

GULLANE PRIMARY SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

WEDNESDAY 3 Nov 2021, 7pm – ONLINE MEETING

Attendees: Ronnie Taylor, Natasha O'Connor, Angus McEwan, Mrs Gordon, Mrs MacIver, James Logan, Sarah Gibson, Marie-Claire Bradley, Jim Goodfellow, FM, HH, PW, LH, RC, JC, CC, ZMcC, CL, RK, JG, DM, CJ, SY, SM

Apologies: Jeremy Findlay, HS, NS, ES, TH, WS, LB, EVDV, VMcD, JH-M, KM, LW

1. Welcome from Chair

James thanked Clare Jones for all her hard work as Chair of the Partnership. James introduced himself, followed by introductions from Sarah and Marie-Claire. James shared that the Partnership would be a team effort between the three office-bearers and that the hope is to broaden the team and get other parents/carers involved in the Partnership's work.

2. Review of draft minutes from AGM held on 22nd September 2021 (attached)

PW requested that his wife LW's name be added to the list of those person who requested membership at the AGM as the draft Minutes had not recorded this. MCB to update the draft and with that addition the Minutes were adopted as an accurate record of the last meeting.

3. Actions update

James noted that there were three action points from the AGM: (1) Road Safety, (2) School grounds improvements, both of which would be dealt with later in the meeting, and (3) Volunteer required for the North Berwick Coastal Area Partnership volunteer. No volunteer has come forward as yet. James appealed to members to spread the word.

4. Update from PTA

LH noted that the following items which were previously approved have now been purchased by the school and the funds transferred by the PTA to cover the cost of these items: 1) Library materials for the upper school £1197.07 and 2) ICT materials for coding and programming (sphero-bots) £1976.55.

LH noted that the current balance of the PTA account is £18,481.01 plus £1219 for Halloween = £19,700.01 (minus just giving fee).

Ideas for proposed spending of PTA funds:

- Playground equipment ordered, final cost to be confirmed at next meeting – thought that spend of £800 was approved at a previous meeting.
- 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)
- Goal posts for the playground (previously approved as spend via the partnership but delayed due to building works)
- Mr Taylor's ideas and future ICT proposals, i.e., tablets
- 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.
- The PTA would welcome discussion on other ideas for fundraising and events that may foster a sense of wellbeing for the children and engagement between the school and community.

CL raised whether an actual tree might be a nice option to mark the end of the extension and to improve the grounds.

5. Update from Mr Taylor

Mr Taylor provided an update to the meeting on a number of different matters.

PTA Spend

Mr Taylor noted that he thought the spend on playgroup equipment was nearer £1,200 but would check. In terms of ideas for future spend, he suggested that the school could benefit from iPads to help with a variety of curriculum areas.

Staffing

- nursery support worker has recently started
- recruiting for Mrs Ross's post and mat leave cover for P1 is underway
- Mrs Ross was very grateful for the recognition she received from the parent body

Building work

- Snagging work has progressed but is still ongoing.
- There are certain areas which still need work but there is no budget as yet – the budget for the capital spend on the build has been used.
- The East gate access point has now been tarmacked and will be opened once the builders remove their equipment.
- The builders are no longer on site which is making communication to get work done slightly more difficult.

COVID update

- The Scottish government has not made any changes to the guidance for school protocols
- As we head into winter, we still need to maintain ventilation within the building and parents are encouraged to ensure that the kids have suitable clothing.
- As the transmission rates are still high, Mr Taylor commented that the rules are unlikely to change and that the school is simply having to work to rule in terms of keeping the appropriate safety measures in place.
- He noted that he had updated the school's risk assessment with the help of James to assist with reducing the risk of transmission within the school environment.

School Improvement Plan

- Work on developing literacy skills is ongoing and the school is working with other schools within the cluster to keep this on the agenda.

Pupil voice groups

- Various cross-class groups have been set up each with a dedicated remit e.g., eco group, gardening group. The groups are due to launch on Thursday 4 November when the kids will decide on their plan of action.

Visions and Values

- Mr Taylor noted that he was disappointed with the level of response that he had received on the Visions and Values questionnaire that had recently been circulated. He noted that he had only received about 20 responses to date out of around 150 families.
- James noted that the Partnership could help push for engagement with that process.

Reporting to parents

- Mr Taylor noted that as previously discussed reporting to parents would be made up of 4 different elements: (i) the learning conversation which took place before the October break, (ii) a written report due to be issued between 10-17 December following a similar style to previous years (i.e., reporting on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing), (iii) learning conversation in March 2022 and (iv) an end of year written report.

Christmas

- There is little chance of the Christmas performances being able to be live this year. It is likely that there will be virtual performances for the infants and P7 which parents will be able to watch live and possibly recorded.
- Christmas parties are likely to be the week commencing 13 December, but the dates have not been set yet as trying to co-ordinate with the PE specialist for country dancing.

- It is hoped that the PTA will support with funding some of the outlay for the parties.

School debt

- Mr Taylor noted that he wanted to raise awareness amongst the parent body that the school operates with some debt which if not met by parents / carers comes out of the school budget.
- The debt arises when school meals or activities etc are not paid for.
- Mr Taylor noted that financial hardship is understandable and that it would be helpful to consider how best the school could deal with assisting financial hardship.
- Mr Taylor sends out email reminders where money remains unpaid and, in some cases, payment is made but not always. He may sometimes invite parents in to discuss the situation.
- Any unpaid debt comes out of the school budget which obviously means that the school loses out if the debt is not dealt with.
- RK mentioned that in their previous school the PTA set up a hardship fund of around £500 per year which teachers were able to use at their discretion. This helped to include those struggling financially and to minimise school debt.
- Jim Goodfellow mentioned that the school might be able to benefit from an annual grant from the East Lothian Education Trust to assist with financial hardship. The trust already supports other schools, and he thinks an application should be sympathetically received. Any grant would be administered by Mr Taylor.

6. School Grounds Improvements

Sarah provided an overview on thoughts for improving the school grounds noting that:

- everyone seems keen to make the school grounds look more attractive now that the building work is mostly finalised.
- it is understood that we need to understand what needs to be completed as part of the build and what work would need additional funding
- Mr Taylor is looking to reinstall the trim trail and the pirate ship but there are some supervision challenges around the location of the trim trail which he is looking into how best to manage this perhaps with the assistance of senior pupils
- There are lots of people keen to help and there is already an active P1 WhatsApp group but that we should have representation across the school and get more people involved

Mr Taylor updated that:

- A bike rack and friendship bench had been found in the grounds and could be reinstated

- There is a pupil gardening group tasked to look at improvements.
- Gullane Bloomers have previously offered to help and wondered whether they might be able to help during the school day.

7. Road Safety

RK gave an update on the road safety project progress:

- made contact with the council road safety department and with Mr Taylor in respect of a new travel plan. RK has obtained a template and got a plan from another school for comparison purposes
- proposing to send out a questionnaire to parent before Christmas if possible
- Lollipop Person recruitment still ongoing but has been unsuccessful so far
 - parents asked to share the vacancy
- proposed to remind to parents of one-way system and circulate an updated plan

Jim Goodfellow noted that in other schools where filling the school crossing role had been difficult, a number of parents had come together to provide cover on a temporary basis.

8. Parental Skills Audit

Marie-Claire mentioned that linked in with the survey that will be raised next is the idea of carrying out a skills audit of the parent group to understand what skills parents have that they might be able to share for the benefit of the pupils. MCB noted that the idea would be for us as a partnership to focus on some key areas which tie in with the school improvement plan and the leadership programme and link in with the pupil groups to support them. For example, if anyone has a particular interest in environmental issues, health & wellbeing, STEM skills, literacy they could link in with the relevant pupil group to support them and the assigned teacher so that the school, teachers, pupils and parents are all working towards the same goals.

Mr McEwan raised a concern about visitors to the school and from a Covid perspective but also from a fairness point of view if some parents are permitted access to the school and others are not able to.

9. Parent Survey / Comms / Website

Marie-Claire mentioned that the Partnership intends to do a survey around what parents understand the partnership to be, what they would like it to do, and how we can best communicate with the parent body.

- The Partnership has discussed linking up social media comms with the PTA so that information is coming from one source. Not sure if can link up with school comms
- The Partnership would like a dedicated area on the website where partnership information can be stored and can be more readily accessed by parents

Mr Taylor mentioned that the school website and communications now form part of the school improvement plan and Mr McEwan mentioned that he had updated the website so that the Partnership now has a separate tab. He queried whether the draft minutes could be uploaded here after each meeting so that other parents can see what has been discussed at Partnership meetings.

10. Online Safety Event

Mr Taylor has been in touch with his contact at the council and they are willing to run a workshop again.

11. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

James mentioned that the committee was considering whether to add equality, diversity and inclusion to its agenda. He noted that as Gullane is a fairly sheltered environment, children could possibly benefit from more experience of different backgrounds and greater awareness of EDI matters. He noted that the school and parents are likely to be doing their own thing in this respect but wondered how the Partnership could help. Things to be considered might be:

- How to encourage girls into STEM subject
- Inclusion of minority families, LGBT families, those with allergies, socially deprived families
- consider the diversity of the environment around the kids and how the school / council promotes this
- broaden representation on school committees and within the school staff

12. Feedback from Class Reps meeting

Sarah shared that we had a good catch-up with the class reps on Monday evening generally about the role of class rep, what that involves, what works well, any improvements that could be made.

The general consensus was that it was a good initiative and that it works well but a few points of action discussed were:

- We prepared a “job spec” type document about the role of class rep that can be provided to any new class reps, new parents if possible and stored on the website
- Class reps have fed back their views on the current draft and we talked about sharing this with teachers to get input on their thoughts about the role and how they view it working / assisting them – how teachers want to be communicated

with – direct or via school office and also adding contact details and/or photographs of each class rep on the documentation.

- The system for notifying new parents of class reps and the role of the Partnership could be tightened up – might require a multi-pronged approach – we wondered about the ability for new parents to opt in to their details being shared with the relevant class rep / the class rep sheet forming part of the new start pack / teachers alerting the class rep if a new pupil joins the school
- We discussed trying to generate positive feedback from parents re what's working well within the school on a regular basis so that this can be fed back to Partnership meetings – aim to start this with the December meeting
- Consider Engagement between class rep and pupil reps to better understand what the kids are thinking about / interested in – joined up approach. Class reps thought that this would be more practical with the older classes in the school.

13. What's working well?

Sarah mentioned that the Committee would like to generate positive feedback from the Partnership and wider parent body to feed this back at meetings. This will be piloted at the next meeting in December. Ahead of that meeting, parents will be asked to share anything they feel that the school is doing well.

14. Appointment of new Partnership members

No new member requests had come forward prior to this meeting.

15. AOB

Mr Taylor noted that he had been made aware of a number of matters that had been raised as AOB following circulation of the Agenda for this meeting and that he would be happy to address these.

Lunch time arrangements

- Mr Taylor noted in particular that there had been a number of questions come through on the lunchtime arrangements. Mr Taylor said that the issues raised do not reflect how he knows the lunchtime system to work.

Questions raised:

- 1) If it's not raining, they go outside but if it had previously been raining, they have to sit on wet concrete/grass. Mr Taylor: this is not how he knows the system to work. It might have happened once but normally because the kids ask to go outside. If it has been wet, the kids can be inside. In any event, as intended, from Monday until springtime, all kids can lunch inside unless they wish to take their packed lunch outside.

- 2) A child almost missed his lunch the other day as there is no lunch bell but rather a teacher shouts out that it is lunch time but if children are at the other end of the playground, they might not hear this. Mr Taylor: this is not what happens. Kids are called in for lunch in a structured way and there are two lunch bells.
- 3) Apparently, the tables are all laid out but they still have to go outside. Mr Taylor: all tables get used over the different lunchtime sittings. The table would not be set out if they were not to be used.
- 4) Some children are given a choice of whether they have to go outside or stay in (I think this is the case with 7A and 7B.) Inconsistencies among classes. Mr Taylor: this was never just offered to P7 pupils, it was offered across all classes.
- 5) If the school is unable to accommodate inside lunches, then we need to ask the council to assist. Mr Taylor: we can accommodate inside lunches and do it over different sittings

Composite classes

- Newer parents are wondering about how composite classes are made up.
- Mr Taylor explained that generally they are set to reflect the school roll and are largely based on the age of the children. Other factors might be considered such as support needs in an individual class and the staff experience, class size.

Tempest photos

- A question arose as to whether Tempest would be back to take photos.
- Mr Taylor explained that they won't be visiting any ELC schools again this year as they are not deemed to be essential visitors.

After School Club

- Question arose whether or not there are any plans for the school/Council to provide after school care. Mr Taylor said that this would be a council decision and there would need to be a business case to justify this. He can find out who would be best to speak to in the council and pass their details across.

16. Dates of next meeting

15 December 2021