



APPROVED MINUTES

DATE: WEDNESDAY 26 MARCH 2014

PRESENT:	Kim White	(Acting Chair)	Parent	PSP member
	Louise Elder		Parent	PSP member
	Amanda Herriot		Parent	PSP member
	Jon Hunton		Parent	PSP member
	Caroline McKinnel		Parent	PSP member
	Janette Middlemass		Parent	PSP member
	Dave Neillans		Parent	PSP member
	Derek Simpson		Parent	PSP member
	Ian Smith		Parent	PSP member
	Kath Anderson		Teacher	PSP member
	Calum Blair		Teacher	PSP member
	Colin Dempster		Teacher	PSP member

IN ATTENDANCE:	Sarah Ingham	Head Teacher
	Bill Plain	School Librarian
	Linda Bowen	Parent
	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 Vicky Cole (Chair), Greg Cookson (Vice Chair), Mark Wyllie and Provost Broun-Lindsay.

2. Mr Plain – School library web page

Mr Bill Plain, School Librarian attended the meeting and gave an interesting and informative presentation on the school library web page, followed by a demonstration of the resources available there. The school library website (<http://www.ka-net.org.uk/library>) is available through the school website and also has links to online resources available to all through the East Lothian Council library web page, which can be accessed by using an East Lothian Council library membership card. Mr Plain circulated a copy of his PowerPoint presentation to those at the meeting.

Kim White thanked Mr Plain for his presentation and he left the meeting.

3 Minutes of Meeting of 5 February 2014

The minutes of the last meeting were approved with one change: Staff Member's report, first item heading to be changed from Modern Studies to History.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes – none.

5. Chairperson's Report & Action Points from the last meeting

UCAS – Mr Simpson gave a talk later in this meeting about changes to UCAS points for entry to higher education. (See item 9, Staff Member's Report).

Former Knox pupils who have died in combat – Janette Middlemass is looking into this and this action point will be carried forward to the next meeting. **Action JM**

6. Pupil's Matters

Tri-house games – the recent Tri-house games were very successful, especially the debate on the upcoming Independence Referendum, which ended in a draw.

7. Head Teacher's Report

Staffing - Mrs Ingham gave a report on staffing, including Acting PT (Curriculum) Communication and Acting PT Literacy posts, and a new Chemistry teacher appointment. Three further posts are currently being advertised for teachers of English, Art and Modern Studies. Parent helpers for lesson observation of candidates are requested for 30 April, 8 May and 9 May. It is possible that this would require a full day's attendance, but this depends on the length of the leet. Mrs Ingham will email out to everyone with more details when available (via the Clerk). **Action SI & MB**

News / updates –

Press coverage – Mrs Ingham gave a statement about the recent press coverage about drugs. There was a general discussion on the issue.

Knox Academy Pipe Band – came third in their class at the recent Scottish Schools' Pipe Band Championships, after only 18 months together.

Sport – there have been a number of recent sporting successes, particularly with the hockey and rugby teams. Various youngsters are excelling in their sports, including judo, swimming and climbing.

Course choices – the school are in the process of finalising course choices for next year and parent information evenings have been well attended. Julie Caulfield of Queen Margaret University has visited the school to introduce the present S4 and S5 to the Health & Social Care Academy.

Easter holidays – school ends on 3 April for Easter. Easter Revision classes will take place on the Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of each week. The programme of classes will go out to pupils this week. School starts again on 22 April.

S3 prefects – S3 pupils have been given the chance to nominate themselves to be S3 prefects during exam leave, whilst the senior pupils are out of school.

Young Enterprise Night – there was a very successful Young Enterprise night at school last night, with one team winning Best IT Director and Best Business Idea.

Haddington Vision - There was also a very successful Haddington Vision event at the school yesterday evening, which was organised by pupils following work they have done with "Space Unlimited" looking at their vision for the future of Haddington.

Spring Concert – invitations have gone out for the Spring Concert on 2 April.

S2 Parent's Evening – 24 April.

Exam Leave – starts on or around 28 April for senior pupils. There is a slightly different policy for pupils studying for fewer than four National 5 exams, which is in line with all other secondary schools in the authority. A letter has gone home about this today. Pupils are welcome to come into school during exam leave to study and get advice from staff. All pupils must be in Dress Code when they come in for exams or to study during term time.

Strategic items –

Evaluation Visit 2 – will take place on 2 April and will focus on Curriculum and Assessment for Learning. School Inspection – a school inspection is expected within the next 12 months. More information will be available if/when this is confirmed.

Councillor McMillan left the meeting.

8. Curriculum

Course choices for next year have been made and the school has had all the parental consultations about this. Management staff are now trying to fit everything together for next year's timetable. Senior pupils are encouraged to have timetables that add up to at least 21 hours per week and Mrs Ingham is speaking to those who don't. Pupils need to have a good reason not to and are being encouraged to make up spare hours in their timetable with volunteering. The school are trying to be more open to youngster's needs and are mindful that university entrance is no longer guaranteed with 5 Highers and 3 Advanced Highers. Pupils need to have other experience and qualifications to give a breadth of knowledge.

Mr Simpson noted that there had not been many parents making individual appointments with staff to discuss course choices. Parents said they felt the information given out by the school was good, including the booklet, with details of both academic and vocational courses available. The section of the booklet giving details of what future jobs required which qualifications was felt to be particularly useful. Parents felt that the fact that the choices were being made close to parent's night was helpful, as discussions about course choice could be had with subject teachers during the parental consultations. Parents had been impressed with the staff support with youngster's choices and noted that the relaxed approach to meetings meant that any issues could be easily sorted.

9. Staff Member's Report

Twitter – Mr Dempster noted that the school's Twitter feed is being used a lot more at the moment, which was felt to be a good thing. The school have bought a new domain name "knox.is", which is being used with a shortening service to reduce the length of web-links for Twitter and for sharing information with pupils in class.

Linda Bowen and Councillor Trotter left the meeting.

Charity football match - Mr Blair gave an update on the recent charity football match between “Knox Academy Select” team and the “Forth One Allstars”. Unfortunately Knox were beaten on the night, but raised over £1000 for good causes through the event and the dress down day at school. It is hoped that this may become an annual event.

10. Parent’s Matters

UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) Tariff –

Mr Simpson gave a summary of the proposed changes to the UCAS Tariff, (the system whereby youngsters wishing to enter university are awarded points for their qualifications and experience to enable universities and colleges to grade applicants). Many universities look for youngsters to have a total of around 300 UCAS points before considering an application.

Currently, Higher, Advanced Higher and A Level results are given points, based on the grade that applicants achieve. All Higher ‘A’ passes are given 80 points, ‘B’ passes 65 points, ‘C’ passes 50 points and ‘D’ grades 36 points. Advanced Highers and A Levels are graded slightly differently based on the perceived difficulty of the courses and final exams.

However, proposed changes which may come into force from 2015 grade each subject differently, depending on the skills required to complete the course and pass the final exam. So, following the change, an ‘A’ grade pass in Higher Chemistry would score 70 UCAS points, but an ‘A’ grade pass in Higher Geography would score 100 UCAS points. This is because it is considered that a greater range of skills is required to gain an “A” pass in Geography than an “A” pass in Chemistry.

The change would also mean that, for example in Chemistry a Higher ‘A’ pass would score 70 points, but an Advanced Higher ‘A’ pass would also only score 70 points. UCAS points are not cumulative, so the Advanced Higher score would supersede the Higher score. In this way, it would appear that there may be little point in sitting Advanced Higher in some subjects, as it would not improve your UCAS score for entry to university. Indeed, Mrs Ingham and Mr Simpson said that their advice to youngsters was often to do further Highers in sixth year, rather than Advanced Highers for that very reason. For those youngsters who require an Advanced Higher for a specific university course, it may make more sense to consider offering a two-year Advanced Higher course, rather than sitting the Higher exam first.

UCAS points are also awarded for “Core Skills”, as well as for other qualifications such as certain Graded Music exams, certain Graded dance exams and certain qualifications from the British Horse Society amongst others. No UCAS points are awarded to Duke of Edinburgh (DoE) Awards, but it may be possible to gain core skill points from elements undertaken within the DoE programme. Some Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications may be worth more than their face value scores, depending on the core skills that UCAS judge to have been

The new SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) National exams have so far been awarded no UCAS point scores at all.

There was a long discussion about UCAS points and university entry. Mr Simpson agreed to circulate a copy of his PowerPoint presentation this evening to parent reps for information. Kim White thanked Mr Simpson for his presentation on behalf of the PSP.

11. Correspondence – has been emailed to all parents.

12. Any Other Business

ELAPCM – Ian Smith attended the last East Lothian Association of Parent Council Members meeting on 25 February on behalf of Knox PSP and gave a summary of the items discussed. There followed a general discussion about parental involvement.

It was agreed that parents should use the PSP as a method to raise issues with the school. A code of conduct was suggested for parents.

Higher courses – Mrs Ingham said that next year it was intended that all Higher courses offered by the school would be the new Highers, apart from in four subjects (Computing, Graphic Communication, Psychology and Economics).

13. Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 21 May 2014 at 6.15pm in the school.

Action points	Who	When
Speak to her contact to see if anyone knows of any former Knox pupils who have died in combat since the end of WW2, for the Knox War Memorial.	JM	As soon as possible