



APPROVED MINUTES

DATE: WEDNESDAY 1 OCTOBER 2014

PRESENT:	Louise Elder	Chair	PSP member
	Dave Neillans	Vice Chair	PSP member
	Amanda Herriot	Parent	PSP member
	Caroline McKinnel	Parent	PSP member
	Janette Middlemass	Parent	PSP member
	Kim White	Parent	PSP member
	Calum Blair	Teacher	PSP member
	Colin Dempster	Teacher	PSP member

IN ATTENDANCE:	Sarah Ingham	Head Teacher
	Bev Skirrow	Knox Business Manager
	Lynsey Ward	Teacher
	Caitlin Adair	Parent
	Katrina Booth	Parent
	Linda Bowen	Parent
	Kay Boylan	Parent
	Fiona Dewar	Parent
	Janette Fairgrieve	Parent
	Carolyn Green	Parent
	Gail Horsburgh	Parent
	Anne Hunter	Parent
	Andy McBain	Parent
	Julie-Clare Paterson	Parent
	Donald Smith	Parent
	Liz Syme	Parent
	Caroline Taylor	Parent
	Elizabeth Vischer	Parent
	Annabel Jackson	Knox Head Girl
	Calum Paul	Knox Head Boy
	John McMillan	Local Councillor
	Mary Benson	Clerk

1. Welcome and Apologies

Louise Elder (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Vicky Cole, Greg Cookson, Alison Hunton, Jon Hunton, Ian Smith, Mark Wyllie, Provost Broun-Lindsay and Councillor Trotter.

2. Learning & Teaching Policy – Lynsey Ward

Miss Ward gave a presentation about the school's new Learning & Teaching policy. The school's policy is being updated to reflect the General Teaching Council (Scotland's) new Standards for Registration. The policy has been drawn up and discussed with staff to create a succinct general policy which can be referred to on a daily basis. It is envisaged that the policy will help to ensure a consistent learning experience across the school, linking in with the school's main ethos of wisdom, engagement and respect. Staff have all seen the document and provided feedback. Pupils have seen it this week via the School Council meeting. The wording is being looked at to make sure it reflects the age groups of pupils within the school. It is hoped to have the final document in place by December.

Paper copies were available to those at the meeting and any amendments or details of anything that parents feel has been missed should be emailed to Miss Ward at lward@knox.elcschool.org.uk as soon as possible. As this is not a finalised document, it will not be available on the website for the parent forum to view at this stage.

Councillor McMillan came into the meeting.

3. Minutes of Meeting of 3 September 2014

The minutes of the last meeting were approved without change.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes & Action Points

There were no matters arising, and all action points had been fulfilled.

5. Chairperson's Report

PSP website and Facebook

Louise Elder and Kay Boylan have been working together on updating the PSP (Parent School Partnership) website and will be attending Parent Council website training on 28 October. In future, information will be published on both Facebook and the PSP website to reach the maximum number of parents. A new email address has been set up knoxacademypsp@gmail.com, for parents to get in touch directly with the Chair. A link to this will be advertised on the webpage and Facebook. Comments from the website may also be moderated via this email address, but this will be discussed with Ian Smith (Parent Rep).

Action LE

Contact

There was a discussion about who to contact in the event of a problem at school.

Issues specific to your child should be raised directly with the school. Pastoral issues should be raised with the relevant Guidance Teacher. Behavioural or learning and teaching issues should be raised with one of the Depute Head Teachers. This should ideally be via a phonecall or letter. Mrs Ingham will check that the school website information regarding Guidance Teachers is up to date. **Action SI/CD**

If the problem is a policy or principle issue (not relating to a specific pupil), then it can be raised with the PSP for discussion at a meeting.

It was agreed that any issues raised with the PSP, which were a school rather than PSP issue would be sent directly to Mrs Ingham for her to forward on the appropriate person.

Presentations

A parent had contacted the Chair to ask if presentations made at the PSP could be published on the website for the wider parent forum to view. It was agreed that although this would not be possible with confidential items, others may be able to be published in this way.

PSP budget

Bev Skirrow noted that the PSP are allocated a budget of £265.00 per year; however the Knox PSP monies held by the school have accrued over time to £714.34. There was a discussion about how best to use this money and it was agreed that £300 of it would be used to pay for the school's new "WE R Knox" badges for pupils (which link to the school's Wisdom, Engagement and Respect ethos). The remaining money will be used to fund additional PSP prizes for the annual summer awards ceremony; in the form of vouchers/book tokens for pupils whom the PSP agree have shown triumph over adversity.

Meet the Minister

Louise Elder, Mrs Ingham and Councillor McMillan will be attending a "Meet the Minister" event tomorrow with Alasdair Allan (Minister for Scottish Language and Lifelong Learning). Louise hopes to discuss the national long-term difficulties with recruiting Home Economics Teachers, particularly in the light of recent experience at Knox and next year's Scottish Year of Food and Drink. Councillor McMillan encouraged any parent with ideas or offers of help to encourage industry to engage with schools to contact him (jmcmillan@eastlothian.gov.uk).

6. Pupil's Matters –

Head Boy Calum Paul and Head Girl Annabel Jackson gave an update, including a summary of the recent School Council meeting:

Preparations for the Christmas Panto have begun.

A group of pupils have started a school magazine called "The Bleater", featuring school information and book/film reviews, with three or four editions planned per year.

A school talent show is being organised by one of the Young Enterprise Teams, with Calum and Annabel on the judging panel.

The recent Dalguise staff/S6 team building weekend went very well.

The Head Boy and Head Girl from each East Lothian secondary school had been invited to the vote count at the Corn Exchange for the recent Independence Referendum. Councillor McMillan noted that Calum and Annabel had been a great tribute to the school. They were congratulated on this by Mrs Ingham and Louise Elder.

7. Head Teacher's Report

Staffing – Mrs Ingham gave a detailed update on staffing and thanked Janette Middlemass for her involvement in the lesson observation at the recent teacher interviews. The position of Physics Teacher is still vacant, but a part-time Home Economics teacher has been found and there is a preferred candidate for the permanent Home Economics post. The school have appointed a second Youth Worker.

News/updates

S6 pupils are working on their UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) forms.

A group of S4 pupils involved in the Haddington and Lammermuir Area Partnership will be at the next meeting to speak about their involvement.

The Nungate Study Club is up and running.

The S1 Settling-In evening is tomorrow night, followed by Knox Academy Support Group's (KASG) Family Blingo Evening.

Supply staff

The national problem with sourcing supply teaching staff was discussed at length. Ms Skirrow explained in detail the problems with getting general teaching supply staff, and in particular with finding supply teachers for specific subjects. Ms Skirrow said Knox has an average staff absence rate within the authority. The school tries to cover absences in-house with their own staff, which reduces disruption but cannot be sustained long-term, particularly when illness bugs are doing the rounds and there are several teachers off at once. The situation can be difficult to manage, but the school is doing the best it can in the circumstances.

Linda Bowen left the meeting.

Exam results

Mrs Ingham gave a summary of the pre-appeals exam results for 2013/14. She felt that on the whole, the school were not doing too badly, but could always do better. The school will focus on trying to close the gap between the lowest 20% of achievers and the highest 20%.

Prelims

A parent asked about prelims. Mrs Ingham said that this year there would be formal prelims in English and Maths only (to give pupils some experience of the exam hall). Prelims will still take place in other subjects under exam conditions, but will be taken within the classroom rather than the formal exam hall. The timing of individual classroom prelims will be decided by the teacher and will depend on the coursework for each different subject. Advance notice will be given to allow pupils time to revise.

Prelims used to be a necessary form of evidence in the event of later exam appeals, but these are no longer needed due to the continuous assessment nature of the new exam syllabus. Prelims can also create an unnecessary break in the school year. Pupils will still do NAB (National Assessment Bank) assessments during their course.

Revision skills

There was a discussion about helping youngsters gain revision skills, particularly for pupils sitting exams for the first time. Parents felt that pupils need help with learning how to be organised enough to revise for all of their subjects at once. Mrs Ingham agreed to look at this. **Action SI**

Ms Skirrow noted that the school has budgeted for two weeks of Easter Revision during the holidays. Parents noted how helpful the informal Easter revision sessions were for senior pupils. Pupils in S2, S3 and S4 are already receiving some study skills tuition. Mrs Ingham agreed to look at providing an informal suggestion box for pupils. **Action SI**

Donald Smith left the meeting.

8. Curriculum – discussed under Head Teacher’s Report

9. Staff Member’s Report

Dalguise – the annual staff/S6 team building weekend at Dalguise had been very successful.

S6 pupils are currently going through the UCAS application process, supported by staff.

The S4 Enhanced Curriculum is going well, with pupils using their time well and being focussed on the tasks in hand.

Mr Dempster will liaise with Louise Elder and Kay Boylan regarding the School and PSP websites to co-ordinate them more.

Action CD, LE, KB

It was agreed that the China Expedition DVD would be screened at the next meeting. **Action CB**

10. Parent’s Matters

Janette Middlemass asked if the “How to Pass National 5” series of books could be ordered through the school. Ms Skirrow will check this with Mr Plain (School Librarian) and let parents know. **Action BS**

Old past paper books may be of use to pupils. Unused copies can be brought into school and will be used in the library, sold in a second hand book sale at school or if not usable sent to recycling.

11 . Any Other Business

Area Partnership Update – Amanda Herriot gave an update on the Haddington and Lammermuir Area Partnership meetings. This item will be discussed further at the next meeting.

National 4/National 5 testing – Caroline McKinnel asked why some pupils were being tested at National 4 as well as National 5. Mrs Ingham explained that if a department has any concern that a pupil may not achieve a National 5 pass, the pupil needs to have a National 4 Added Value Unit for evidence. If the pupil fails National 5, and does not have this evidence, they will get no qualification at all. If parents feel that their youngster is under too much pressure to do this unit in S4, they should write in and inform the school so that the pupil can do it in S5 instead.

East Lothian Youth Orchestra – Caitlin Adair noted the incredible recent inaugural performance of the East Lothian Youth Orchestra. Mrs Ingham agreed and said she would pass on the positive comments to the music staff.

Past / specimen exam papers – Mr Dempster noted that the SQA website have free access to past and/or specimen exam papers and information on the marking scheme also. <http://www.sqa.org.uk/pastpapers/findpastpaper.htm>

12. Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 5 November 2014.

Action Points	Who	When
Discuss moderation of website comments with Ian Smith	LE	As soon as possible

Update the staff list on the school website to show 2014/15 staff.	SI/CD	As soon as possible
Look at helping pupils to learn organisation and revision skills for studying for multiple subject exams at the same time.	SI	As soon as possible (contd over page)
Provide an informal suggestion box for pupils	SI	As soon as possible
Co-ordinate schools and PSP website information	CD,LE,KB	As soon as possible
Screen China Expedition DVD at next PSP meeting	CB	For next meeting
Check with Mr Plain whether "How to Pass National 5" books can be ordered through the school and let parents know.	BS	As soon as possible.