Eyemouth High School Parent Council Minutes

**April 26, 2022**

**Present:** Wendy Brocker-Penalver (chair); Diana Smith (minutes); Frances Cowan; Carrie Haddow; Susanne Simpson and Robin Chapman (headteacher).

**Apologies:** Cate Bell (treasurer); Kimberley Bayley-Tweed; Claire Cromarty; Iris Cunningham; Kerry Ebner; Katie Forsyth; Sarah Jamieson; Sophie McNeil; Raquel Lloyd-Jones; Alison Ramcharran; Claire Trueman; Jan Weeks; Genevieve Young.

**AGENDA ITEMS:**

* **Welcome**

Chair, Wendy Brocker Penalver (WBP) welcomed everyone to the meeting which was held in school.

* **Apologies for absence**

Recorded above.

* **Consider minutes of the EHS Parent Council meeting on March 1, 2022**

The minutes were approved as a true record**.**

* **Headteacher’s Report**

Mr Chapman said covid restrictions had eased and staff had held their first in-person Monday staff meeting in over two years. A P7 Parents’ Evening held in the first week back after Easter had been very well-attended with over 140 people present. It showed how important it was to prospective pupils and parents to meet staff and tour the school.

An Expressive Arts Showcase was planned for June 15 and he asked for parent council volunteers to organise refreshments. DS agreed to help. RC said he was expecting the expressive arts department to make a funding bid to the parent council soon.

The process of pupils making their subject choices for next year was going well with those going from S2-S3 due to select their options via the online form next week. All pupils had had an interview with a guidance teacher.

Staff had noticed that many young people taking exams this year were needing more support than in previous years. He noted that for senior pupils right through to S6, it was the first time they’d take formal national exams because alternative arrangements (staggered school assessments and teacher evidence gathering) were made in 2020 and 2021. That inexperience, added to the removal of coursework and mixed messaging from the SQA about grading and appeals, meant that anxiety levels were high and students were needing support with revision and exam technique. The school had run interventions such as Study Zone, Easter School, supervised study and provided revision materials. Staff had needed to implement bespoke support for those who were struggling. He said it was situation all schools were finding themselves in and he felt they had done all they could do tohelp. He hoped the SQA would come true on its promise to take the difficulties these cohorts had faced into account.

With regard to the lifting of restrictions, staff had been asked to ‘Revise, Reflect and Restart.’ They were looking back on the past two years to see what worked and what didn’t, how things had changed and what could be re-started to benefit young people.

There had been further discussion with SBC on Devolved School Management which would give headteachers more power on how they spend their budget. He would speak to the parent council about this in due course. In essence, it could have benefits in terms of resolving the issues we have campaigned on such as maintaining a school librarian.

Staffing was looking good for next year. Maths teacher, Mrs Atkinson, would be returning to school, allowing Mr McWilliam to teach more computing. The school will also have an extra biology/science teacher. The process of recruiting a new RMPS teacher had begun.

ICT problems had been causing disruption for staff and students and he was seeking a meeting with SBC to flag up the poor response times and no-shows by CGI, the contractor commissioned by SBC to provide IT support in schools. Schools across the Borders were facing similar issues. At Eyemouth, there were problems with cabling, printers going slow, licences and other unresolved technical faults. The staff committee which monitors ICT in school were planning to take it to the union as it was hampering their work and causing difficulties for exam students, particularly in art subjects, who have to upload work to meet deadlines.

* **Treasurer’s Report**

Cate Bell was absent but had sent a report (attached). WBP commented that over £2,000 had been spent since the last report which was positive because it showed that our fundraising was being put to good use. She asked members to consider further fundraising ideas to boost the balance so the parent council could support more projects.

* **AOB**

**Update on Mental Health Campaign**

WBP said all Borders secondary school parent council chairs had joined together to support the mental health campaign with the aim of restoring face to face counselling in schools. The group had made a Freedom of Information request to SBC and she and Raquel had met with other chairs and mental health champions to review the results. They discussed the SBC commissioning process and the business objectives of some of the service providers as they felt there was an emphasis on saving money rather than getting the best service for young people. The group intend to submit further questions to SBC.

WBP said she was very encouraged by the support of the group and that a successful outcome was much more likely with all schools involved.

RC said headteachers had met with CAHMS to discuss issues such as long waiting times and had been encouraged by changes made to the service by its new head. The re-organisation seemed to be making a difference and further discussions were planned.

He suggested that, given the consensus that a return to face to face counselling was needed, headteachers and campaigners could request a meeting with SBC to ask how this objective could be achieved.

**Summer Night Out**

A date for the summer parent council night out was set for Thursday, June 23 with details to be arranged.

* **Next Meeting:**

The date of the next meeting is June 7, 6:30pm.