



APPROVED MINUTES

DATE:	WEDNESDAY 5 SEPTEMBER 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
	Mark Wyllie	Parent
	Kath Anderson	Staff
	Colin Dempster	Staff
IN ATTENDANCE:	Sarah Ingham	Head Teacher
	John McMillan	Local Councillor
	Tom Trotter	Local Councillor
	Mary Benson	Clerk

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Councillor Ludovic Broun-Lindsay. Seven S3 parents were also in attendance to discuss item 2.

2. S3 Curriculum

A group of S3 parents have written a letter to the PSP outlining their concerns about the changes to the S3 curriculum due to the introduction of the new Curriculum for Excellence across Scotland. They were concerned that the new broader S3 curriculum was at the expense of “core” subjects. In particular, the parents were concerned that S3’s timetabled 1 hour of French and 2 hours of Maths a week were not sufficient. Mrs Ingham noted that the curriculum was new and different and a change from the old system; but she emphasized that Knox is a good school and that staff care about the youngsters and don’t want them to be disadvantaged in any way.

Maths - from S1 to S3, pupils are getting more than the minimum number of hours required, and more than pupils in a number of other schools get. It was also noted that numeracy is not solely taught in the maths classroom, but also in many other subjects, such as the sciences, technical and home economics to name but a few. Under Curriculum for Excellence, numeracy is designed to be spread across the curriculum in this way.

French - the school has only 2 French teachers and they are both fully timetabled. The school is giving what it can to S3 pupils. An intensive course in French will be run between Christmas and the summer for those pupils who wish to take French in S4. Councillor McMillan suggested Modern Language helpers – parents with

modern language skills who could help support pupils in a similar way to the Literacy helpers that Mrs Ingham is currently recruiting.

East Lothian's Education Authority has made Maths compulsory in S4 and they also highly recommend pupils to take a modern language. These subjects are not made compulsory everywhere.

It was noted that although Curriculum for Excellence is new for pupils this year, Knox started planning for this 6 years ago, so changes to the previous system are not a knee-jerk reaction. The whole system has changed and this will take some getting used to. Mrs Ingham said that many parents feel that the new curriculum allows pupils greater choice. It is difficult for a lot of youngsters to narrow their choice of subjects at this stage, as they don't know what they want to do when they leave school.

Knox has taken the best advice from those creating the new curriculum and are not setting pupils up to fail. There are two National Assessors on the staff at Knox and there is constant departmental evaluation to make sure that basic skills are being covered and that all pupils are kept engaged.

One S3 parent noted that their youngster was starting to feel slightly anxious about their Maths work, as the pace of work stepped up. Mrs Ingham will speak to the Maths Department about this. Parents wanted to make it clear that their concerns were not a reflection of the Maths teachers, whom they felt were doing a great job.

Action SI

Vicky Cole thanked the S3 parents for coming to the meeting and hoped that Mrs Ingham had addressed their concerns. She noted that staff and parents must work together as they have the same ultimate goal - the happiness and success of the children.

Four of the S3 parents left the meeting

3. Minutes of 30 May 2012 - approved without change.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

Knox KWN – Knox won the Best Documentary global award at the Panasonic Global Awards Ceremony in London in August. Mr Dempster and the Knox KWN (Kid's Witness News) team attended the ceremony and also visited the Olympic park during the games, which was a great experience for all. Vicky Cole thanked Mr Dempster on behalf of the PSP for all of his hard work and dedication to this project, and noted that she was aware that he had given up a lot of his own time to do it.

ePortfolio – Mr Greenaway will attend the October meeting to talk to the PSP about progress on the ePortfolio system. He gave a presentation to Head Teachers across Scotland about the system today.

Predictable Needs budget – Ian Smith had raised the PSP's concerns regarding the proposed cut to the Predictable Needs budget at the last ELAPCM meeting. The concern is that the most vulnerable children will have their required funding cut, and this will have a knock-on effect for all. The PSP will raise this again.

5. Chairperson's report and action points from the last meeting

Due to the summer break, there has been no further progress on the action points from the last meeting.

6. Pupil's matters

The pupil's Young Enterprise Group will shortly be undertaking several fundraising activities, including a car washing session on Friday afternoon at the school.

The hand driers in the boy's toilets keep breaking down – Mrs Ingham will raise this with FES. **Action SI**

Parents are asked to remind their youngsters to pick up the food they have made in Home Economics at the end of the day.

7. Head Teacher's report

Vicky Cole officially welcomed Mrs Ingham to her first PSP meeting as Head Teacher. Mrs Ingham thanked everyone for their good wishes on her recent appointment. She stressed that teamwork is very important and that the school staff, parents and pupils were all part of one team.

Exam results – Mrs Ingham gave a detailed report on pre-appeals exam results at Knox. She noted that some results were very pleasing, some interesting and that there were some anomalies that the school will be looking into. Appeals to the exam board are pending – if the school feels that a pupil has underperformed and they have evidence that the pupil should have attained a higher grade based on their work throughout the year, they will automatically raise an appeal on the pupil's behalf. However, this process can take several weeks. Final results summaries are usually published for each school by the Education Authority in December or January.

Staffing – Mrs Ingham gave an update on staffing.

It was noted by parents that the proposed reduction in the Predictable Needs budget will have a negative impact on school staffing. Councillor Trotter said that times are tight for everyone and that some cost savings will have to be made. Councillor McMillan said that although finances are tight, the administration try to protect what is a priority. If a school has a need and there is a gap which cannot be filled, it should be made known to the administration to see if a solution can be negotiated.

Curriculum for Excellence promotes a broad general education to all pupils up to S3. Where the school was previously perhaps teaching one Standard Grade S3 French option class, they are now teaching French to all in S3. This has an impact on staffing, particularly when there is no additional money available to employ extra staff to help deliver the new curriculum. Schools are being asked to do more with less money, which means that the management staff have to be creative with the resources available.

Councillors McMillan and Trotter left the meeting for another engagement.

Events –

KWN success

Honduras expedition

National Theatre of Scotland exchange

The new way of doing recourcing has been very successful.

A request has been made for parents to for a contribution to the cost of materials in Home Economics, Technical and occasionally Art.

Twitter feeds – new twitter feeds have been set up: @KnoxAcademyS6 (specifically for S6) and @KnoxComFaculty (Communications Faculty)

Vandalism in toilets – all toilets have been closed except the main ones in the social area due to recent appalling vandalism (abusive graffiti and blocking the toilets with food). Prefects are checking the toilets every hour.

Dress code - Mrs Ingham intends to do a complete relaunch of the dress code after Christmas. A dress code consultation will be carried out involving staff, parents and pupils. Length of skirts was discussed – Vicky Cole noted that it was difficult to find longer school skirts in the shops at the moment. Derek Simpson said that Dunbar Grammar ask for girl's skirts to be no shorter than one inch below their longest finger, when the girls hold their arms down by their sides. One idea to promote school uniform was to hold a "School Uniform Day", where pupils are required to wear full uniform to school. If 90% of the pupils wear full uniform on three consecutive School Uniform Days, then pupils earn the right to a Dress-Down Day. Another idea is to do this by class, rather than by whole school.

Sporting achievement – recognizing pupil's sporting achievements was discussed, including the idea of a prize giving event during the school day to recognize non academic achievements in front of the whole school.

Literacy helpers – meeting on 12 September.

Talking to Teens – has been postponed for the time being.

Events (continued):

School production auditions – 13 September

School closed – 17 September (public holiday) and 18 September (Curriculum for Excellence In-Service day)

UCAS evening – 20 September

Staff/S6 weekend to Dalguise – 21 September

S1 Settling-In Evening – 27 September

8. Staff member's report

No items.

9. Parent's matters

Vicky Cole will post a summary of the main points discussed at each PSP meeting (Edubuzz permitting – see item 11) onto the PSP website within a couple of days of the meeting, to keep parents informed while the minutes are prepared.

Action VC

10. Correspondence

The dates for the ELAPCM meetings this session were advertised. Ian Smith has agreed to attend the meeting tomorrow at North Berwick High. Vicky encouraged parent reps to see if they would be able to attend some of the other meetings this year with Ian.

11. Any Other Business

S1 Maths – one parent said that their S1 youngster had started to feel anxious about their maths work. There was felt to be a difference in standard between children coming from the three different cluster primary schools. Another parent noted that there seemed to be a lot of pupils from various schools in the area attending tutored classes in Maths outwith school. Mrs Ingham said that the Knox Maths department worked with all cluster primaries, but would take this comment back to the Maths department. The idea of running an S1 parents information class on maths was discussed. It was felt this might be beneficial in helping parents support their youngsters. Parents voiced their thanks for the lunchtime Maths Club, which was very beneficial.

Action SI

Homework – the amount of homework sent home was discussed. Some parents felt there wasn't enough and others felt that the quality of the homework was good, which was more important. The value of teaching home study skills was raised.

Parent/staff reps – there is a position vacant for a new staff rep, plus two spaces available for additional parent reps. Vicky Cole will post a message advertising this on the PSP website once Edubuzz is up and running again.

Edubuzz East Lothian Council's school website system is offline at the moment due to a malware infestation. Some parents have been unsubscribing from Feedblitz due to the number of notification emails they are receiving, generated by the problems with the website. The system should sort itself once the website is back online. Parents are asked not to unsubscribe in the meantime.

Advanced Higher Geography – Mrs Ingham clarified the teacher contact hours for the Advanced Higher Geography course.

Updating noticeboards – Donald Smith asked if the noticeboards in the main foyer could be updated. Mrs Ingham said she had noticed this and would do so.

Action SI

PSP meeting dates – Mary Benson will email a list of this year's PSP meeting dates to all.

Mrs Ingham, Mr Dempster and Miss Anderson left the meeting.

School Roll Capping – It is understood that this year’s S1 is now full to the roll cap, but not to the capacity of the school. Vicky Cole gave a summary to parents of the progress to date on this item. The PSP intends to look into whether an official complaint can be raised with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman regarding the Education Authority’s handling of the issue. With regard to the Roll Cap issue, two items have been submitted by Knox PSP for tomorrow’s ELAPCM agenda:

- 1: Knox will soon be hosting a P7 Open Evening. What is the current out of catchment area policy for Knox? The usual staffing and accommodation criteria do not appear to have been applied this year.
- 2: Our Chair reports that a promise has been made to make next year's process open and transparent. What changes will be made to achieve this?

Derek Simpson thanked Vicky Cole on behalf of the PSP, for her efforts on this matter.

Date of Next Meetings:

3 October, 31 October, 28 November 2012; 9 January, 6 February, 24 April and 22 May 2013.

Action points	Who	When
Invite Mrs Ingham to talk to the PSP about the pupil focus groups.	VC	At a date to be arranged
Discuss the circulation of Knox News	All	At a date to be arranged
Discuss careers event ideas to find a way forward.	All interested parent reps.	As soon as possible.
Discuss S3 CforE concerns and point raised regarding S1 with Maths Department.	SI	As soon as possible.
Speak with FES about broken hand driers in boy’s toilets.	SI	As soon as possible.
Write a summary of the main points of the PSP meeting for the website	VC	As soon as Edubuzz is up and running again.
Update the noticeboards in the main foyer	SI	As soon as possible.