



2012 Annual Report from the Partnership

Meetings

In 2012, the Partnership met nine times, with the AGM being held after the PSP meeting in February. The minutes of meetings are available on the website at <http://edubuzz.org/blogs/knoxparents/psp-meetings-minutes/>.

Membership

There are currently ten parent members of the Partnership. Sally Wilson was co-opted as a member but has since resigned her post. Otherwise, parent membership remains unchanged since the last AGM. Vicky Cole and Greg Cookson remain as Chair and Vice Chair respectively. There has been change amongst the teacher members in the PSP this year; Colin Dempster was elected as a teacher member and Sarah Ingham resigned her post upon her promotion to head teacher. Kath Anderson remains a teacher member. The Head Teacher attends all meetings.

Issues Discussed by the Partnership during the School Year

The PSP has discussed various issues raised by parents this year:

Roll Capping: In May 2012, a delegation of parents from Pencaitland informed the PSP that all out of catchment requests for S1 had been refused. We agreed to look into the matter and Vicky Cole met with Richard Parker and Fiona Brown, and then she and Kim White met with Don Ledingham and Richard Parker. Mr Ledingham agreed with us that the capping procedure was not as 'open and transparent' as it should be and assured us that he would take measures to change that.

The S1 roll was capped at 120 though the parents believe that the school could have managed an intake of 140. We also wrote to Angela Leach and Shamin Akhtar, neither of whom addressed our concerns. Despite lengthy and extensive communications and discussions, the cap remained at 120.

We remain concerned about the roll cap for the following reasons; we have yet to receive a satisfactory legal justification for the cap and Mr Ledingham's assurance that this year's capping procedure would be open and transparent has yet to be proven, though we see that there is a place advertised for a parent rep to be involved in the placement process to ensure 'clear and open understanding by the parents of the procedures involved.'

Vicky Cole has been informed that the new Head of Education, Darrin Nightingale will contact her regarding our concerns about the Knox roll cap.

Curriculum for Excellence: Parents of S3 children told us that they were very concerned that core subjects were being neglected because of the broader curriculum, specifically Maths and French. Miss Ingham was able to show that, if one looks at S1 –S3 as a whole, the pupils receive more maths tuition than the minimum required and more than many other schools. We were also reminded that numeracy is now part of the broad curriculum and is taught as part of most other subjects.

Regarding French, the Head Teacher acknowledged that it is difficult to provide more language tuition as the two language staff are fully timetabled as it is. However, for those hoping to pursue French in S4, there are plans for intensive courses twice a year to boost their language skills. Other suggestions, such as seeking help from the parent body, are still being explored.

We would like to thank all the parents who attend our meetings and bring their concerns to our attention.

Duke of Edinburgh: The school have reintroduced the Duke of Edinburgh scheme at our request. There was a great demand for this course – 39 pupils for 24 places on the Bronze award scheme – and we are very grateful to all the staff involved for giving the pupils this opportunity.

The PSP has used its website to raise awareness of school issues amongst parents:

School Web Resources: Our main point of contact with parents is through our website. Unfortunately this was out of action for the whole Autumn term due to technical difficulties.

It appears to be operational now, though, and all the minutes of our PSP meetings so far this year can be found there. Any parent who wishes to contact us can do so using this site, or through the school office.

The PSP has been actively involved with the school this year:

The parents of the PSP were consulted on the shortlist of applicants for the post of Head Teacher.

Vicky Cole and Donald Smith sat on the panel that interviewed applicants for the post of Head Teacher. Sarah Ingham was the successful candidate.

Sally Wilson and Donald Smith sat on the panel that interviewed applicants for the post of Depute. Derek Simpson was the successful candidate.

The Chair attended the P7 information evening where she gave a brief presentation on the work of the PSP.

Ian Smith has regularly attended and contributed to the meetings of ELAPCM and has reported back to the PSP. He has raised our concerns about cuts to the predictable needs budget as well as our concerns regarding roll capping. He has used this forum to ask for clarification on an 'open and transparent' roll capping procedure. We thank Ian for continuing to represent us at ELAPCM.

The PSP has been kept well informed.

We are very grateful to all the people who have taken the time to keep us up to date with developments in the school.

Mr Illingworth gave a presentation on Teaching and Learning at Knox explaining, amongst other things, how areas for improvement are identified, how staff share good practice and how pupils are encouraged to take ownership of their own learning.

Mr Greenaway gave us an update on profiles and eportfolios. We were excited to learn of these innovative ways of reporting and celebrating achievement and we are proud that the Knox system has been identified as an example of good practice.

Mr Flood talked to us about the school handbook and also outlined some very encouraging ideas for improving work experience and business coaching.

Bev Skirrow reported to us on the schools finances and how the budget is managed. We were impressed with the school's responsible and positive attitude at this financially difficult time.

The Year Ahead.

In the coming year, as it was last year, the priority for the PSP is to encourage and enable parents to support the pupils by sharing their skills and experience with the school. Any suggestions from the parent forum will be much appreciated.

We hope to use our website more to the parents' advantage by facilitating discussions on a variety of issues concerning parenting generally, and not just school related matters. Again, all suggestions for topics will be very welcome.

We are keen to explore ways of encouraging sporting achievement, as well as achievement generally.

We are also considering ways in which the whole school can be involved in fundraising. Several ideas have been mentioned already and the feasibility of these ideas will be explored.

We have raised a concern with the council. Parents on the PSP find it difficult, if not impossible, to take time off work to be on interview panels. We have asked if it might be possible to have interviews at different times, but we have yet to receive a response other than an acknowledgement.

Vacancies for Parent Members

There are currently vacancies for parent members in the Partnership. This is an excellent way of becoming more aware of, and involved in, the work of the School, and of having your voice heard. Please contact us via our website for more information.

Vicky Cole, Chair