

GULLANE PRIMARY SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 22ND SEPTEMBER 2021

- 1) Report from Chair**
- 2) Report from Deputy Chair**
- 3) Report from Clerk**
- 4) PTA 20/21 overview and future proposals**
- 5) Report from PTA Treasurer**

1) REPORT FROM CHAIR

2020-21 was my third, and final, year as Chair of the Partnership.

Clearly, the major issue for the Partnership since our last AGM in September 2020 has continued to be the Coronavirus pandemic and its implications for our school community. This time last year, we had returned to school following a longer than expected period of home learning and, while there were some unpopular restrictions and mitigations to contend with, we assumed that we were back at school for good. However, unfortunately, we were faced with yet another lockdown and more home learning at the start of 2021.

Parental engagement is much more difficult when parents and carers are not allowed into the school building and when even the playground is restricted. The usual opportunities for parents and carers to take part in school life – assemblies, learning conversations, sports days, concerts, helping on school outings or in classrooms, attending PTA events – have all been off the agenda for a year and a half now. So formal opportunities for engagement – Partnership meetings, class reps, learning conversations, newsletters etc become much more vital. One upside of the pandemic has been increased participation in Partnership meetings by both parents/carers and staff. When we met in person, we averaged around 10-12 parents/carers and the only staff member to attend was the Head Teacher. We now average 20-30 attendees, including several members of staff. When face to face meetings are allowed again, it would be wise to consider how this increased participation can be maintained.

I have been consistently impressed with the resilience and positivity of the children, staff and families in the school. Our lives have been turned upside down several times now and our community has coped admirably. I would like to offer my sincere thanks to Mr Taylor, who took on his new role at possibly the most difficult time - in a near-empty school building at the start of the second school closure - and to all the staff for their tireless work, under constantly changing rules, to keep our children's learning on track and for supporting us all in the to and fro from

school to home learning and back to school again – hopefully for good this time! Given the circumstances being faced by all of us, there have been some challenging conversations but we are very fortunate to have such a dedicated staff group at Gullane PS.

The Partnership has been involved in a wide variety of issues, large and small, this year, including (in no particular order):

- Recruitment of new Headteacher and new Deputy Head Teacher
- Implementation of new class reps system
- Home learning during lockdown
- Pressing for online learning conversations
- Plans and procedures for returning to school – for the second time!
- The redevelopment of the school and nursery, including safety concerns around the site
- Changes to nursery hours and roll out of 1140 hours provision
- School Improvement Planning processes
- Improving representation of parents and carers of children with additional support needs
- Communications between school and home
- Organising collections for gifts and farewells for Mrs McGillivray and Mrs Elderfield
- Providing School Uniform Eco Stall
- Use of Google Classroom across the school
- Lobbying Council to replace the insecure perimeter fence
- The PTA has adapted admirably to the changed circumstances brought about by COVID and have raised a significant sum and provided a range of fun COVID-safe activities for children and families to enjoy. The Partnership has agreed spending on a range of items to benefit the school.

Being involved in the recruitment for our new Head and Deputy Head teachers was probably the most significant part of my role this year. The quality of leadership team in the school is so vital to the success of our school as a learning community. They set the whole tone of the school, so we were very fortunate to have a good number of really strong applicants to choose from for both positions. I am delighted to have been part of appointing Mr Taylor and Mrs O'Connor to our school. The appointment process is rigorous, and the parent voice is taken very seriously by all involved. Many thanks to Jenni Carter for being the other parent representative on the panel.

The class reps system has bedded in well and been a useful way of communicating more directly with parents and carers and staff. I hope this system will continue to develop in the coming session. Many thanks to all the class reps – some of whom have even volunteered for another year! – for putting up with the incessant WhatsApping and for being the first point of contact for parents and carers in their classes. I think the class reps have really helped to improve the Partnership's effectiveness and visibility within the Parent Forum.

I have regularly attended the East Lothian Association of Parent Council Members (ELAPCM) and found it useful to hear from ELC officials and elected members and other PC chairs about

developments across the county, particularly in relation to lockdown, home learning and COVID mitigations in school. It is useful to share good practice and insights from other schools.

It will be a matter for the new Partnership team to decide what issues to take forward in the coming year, but some of the issues I anticipate being on the agenda would be:

- Continuing the recovery from the COVID pandemic
- Safe routes to school, particularly given the ongoing construction work in the town and the increased population and traffic
- Continuing to improve parental engagement in school life and in the work of the Partnership including through a system of class reps
- Ensuring the meaningful involvement of parents and carers in the School Improvement Plan, school vision and values and curriculum rationale review
- Improving communications with parents, staff, ELC and the wider community

It will continue to be challenging to achieve some of this while we are still facing COVID mitigations and creativity will be required!

I was very grateful to the Gullane Village Association for hosting our School Uniform Eco Stall at their Book Hub during the summer. It was a great success and saved a lot of good quality uniform from landfill and many families the cost of buying new items this year.

A lot of the work of the Partnership happens between meetings. I receive feedback from parents formally and informally and raise these issues as they arise with Mr Taylor. I appreciate his openness to parent feedback and his willingness to explain and/or review policies, processes and decisions as appropriate. When the Partnership works with the interests of the whole school community at heart, I believe we can really help to improve the quality of educational experience and the learning and working environment in our school for pupils, families and staff.

Many thanks to Jenny and Joanna for all their hard work and support this year. We couldn't have made it through the year without them! And thank you to all the parents, carers and staff who have been so supportive of the school and the Partnership this year.

Clare Jones
September 2021

2) REPORT FROM DEPUTY CHAIR

As Deputy Chair of the Partnership I feel I have been able to take a more active and supportive role in communications between parents and the school.

It has been a challenging role at times, given the context of national lockdowns and the ensuing levels of stress and pressure on both parents and schools alike. However, it has been rewarding

to assist in prioritising agenda items for meetings and witness firsthand the positive changes which can be implemented through open dialogue. Furthermore, it has been a delight to work with a motivated Chair and Clerk who are both pro-active and sensitive in their approach to initiating change.

Jenny Gries
September 2021

3) REPORT FROM CLERK

The last year has seen many challenges for both the school and the parents/carers in the form of a change of head teacher and the disruption of lockdowns and home learning as a result of covid.

It has been interesting to work with Clare, Jenny and the school to help facilitate understanding of each other's experiences, perspectives and challenges.

We feel the class rep system, which we set up a year ago, has been very helpful for engaging more parents in the Partnership and allowing people a channel for raising issues and concerns.

I've enjoyed the role of Clerk and it is an excellent way of understanding more about the educational facility in which our children spend so much of their time.

Joanna Heijmer-Mason
September 2021

4) PTA 20/21 overview and future proposals

Co-chairs: Leeanne Nicklas and Lottie Hutchison

Secretary: Kirsten Sadler

Treasurer: Rosie Creyke

An additional eight members of the PTA have committed their time and wonderful efforts to organising fundraising events over the last year, and we are very grateful to Zoe McCrossan, Gill Van Der Westhuizen, Michelle Brown, Claire de Franck, Elena Wright, Emma Van Der Vijver, Joanna Heijmer and Rachel Wilson.

Leeanne has decided to step down from the PTA in September 2021 due to increased work commitments. We thank her enormously for her amazing contribution and will greatly miss her enthusiasm and organisation!

The position of co-chair is therefore available to any interested individual and we would be delighted to hear from them.

Total in account: £20,656.98. Less £1000 required float, total £19, 656.98 available to PTA

Total agreed to be paid to school, yet to be transferred: c£4600

Funds available: c£15,000

2020/2021

Fundraising events

1. School calendar September 2020 **£1193**
2. Pumpkin trail October 2020 **£1295**
3. Christmas cards December 2020 **£596**
4. Reindeer ramble December 2020 **£1596**
5. Easter raffle **£1095**
6. School lottery **£853**
7. Stampstastic/Easy fundraising **£113.10**

Non-fundraising events

1. Promotion of school “no nut” policy and food allergy awareness
2. Forth 1 Mission Christmas Cash for Kids toy collection

Approved spending

1. Library materials for the upper school **c£1300**
2. ICT materials for coding and programming **c£2500**
3. Playground toys: school to cost/procure where possible **c£800**
4. Christmas party food and nursery Christmas gifts **c£400**

2021/2022

Proposed fundraising activities (final plans and events TBC)

1. School calendar, proposed date Sept 22nd and 23rd
2. Pumpkin trail
3. Christmas event
4. Easter raffle
5. School lottery

6. The PTA is considering a 'welcome tree' with engraved leaves to mark the end of the school extension, and this idea has been discussed with Mr Taylor. Families could donate to 'buy' a leaf and we could make sure we have a strategy to ensure that costs are not a barrier for families who want to be involved.

Proposed spending

1. New trim trail for the junior section of the playground following the build completion (previously discussed and agreed in principle between previous PTA and Mrs McGillivray).
2. Goal posts for the playground (previously approved as spend via partnership but delayed due to building works).
3. Future ICT proposals.

In addition...

- A September school fair had been proposed and agreed with Mr Taylor in April 2021 as an opportunity to welcome families back to the school and view the new facilities. Unfortunately while in early planning stages the council informed us that they were not presently accepting applications for lets of school premises until at least after the October break, and we were disappointed that the fair could not proceed.
- The PTA is looking into obtaining charitable status, which may increase fundraising income.
- A gardening club has been suggested. Some funding for things in the playground could be part-funded by an application to the area partnership committee and materials to support a gardening club are likely to be a good option to request funding for.

We would welcome discussion on other ideas for fundraising and events that may foster a sense of wellbeing for the children/engagement between the school and community.

5) TREASURER'S REPORT

GULLANE PTA FUND RAISING ACCOUNTS SUMMARY FOR PERIOD 01/07/2020 TO 30/06/2021

The PTA have raised a total profit over the last year of £6,301.30 through the various fundraising activities and events held. This is in comparison to last year's profit of £6,890 which was similarly curtailed by COVID19. Various events were cancelled including the summer fair but other new events were created.

Total income was raised of £8,534,43 but expenses were incurred of £2,233 including £442 of ancillary costs paid to school and admin costs. The bank balance at 30th June 2021 was £20,656.98. No funds have as yet been transferred to school for expenditure but a total sum of £19,656.98 is being held by PTA (allowing for a float of £1,000 to remain in the account). This incorporates funds from 01/07/2018 to 30/06/2020 which were being held by PTA until the school extension had been completed. Expenditure can be determined now that this phase has been completed.

New events in the year were profitable with the Pumpkin Trail at Halloween raising £1,295; the Reindeer Ramble raising £1,596 and the Easter Raffle raising £1,095. It was generally thought the Pumpkin Trail was great fun and we would look into running this again. The Reindeer Ramble was an effort driven by the need to be outside for COVID purposes but still bringing fun to the children. It did require substantial work and it was a gamble with the weather. This event, although fun and profitable, was probably too much effort to put on again. The Easter Raffle however required much less work but was very profitable. This may well be considered again for the future.

More effort should be placed on raising the profile of the School Lottery as again this requires minimal effort but raised relatively substantial income. Income from this revenue source has dropped dramatically over the last couple of years, maybe due to a lack of marketing its presence and also to the financial pressures COVID19 may have placed upon family budgets. Nevertheless, it raised £853 and so its presence should be raised to the parents – particularly of new families who will be unaware of it.

Christmas Cards raised comparatively little revenue of £596 in comparison to the amount of work required. This may not be continued forward to future years.

The Calendars were again very successful at £1,193 and they will be produced for a final year in September 2021.

Rose Creyke

September 2021