

MINUTES

Towerbank Parent Group

Thursday 28th November 2019

In attendance

Joanne Macaulay (Chair), Polly Clement (Vice Chair) Lucy Anderson (Secretary), Alasdair Friend (Head Teacher), Morven Wraight, Jenny Capon, Onyena Ibe, Andrea Barlow, Deirdre Macleod, Alan Crosbie, Trudy McPherson, Lesley Lawrie, Gareth Evans, Katy Wilson

A few others attended but no name on list

Welcome and Introductions

Joanne welcomed everyone and went round the room and everyone introduced themselves.

Headteacher's Report

AF firstly spoke of the really sad news of the death of Sol Barrie-Douglas and how school has drawn on some reserves and would like to do something permanent to remember Sol with the families input.

AF then spoke of the window work being very messy but will be good and the new gym floor is down and great.

2 things to talk about:

1. The potential class structure for the school next year can be seen in the following table. This is subject to change depending on the numbers in P1. The school could also end up with a P1/2 class in addition.

Class	Number of pupils	Notes
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1a	25	
1b	25	
1c	25	
2a	28	
2b	28	
2c	29	
3a	30	
3b	30	
3c	30	
3/4	25	9 P3 pupils & 16 P4 pupils
4a	30	
4b	30	
5a	28	
5b	28	
5c	28	
6a	32	
6b	32	
6c	33	
7a	33	
7b	33	
7c	33	

- Edinburgh Council Education dept have decided to review how composite classes are made up and AF is on the group that is looking at that. They have met a couple of times and about to put

out a citywide consultation on how composite classes are made up. That will have to happen before the next school year. Won't be unanimous.

One parent asked about the timescale on knowing about composite class decisions. Not sure.

Affinity Groups:

AF brought up the idea of having affinity groups (working name), this idea came about from ASN parents and a trip to the USA when AF was invited to visit a school there. The idea is facilitating parents and carers who have shared identity, could be single parents, new parents etc....

One parent asked if there is an opportunity to get help from school to facilitate. AF said yes, for example could get a translator but he wouldn't want to assume what groups wanted. Another parent asked how it worked and AF said there is some info around it on the internet.

One parent said she had heard of these groups but called something different and another talked about ASN Facebook group that was set up and it was working well, finding kindred spirits and knowing school supports it. she is really pleased this is on the table. AF said we would need to find out what groups people are interested in.

Joanne asked how do they get started and there was a discussion around perhaps small established groups that could be opened out? AF suggested doing a surveymonkey as they are always quite fruitful.

One parent suggested putting something up at the school fair so people could at least know it's something that could be possible.

School Streets (Joanne Macaulay)

On the whole going well but some recent issues – people driving down when they shouldn't and some ugly incidents between people.

Joan said... we wrote to the council saying it was getting ugly and the response was to look at the school website?

One parent said that police have advised that the council signs need to be moved. One parent said could a leaflet be given out? One parent felt that

the children shouldn't be on the road and there was discussion around the volume of children going up the pavement was really achievable.

AF said that at least the refuse collections have stopped. One parent said could blue badge holders add weight? Joanne said we would carry on emphasising it and a banner will be made for school fair.

Charitable Status (Joanne Macaulay)

If you have charitable status you can get match funding. Duddingston, St John's, Brunstane have done it, however you need trustees, people to run it, someone to apply for grants, not sure what the financial benefit is. Some-one said TASC went through the process - maybe speak to Matt Gilbert-Straw/Kristina Robb. It also changes the way you fundraise - accounts at end of year. Not very straightforward.

One parent said that for a lot of things we don't have the level of deprivation to secure funding.

Could Affinity groups bolster chances of getting funding?

AF said you can form a separate group - but who would take it on? A parent said she works in fundraising and it can be very variable and lots of work involved.

Also you can't target specific children.

Fundraising (Polly Clement)

Christmas Fair - quite organised, there is a quiet opening and we will have golden tickets to be allocated by the school.

Disco made £992

Bake sale made £729

Christmas cards made £312

Lottery has brought in £408 so far this academic year

Discussion around Christmas cards - should we still do it? Why was it not being done in school time any more - it is a work load issue. Parent who looks after it kindly happy to keep doing it if folk want.

Treasurer's Update (Polly Clement)

Fundraising has brought in a net £2441 so far this academic year. Outgoings have all been costs related to events. The school are due to invoice the TPG for costs related to the book festival trip. TPG finances are healthy and we are on track to cover costs for the year.

We have a volunteer to replace our current treasurer Graham Elliot. Steph Dodds is interested in taking on the role.

Uniforms (Lesley Lawrie)

Leslie gave out 2 t-shirts to the group see if thick enough – most felt ok

Leaver's hoodies – can we have them earlier so the P7s can get wear out of them – agreed this was a good idea and possibly after Christmas.

ASN Update (Alan Crosbie)

The ASN group have met with Mr Friend and will continue to do so on a termly basis.

As a result of the first meeting the whole school will attend a relaxed performance at the Lyceum.

The ASN group are in touch with Paddy Dearlove of Active Schools to see if they can get an ASN specific activity set up within the Portobello cluster.

Development of the nurture room for all children continues.

ICT Update (Trudy McPherson and Gareth Evans)

We've ordered laptops via school. Gareth reviewed current situation at TB. We felt that going through council is best bet. Ordered 33 laptops, not sure when arriving. We were offered stuff from Skyscanner, they've got a cupboard of doom! Stuff in good nick. We felt even if we could get the basic word, up and running it would be good so we have secured 25 or 30 laptops. They do need software put on them and supported. The strategy was to get 3 sets of 33 laptops. For higher up the school. We agreed it would be a test to see if it would work or not. Biggest concern is we have an IT strategy but no financial strategy.

Further funding from parent group is another option.

AF said that we have a technician starting with us half day a month.

Lots of IT parents have offered help to support.

Food Focus Update (Andrea Barlow)

Onyema Ibe and Andrea Barlow, as part of the Food Focus team, alongside the school, have been working with council officers to improve the food offering at Towerbank. One of the last remaining challenges is to move the cooking of food on site rather than having it delivered from the High School every day.

As an interim measure, the cooking of our school lunches is moving to St John's Primary School. This will be better as it is a primary school team cooking for another primary school, rather than a High School team adapting for a primary school. Once Brighton Place is open the food should also have less distance to travel. This is due to happen before Christmas.

Onyema and Andrea, along with Eilidh Jays and Leila Koita (P7 pupils) represented Towerbank at the Education, Children and Families Committee in the City Chambers on 10th December. The Committee was reviewing a report prepared by council officers that proposed a pilot hybrid kitchen system. The pilot will fit the school with enough equipment to cook some food on site while the remainder continues to be cooked at St John's. We are pursuing this model as a full production kitchen is currently too expensive and would take up too much space.

Eilidh and Leila outlined the background to the project and asked the Committee to support the council officers' proposal. The girls were fantastic advocates for the school and made a compelling case. The Committee passed a motion to support the pilot, and to suggest that £50K is budgeted to make this happen next year. Whilst this does guarantee support for the project, it does not guarantee the money. For this to happen, we need to make sure that key political parties apportion this budget in their own proposals. Ol and AB will be pursuing this with Maureen Child and Kate Campbell, who both sit on the Finance Committee.

Through this strategic approach the team continues to make headway with bringing cooking on site. At same time the school are trying out practical changes to make meal-times at school as sociable and successful as possible, for example re-siting waste units, making the salad bar more accessible, and encouraging children to drink more water.

Library Update (Andrea Barlow)

Notes from parentmail with all latest news about library:

Our Author in Residence

The P2s-P7s have been working with the author Mike Nicholson to explore creative writing and illustrations based on 'Our Library by the Sea'.

The residency, funded by the Scottish Library Improvement Fund, has involved three sessions with every class to help promote enjoyment of reading, inspire creative writing and increase confidence in both. In the final session, delivered in the library, the children explored different genres of books in our school library and were encouraged to try new titles.

Jenny Capon, parent and local illustrator, produced a lovely visual minute of the discussion areas and captured the children's ideas.

Time

Time to return all your library books!

Your children have all been enjoying the wonderful books and using this fabulous library space. We now need to do a stock check and so the library team would be grateful if **all** the books are returned by **Wednesday 18 December**

We are really pleased that the school has established a partnership with The Portobello Bookshop and next year we hope to work with them on author visits, a World Book Day project and other events.

For anyone who wants to donate a new book to our school library, the Bookshop has created a list of 100 top titles that we would like for the children.

Anyone who buys a book to give to the library will receive a 10% discount on the price of the book and a specially designed bookplate to add your own message. Just ask the staff at the bookshop about the 'Towerbank 100' and they'll help you out.

Library Lunchtimes

From the beginning of December, the P5-P7s have been using the library at lunchtimes. The slots, staffed by parent volunteers on Tuesdays and Thursdays and school staff on Wednesdays, provide a quiet area for the older pupils to enjoy during the lunch break.

Thanks to staff and volunteers that have helped to make this happen.

So, do remind your children that:

- Tuesday is the P7 lunchtime
- Wednesday is the P6 lunchtime
- Thursdays is the P5 lunchtime

Everyone is welcome along to 'Friday Tidy' sessions in the library - drop in when you can. We are always looking for more volunteers to help out at lunchtime sessions too. Email towerbanklibrary@gmail.com for more information.

Finally - thanks to all of you who donated books for the library!
