1. Welcome and apologies

Debbie Strachan welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Kay Boylan, Lottie Brown, Janette Fairgrieve, Kate Goan, Nicky McCall, Mrs McGinley, Mrs Murphy and Councillor Broun-Lindsay.

2. Welcome to new Head Teacher, Mrs McGillivray

Debbie introduced King’s Meadow’s new Head Teacher, Mrs Seonaid McGillivray. Mrs McGillivray is currently Head Teacher at Stoneyhill Primary School, Musselburgh and will be moving to King’s Meadow after the summer holidays. Mrs McGillivray is the wife of the previous Head Teacher, Mr Donald McGillivray. She spoke about her background, noting that she had recent experience in composite classes in her current school and said she was looking forward to coming to King’s Meadow. She was welcomed to the school by those at the meeting.
3. Minutes of meeting of 15 May 2013 to be approved.
The last minutes were approved without change.

4. Matters arising from the minutes
Supply letter – Gael Gillan will draft a letter to East Lothian Council about the ongoing problems with getting supply teaching staff and forward it to Debbie Strachan tomorrow, so that the Parent Council can raise their concerns with the Education Authority as soon as possible.  
Action GG & DS

Golden Time – Mr Smith has advertised for parent helpers for Golden Time, but there have been a disappointing number of responses. The school will readvertise this to parents after the summer.  
Action BS

Feedblitz – Debbie Strachan has spoken to David Gilmour (East Lothian Council IT dept), who is going to organise an equivalent version of Feedblitz for the Parent Council website. This will alert subscribing parents whenever a new post is put onto the website. Debbie also asked all parent reps to advertise the Parent Council Facebook page to their friends, as this was felt to be the best way to communicate quickly with most parents.

5. Budget and staffing – Mr Smith
Budget - The school budget for 2013/14 is £1,010,001. The underspend from last financial year is higher than expected and is in the region of £10,000. This can be carried forward into this financial year.

David Anning came into the meeting

Staffing - Mrs Debbie Laidlaw has been appointed as a full-time permanent member of staff from the start of next session. Mrs Heather McConnell (school auxiliary) is retiring and has been with the school for 22 years. She will be greatly missed. Mr Mark Lambert (P4 class teacher) is leaving the school for Musselburgh Burgh Primary School. He was well liked by parents and pupils and will also be greatly missed.

The school intends to share details of staffing and classes for next year in a letter home to parents tomorrow. (see also Item 6 School Organisation 2013/14).

6. School organisation 2013/14
Debbie gave a summary of the discussion at the last meeting regarding next year’s proposed school organisation. The decision as to how many classes and teachers the school has next session has been made by the Local Authority, not the school. Although the school roll fluctuates all the time and changes are still possible, it is envisaged that next session the school will be organised as follows:

Three straight P4 classes and a P4/5; two straight P5 classes and a P5/6; two straight P6 classes and a P6/7; and three straight P7 classes.

All classes at King’s Meadow will have to be reorganised to accommodate this.

Melanie Norris came into the meeting
Concerns with class reorganisation

Concerns had been raised by parents prior to this meeting over both composites and the amount of disruption involved for children. However, parents at this meeting were most concerned over the amount of disruption required and the fact that reorganised classes will not take account of friendships, as previously discussed.

Martin Hayman believed the problem was that the school have to maintain three spaces in each year for children who may move into the area during the course of the school session. He believed that at present, the P6 (next year's P7) year group is one space short, which is why the composite classes and subsequent reorganisation are required. He questioned why this additional space could not be provided, if it should become required during the year, at St Mary’s RC Primary, which has small class sizes and could accommodate an extra child more easily. This would avoid the class reorganisation at King’s Meadow.

Although it was agreed by most that children's education was the greatest priority, many parents still felt the social problems arising from the class reorganisation were a big worry and that the mixing of classes will cause anxiety for many children as their friendship groups may be broken up. Concern was also raised that this mixing of classes might be required in successive years, which could lead to more disruption in future. One parent noted, however, that disruption is part of life, and dealing with it can be a good skill for children to learn and there could therefore be some benefits to children being moved.

Mr Smith noted that children would still have the opportunity to mix with their peers in the rest of the year group at break times, assemblies and during some organised sports activities.

Composite classes

For balance, Debbie Strachan noted that there are some advantages to composite classes, such as smaller class sizes (the maximum size for straight classes is 33, the maximum size for composites is 25). It was also noted that there was no evidence that composite classes are detrimental educationally.

Some parents were concerned that King’s Meadow has not had composite classes recently. However, staff advised that composites are no harder to teach than straight classes and do not involve extra work for staff. Children within straight classes are put into groups according to ability, and this would be no different in a composite. ‘Curriculum for Excellence’ supports composite classes far better than the previous ‘5-14 Curriculum’. There would be no repetition for example for P5s within a P4/5 class, as ‘Curriculum for Excellence’ is all about teaching children from where they currently are and moving them on to achieve specific outcomes.

Due to the new Accelerated Reading programme being introduced after the summer, there will be no need for Reading Sets next session; however it is envisaged that Maths sets will continue, despite the need for composite classes.

Parents asked if there was any chance that an extra Probationary Teacher may become available, to allow the classes to stay as they are and avoid the reorganisation. However, Mr Smith thought there was little chance of this.
Action

After lengthy discussion, it was agreed that Debbie Strachan would write to Richard Parker (ELC Education Dept) on behalf of the Parent Council to ask the following:

- If it is Scottish Government policy or East Lothian Council policy to have three spaces available in each year group for children who may move into the area.
- If it is necessary to have three spaces at P7 in King’s Meadow, with the number of spaces potentially available across both schools in Haddington (King’s Meadow and St Mary’s); and whether an additional space could be provided in P7 at St Mary’s instead if it is required during the year, in order to avoid a major reorganisation at King’s Meadow.
- Whether the Education Authority would reconsider its position on this due to the possibility that the whole school could be disrupted for one space which may not even be filled during the year.

Mr Smith said that there had to be a cut-off date when changes to the proposed organisation would no longer be considered. He said that the Education Authority would have to relax its position before the end of this term (ie within the next fortnight) for the reorganisation to be cancelled, otherwise children would be returning to school after the summer not knowing which class they were in. Debbie agreed to write the email over the weekend and send it by Monday, to give time for the issue to be considered before the summer break.

Action DS

Mr Smith said the school would give each child a slip tomorrow with their class name for next year, and the name of their teacher. Full class lists would not be sent out due to data protection issues. He said that P3 children were visiting the school on Tuesday and would spend part of the day in their new classes. The rest of the school would be given an opportunity on Tuesday or Wednesday next week to spend some time with their new classmates.

Martin Hayman left the meeting.

7. Playground improvements

Next term, it is intended that the Parent Council will have a Playground Improvements sub-committee, with playground improvements being a regular Parent Council agenda item from now on. Juliet Wilberforce gave an update on work so far. Juliet, Sarah Cheyne (P5 parent and ELC Landscape Architect) and Mr Smith have been planning and implementing the playground improvements over the past few months. There has also been some support from the charity ‘Grounds for Learning’.

A stage has recently been built in the P6 area, which has gone down well and been very popular. There is a proposal to introduce some loose play materials next session; however this is still to be fully discussed with school staff. There has to be a balance between benefits and risk.
Mr Smith noted that Juliet had very much played down the hard work and time that both she and Sarah Cheyne have invested in this and thanked them both on behalf of the school. Kate Kelman mentioned the recent 'Sustainable Haddington' initiative to grow vegetables in the area behind the pavilion in Neilson Park and wondered if this was something that could feed into the Playground Improvements in future.

8. Urgent items (AOB) / items for next meeting

*Parent Council resignations* - Kay Boylan and Janette Fairgrieve will be resigning as parent members, as their children are moving up to Knox after the summer. In their absence, they were thanked for their input and commitment during their time as parent reps.

*Thank you to Mr Smith* - Debbie thanked Mr Smith on behalf of the Parent Council for his hard work and commitment during his time as Acting Head Teacher. She noted that his knowledge and experience had been invaluable in successfully steering the school through a challenging year.

9. Date of next meeting: The next meeting will be the Annual General Meeting (AGM), to be held on Tuesday 10 September, at 7pm in the Staff Room. It was agreed that a slip would be sent out early in the new term to advertise the date of the AGM to the parent forum.

*Action DS & SM*