

Towerbank Parents Group meeting 26 August 2020

Present: Mr Friend, Joanne Macaulay (chair), Polly Clement (vice-chair), Ali Payne, Jo Wishart, Jo Doherty, Emily Findlay, Lindsay Perth, Lesley Lawrie, Ross Perth, Corrie Fairweather-Mills, Ruth Jays, Lindsay Wright, Deirdre Macleod, Serg Suslenkov, James Lewis, Abbi Hobbs, Cordelia Beattie, Shauna Macdonald, Ellie Lessels, Corinne MorrisonGillies, Daniel Abercrombie, Rebecca Armstrong, Rivka Lim, Zoë Berry, Bridget Campbell, Jo Simpson, Kirsty Gardner, Hayley Gooding, Sarah Surgenor, Pete Sparkes, Kathryn Collier, DHT, Peter Sinka, Marcus Britton, Olivia Furness, Katy Rae Wilson, Lucy Scott-Watson, Morven Wraight, Val & John Hawthorne, Ellen Munro, Kate Gillson, Rachael Sinclair, Sinead Fitzpatrick, Carla Bichan, Ros Hughes, Janet Jones, Heather Williams, Madelaine Sproule, Jennifer Martin, Heidi Proven, Neil Grubb, Joanna Reid, Robert Reid, Andrew Allchorne, Sarah Morrison, Elodie & Cedric Couture, Michelle Luciano, Amy Saunders, Mrs Chad, Mr Rand.

1. Welcome

Joanne Macaulay welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave thanks to Mr Friend and the staff for all they had done to ensure the safe return of pupils to school. She also thanked parents for all their work over the past few months.

Joanne explained that the meeting was specifically to allow Mr Friend to answer questions about the return to school. Mr Friend would answer the questions that had been submitted in advance and then there would be time for additional questions.

2. Headteacher comments

Mr Friend reported that the pupils generally seemed happy to be back at school and had demonstrated remarkable resilience. They didn't want to talk about lockdown, rather get on with learning.

He thanked the leadership team and business manager for all their work towards the smooth return, especially that which was done during the holidays.

While there had been a number of colds going around the school and a significant number of children and those connected to the school being tested for Covid for a range of reasons, there had been no positive cases.

Mr Friend explained that while under 12s do not need to socially distance from each other, the school was restricting mixing between classes to lessen the impact should there be a positive case.

Due to the staggered and extended lunch period and start/end times there is little time that the playground is available for anything else, restricting what can be done. Although the school is back full time, it is very different. There are no assemblies, no music tuition, no singing, no active schools and other activities. The school has to restrict adults so there can be no volunteers which would enable classes to be outside of the school.

Lunch is generally 15mins in the classroom and the rest outside to avoid groups clashing. Pupils have been told to focus on eating the main item in their lunch box in the classroom and they can take additional items outside should they wish.

Should there be a positive test, the school will work with the health board and council to devise a plan. The implications will depend on the circumstances and contact. Should a child become ill in school

with covid symptoms, a room has been set aside for isolation for the pupil, along with a member of staff who would wear a mask, gloves and apron.

Mr Friend emphasised that the key symptoms were a high temperature, new continuous cough and a change in taste and/or smell. As for other illnesses, procedures are as they were before – 48 hours off school for sickness/ diarrhoea. For colds it is up to parents and carers to judge whether a child is well enough to attend.

The changes to pick up and drop off have been implemented. The staggered start times were working well. Unfortunately, the same breadth of times can't be used at pick up due to the combination of the amount of time children need to be in school coupled with staff contracted hours. However, recent changes seem to have helped. Suggestions of older children finding places at the back of the playground to meet parents, or allowing P5/6/7s to walk home themselves could help further.

The School improvement plan this year will be a 'renewal plan'. It will have four strands:

- Core aspects of learning
- Equity & inclusion
- Health & well being
- Equalities – a new strand looking at the curriculum and how the school can respond to the Black Lives Matter movement. A group of parents are helping with this.

3. Additional questions

Mr Friend answered a number of additional questions that were put to him during the meeting:

- Parents would be informed if there was a positive test in the school but not who had tested positive.
- There should be a new member of staff to cover additional support for learning for the upper school. The school can't currently have parent meetings in the school due to restrictions on adults in the school.
- PE – Specialist staff can only teach 2 groups of children per day. This is restricting the availability of PE. According to guidance nothing is allowed in the classrooms that can get the children out of breath (singing, Joe Wicks style exercises etc). Spaces outside the school premises, like the beach, can't be used because this would require additional adults – there are not spare staff and volunteers are not allowed.
- The buddy system cannot be used at the moment due to restrictions on mixing. However, Mrs Collier and Mrs Chad are looking at creative ways to keep it going.
- There are safety concerns around the exit gate. The school is still in the safe streets zone, though there will continue to be allowed traffic and it is worth reminding pupils.
- Shauna Macdonald offered to help Mr Friend find out more about the outdoor stages Edinburgh International Festival were putting up in schools.
- Classroom windows are open at present to enable air circulation. This will be reviewed with changes in weather. For example, some had to be closed slightly on Wednesday due to the rain coming in.
- There are no automatic bells at present. Though occasionally the hand bell is used. Mr Friend is happy to consider this for that start of the day, perhaps involving pupils.
- Every 3-4 weeks the school is fog cleaned.
- The more staff the more things can be done with pupils. Mr Friend is happy for parents to lobby the council on this. The TPG will consider what action.
- P1s and 2s are lining up, the rest of the pupils go straight in.
- Specialist teachers are on rotation and teach a class for 2.5 hours at time. This covers the fact that they can only mix with two classes each day and provides cover for the teacher's non-contact time. As this means that there isn't a weekly time when pupils get PE, and given they

are supposed to come to school wearing PE suitable clothes, Mr Friend agreed to share a timetable to help parents/carers know when PE is.

4. Safe Streets

It was agreed that it would be helpful to remind parents that the school is in a safe streets zone which means that unauthorised cars should not be driving round the school at drop off and pick up. However, it is also important to remind children to be careful and look for traffic at the exit gate as many cars are still allowed to enter (Blue Badge, residents etc), and continue to use the road at these times.

5. Playground at pick up

It was agreed that new measures were beginning to help reduce crowding at pick up but there was perhaps additional measures parents and carers could follow.

Mr Friend said that the school would support parents who wanted P5-7s to walk home from school alone or in groups, or to meet someone half way.

It was also suggested that some of the older pupils could arrange to meet people at pick up at the back of the playground where it is quieter.

Mr Friend said the school would support parents choosing to wear facemasks in the playground at drop off and pick up. As it is an outside space it would not be compulsory and up to each individual.

Date for next meeting: The AGM will be on 22nd September via Zoom.