. There is good evidence that study over the course of the year is more productive and less pressure than short bursts immediately prior to the assessments. Lots of advice on study skills is provided across all the subject areas. Students are encouraged to think about their study timetable and build in rest period. It was noted that there were life skills to be found in juggling the balance between work, rest and play.

F Haseen asked about Lenzie Academy's current position in school tables. This was not known. However the point was made that the stand alone metrics were not always very helpful. When viewed against our Virtual Comparators, Lenzie Academy was above in almost every measure.

## 5 Presentation: Digital Learning (Mr McDowell)

Mr McDowell is Principal Teacher of Chemistry and the Lead for the Digital Learning Committee within the school.

He presented an overview of the resources that the school uses and promotes to pupils to widen learning techniques and revision.

Digital Learning was already an area for improvement that the school wanted to pursue, however the pandemic accelerated the pace at which progress was made. As a result of the work done by the digital learning committee members to support teachers during Covid, confidence amongst the staff was vastly improved in using digital learning materials. Significant time was dedicated to staff training which overcame some of the initial resistance apparent pre-pandemic. IT is used much more widely across the school for planning and teaching lessons, communicating with pupils and providing a library of virtual resources.

M McDowell provided an overview of some of the resources being used by a number of departments and the use of such technology is being embraced by an increasing number of subject areas. Tool such as Kahoot, Quizlet and other game type formats have proved very engaging to pupils. They are an enjoyable and informal way of testing knowledge and understanding and provides instant feedback to both pupils and teachers. The free versions of most of these applications are sufficient for classroom purposes.

A question was raised about the use of devices and whether there was sufficient capacity as it was acknowledged that not all pupils will have access to smartphones in class. There are laptops and tablets available which is sufficient for a class, though some pupils did use their own devices.

Sharepoint is being used to construct a library of resources by department. This is fairly new and at the moment only a few departments have put together their resources in this way. However a number of departments are now working on this with support from the Digital Learning Committee whose staff 'experts' are providing CPD training for their colleagues.

There are also opportunities for pupils to develop digital learning skills. Glow Ambassadors are being recruited from S3 to support younger pupils.

Pupil Zone is similar to Sharepoint but is pupil facing. The site provides lesson materials, revision notes, useful links and past papers. There is a vast amount of information.

L Beastall asked whether it was likely that ED Council would provide pupils with devices as has been the case in some other council areas. N Farquhar advised that this has been discussed over recent years but there was no current plan to do so.

There was a general discussion about pupil equity in the use of technology given there will e=be a disparity between pupils as to their access to devices, broadband etc. Unfortunately PEF funding will not stretch to provide devices for all pupils who might need these. Teachers are mindful when setting homework.

## **6 PTA**

The PTA are hosting a Quiz night on 24<sup>th</sup> November at Lenzie Rugby club. Donations have been sought and some tickets are still available. This is a key fundraising event for the school and always an enjoyable evening.

The PTA have appointed a new chair – Chad Morris.

## **7 AOCB**

P Sands raised a point about representation at sports events by LA pupils and whether it was possible for any suitable badged sportswear / equipment could be made available. When competing on behalf of the school it would be nice if pupils had access to items that displayed the school name / badge to show their affiliation. It was suggested that an application be made to the PTA for funding for suitable items.

## **8 Date of next meeting**

It was again suggested that it would be useful to plan out the dates of meetings for the remainder of the academic year in advance.

ACTION: S White to discuss with B Paterson.

The date of the next meeting will therefore be communicated in due course.