



DRAFT MINUTES

DATE: WEDNESDAY 2 MAY 2012

PRESENT:	Vicky Cole (Chair)	Parent
	Greg Cookson (Vice chair)	Parent
	Sally Cunningham	Parent
	Andrew Greathead	Parent
	Dave Neillans	Parent
	Derek Simpson	Parent
	Donald Smith	Parent
	Ian Smith	Parent
	Kim White	Parent
	Kath Anderson	Staff
	Colin Dempster	Staff
	Sarah Ingham	Staff
IN ATTENDANCE:	Janis Craig	Head Teacher
	Steven Illingworth	Depute Head Teacher
	Susan Rae	P7 parent
	Tom Trotter	Local Councillor
	Mary Benson	Clerk

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Mark Wyllie, Councillor Ludovic Broun-Lindsay and Provost Sheena Richardson.

2. Presentation by Mr Illingworth

Mr Illingworth gave a presentation about how the school addresses concerns with regard to teaching and learning:

Identifying issues - The school tries to bring down barriers between staff, pupils and parents in order to enable pupils to achieve as highly as possible. Any concerns with regard to teaching and learning can be picked up in a number of ways, for example through analysis of statistics, both the school's own statistics and Scottish Government exam statistics; through regular departmental visits by senior management staff; through pupil focus groups and through parental feedback (both ongoing throughout the year, eg by phone, and from parent consultation evenings). The school's own statistics come from the software used for pupil reports as it tracks the attainment of individual pupils across the school and these statistics are regularly reviewed.

Complaints procedure - Where issues are identified, the focus is on encouraging and developing solutions and, where necessary, on helping staff to develop and improve. It is important to support staff while they do this. If complaints from parents are received, the school takes them very seriously and there is a structured approach in dealing with them. A discussion takes place with the relevant departmental head, followed by

management staff and sometimes peer staff observing lessons and giving feedback, and a review of lesson plans. This approach does not give a speedy solution, but there are no teachers at Knox that do not want to improve. Feedback is always given to parents.

Staff development - Staff development is built on an open relationship involving trust. All teachers should regularly reflect on practice and lessons as part of continual professional development and should consider how lessons could work better next time. The school supports this by holding Learning Lunches three or four times a year, where staff from across the school get together to share good practice. Each Learning Lunch is themed (eg "effective group-work, questioning techniques etc). There are often common traits which can be observed in successful departments within the school and these are shared and encouraged in all departments. The Faculty system is very helpful as it brings departments together, which can help identify issues more quickly; help share good practice more easily and break down barriers.

Independent learning and ePortfolio - It is important to remember that pupils also need to take responsibility for their own learning and the school helps to support, develop and encourage independent learning. The school also tries to encourage all parents to get involved with their child's learning. Mr Greenaway's ePortfolio is very useful for this and there has been a lot of interest from other schools in this innovative approach. Knox has had discussions with Mr McGillivray (Kings Meadow Primary School) about linking in to P7 work and it is envisaged long-term that the ePortfolio system could be rolled out to other schools in the cluster so that pupils would have a body of work in it when they left Knox that would reflect their learning journey right the way through school. Vicky Cole will invite Mr Greenaway to attend a future PSP meeting to give an update on the ePortfolio system.

Action VC

Pupil focus groups - Mrs Ingham, Mr Swinney and Mr Greenaway run pupil focus groups, where 5 pupils from each department give feedback on their learning and attainment, including what worked in the classroom, how involved their parents have been and whether they received any extra-curricular help. Pupils chosen for the group are those who have moved up by 3 grades or more during the school year. The idea is to find out what factors contributed to the pupil's success. Vicky Cole invited Mrs Ingham to give a talk about this to the PSP at a future meeting.

Action VC/SI

Tutoring - A question was asked about tutoring and whether it skewed attainment statistics within the school. Mr Illingworth and Mrs Craig said this was difficult to analyse, as they did not know who was being tutored and had no control over the tutoring staff. They felt that sometimes tutoring can act as a "comfort blanket" to pupils. Some tutors can also have a detrimental effect, for example if they are of poor quality or if they teach different ways of doing things, which can be confusing to pupils. Any parent who has concerns regarding teaching and learning at Knox should take the matter up through the school, where staff will willingly look into complaints from parents.

Mr Illingworth was thanked for his presentation and he left the meeting.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Mrs Craig requested two changes to the minutes of the last meeting, held on Wednesday 7 March 2012.

Item 7, Page 3: "*change to Curriculum for Excellence*" to be changed to "continued implementation of Curriculum for Excellence".

Item 3, Page 4: "*Each promoted Principal Teacher's post is job-sized and paid according to responsibilities*". The job-sizing and pay are indicative only at this stage, which should be clarified in the minutes.

4. Matters arising

KASG's 'A Taste of Scotland' event was rescheduled for this week and was excellent. Highlights will be posted on the school website shortly.

5. Chairperson's Report and Action Points from last meeting

Feedblitz - Mr Dempster thinks it would be possible to import Feedblitz subscribers into MailChimp, if required.

Careers event - There has been no further progress on the careers event to date.

School buses - Mr Illingworth has spoken to Ross Prentice regarding the school buses leaving too sharp from school. Mr Prentice will raise this with his drivers and the school will keep an eye on the situation.

6. Pupils' Matters –

The Head Boy and Head Girl have been made aware that they are welcome to attend the PSP meetings.

Furniture for the social areas has been chosen by the youngsters and has now arrived. The furniture will be installed in the social areas once the exams period is over.

7. Head Teacher's report

S2 – a letter has gone out to S2 parents today. S2 reports and curriculum information will be going out to parents this month. An open evening will be held on 22 May from 3-6pm which will be faculty-led. The parental consultation evenings will be held on 24 May, but these will focus on pupil progress rather than general course information. The current S2 will move into S3 in June.

Curriculum for Excellence – Mike Russell MSP (Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning) visited Knox at the end of last term to discuss Curriculum for Excellence. This was picked up by The Sunday Post newspaper, which unfortunately ran an inaccurate article on the matter.

S5/6 coursing – has now been completed and there are very few classes not running. Psychology Higher was oversubscribed and names had to be drawn out of a hat to decide who would get a place on the course. In total, 16 Advanced Highers will be running. Mrs Craig has completed the timetable and all the courses have been fitted in; however some youngsters will have tough decisions to make where their preferred subjects are within the same option column and may have to fall back on their reserve choices.

Virtual classrooms – Ian Smith noted that virtual classrooms had been discussed at recent ELAPCM meetings where he was told that the technology was now available to schools that requested it. Mrs Craig was not aware of this, but staff questioned who would supervise pupils undertaking distance learning via the computer. Mrs Ingham noted that recent research has shown that Knox Academy has the fewest number of pupils who can access the internet from home, compared to the other schools in the authority.

Secondary School Management Review – this is now complete and the relevant staffing appointments have been made. Mrs Craig gave an update on staffing for the benefit of parent representatives. Mrs Craig noted how professional the staff have been in accepting the changes.

Budget – money will be tight for the school next year, but the timetable has been costed and can be afforded. The school roll has dropped and will be in the region of 780 pupils.

Dress code – skirts and ties are particularly an issue with regard to school dress code. This will be tackled again in June, after the study leave period, and August at the start of next session.

Events –

Knox KWN – S3 pupils and teachers are travelling to Redditch tomorrow to attend the KWN (Kid Witness News) Awards Ceremony, where their video production "Think of Life - Put Down the Knife" has been nominated for an award.

Exams – S4 exams are now underway, S5/6 study leave begins next Wednesday.

Visitors - Knox are currently hosting two visiting teachers from partner schools in Rwanda. Four Knox staff will make a reciprocal visit to Rwanda on 26 May. It is hoped to set up pupil exchange visits in the future.

Next Monday (7 May) is a holiday and Tuesday is an in-service day.

Week commencing 21 May is Activities Week.

Monday 4 June is the Jubilee holiday.

Staffing - Mrs Craig announced she would be taking early retirement on 12 August. An advert for the Head Teacher's post should be published this week and it is hoped to have a new Head Teacher by the start of next session in August. On behalf of the PSP, Vicky Cole said that we will be very sorry to lose Mrs Craig. Dave Neillans said we would all be sad to see Mrs Craig go, as she has brought the school to a good place. Councillor Trotter echoed this and thanked Mrs Craig on behalf of East Lothian Council.

On the eve of the Local Council Elections, Vicky Cole also thanked Councillor Trotter for his valued contribution to the PSP during his time in office.

8. Staff Member's Report

School Development Plan – Mrs Ingham asked for parent reps to get actively involved in providing ideas and feedback for the School Development Plan, which will be reviewed in May/June this year. She will send an email copy of her memo to Vicky Cole so that it can be forwarded to all parent reps. **Action SI/All**

Knox News – Mrs Ingham's article on energy drinks in a recent Knox News was picked up by the East Lothian Courier, and then by The Telegraph, who published an article on it. The deadline for the next edition of Knox News is 1 June. The circulation of Knox News still needs to be discussed at some point. **Action VC/SI**

Website – Mr Dempster gave an update on his work on the school website. Frequently Asked Questions – he has received some comments from S1 pupils about what should be included, but is still awaiting comments from the PSP. The tagging system for news articles (where news articles could be "tagged" under different categories) is not online yet, but it is hope to be soon. The drop down menus at the top of the page have received positive feedback. Mrs Craig has timetabled two hours a week for Mr Dempster to work with Mr Blair on the website. It was asked if the photograph of the school on the homepage could be changed to illustrate the current news. Mr Dempster said this could be considered.

9. Parent's Matters

School roll capping – The issue of roll capping was raised by parents. Some children from outwith the catchment area of Knox have had their application to join the school in S1 refused, despite the fact that some of them have older siblings already at the school. This is causing distress and frustration to many families in the Pencaitland area. The roll for next year is likely to be in the region of 780 pupils; however the school has been designed to accommodate 950.

All school staff left the meeting at this point.

The reasons for the roll cap are unclear. The issue was discussed at length by the Parent Reps and will be raised immediately with the Education Authority by the PSP. **Action VC**

10. Correspondence – Due to time constraints at the meeting, correspondence was not discussed; however all relevant incoming correspondence has been emailed to all.

11. Any Other Council Business –

Ian Smith gave out a written summary of items discussed at the last three ELAPCM meetings to all parent reps. Concern was expressed about the proposed education budget savings over the next two years, particularly regarding the Predictable Needs Budget. The consensus was that this could be detrimental to all pupils in the school. It was agreed that the PSP should raise this with the Education Authority and this will be discussed at the next meeting.

Date of Next Meeting:

30 May 2012.

Action points	Who	When
Invite Mr Greenaway to update the PSP about the ePortfolio.	VC/JC	At a date to be arranged
Invite Mrs Ingham to talk to the PSP about the pupil focus groups.	VC/JC	At a date to be arranged
Discuss the circulation of Knox News	All	At a date to be arranged
Discuss ideas and feedback for the school development plan	All	Before the next meeting
Discuss the proposed cut to the Predictable Needs Budget	All	At the next meeting
Discuss careers event ideas to find a way forward.	All interested parent reps.	Before the next meeting
Raise the issue of non-catchment children being refused entry to S1 with the Education Authority.	VC	Immediately

Signed:

(Chairperson) Date: 30 May 2012

Signed

(Clerk)

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