

Hawthornden Parent Council Meeting
Minutes – 2nd December 2020

Present – Aileen King (Chair), Gracie Ross (Vice Chair), Louise Duncan (Secretary – minutes), Sarah Kelly (Treasurer), Jackie Mellon, Ruth Johnston, Wendy Townsend, James McCutcheon, Marilyn McRobb, Lea Sime, Angela Fletcher

Apologies – Angie Neil, Anne Charleston, Sam Hogg

Headteacher update

Jackie Mellon was recently appointed as acting Head Teacher until June 2020. The parent council congratulated her on her appointment.

Jackie advised that she is excited to start her new role. She described Hawthornden as being in a fragile place just now though she is looking forward to building relationships and working through the difficult time with a dedicated staff group.

It was acknowledged that there were some negative comments relating to the school on social media and how it “must be a hard place to work” in relation to the turnover of head teachers. Jackie encouraged everyone to challenge bad press – noting that it is not helpful or useful. She praised the staff group and general school community, describing Hawthornden as a “great school”.

Jackie acknowledged the behaviour difficulties that have escalated recently and said there would be more focus on inclusion and the PRIDE values.

A couple of new appointments have been made at Learning Assistant level. Stacey Duffy, currently on a temporary contract and on maternity leave, will return to work on 11/01/21 on a permanent contract. Lauren Birrell has been appointed as a temporary learning assistant and will start when her PVG has been processed.

Jackie noted there is some space left in the budget, perhaps for a couple more LAs or a teacher. More discussions to take place with the senior leadership team.

COVID – there has been one class closure and the school is constantly adapting to the changing guidance.

Christmas

Some activities will not be able to go ahead due to COVID rules but a calendar of activities will take place.

Class calendars are ready for printing. We are awaiting a price per unit in order to set prices however we have usually managed to sell for £5 or 3 for £10.

Playground inspection

An unannounced playground inspection recently took place and there are a number of action points to note. The more significant ones were the trim trail and outdoor classroom being declared not fit for purpose due to required maintenance. A timber specialist and maintenance person from the council will visit the school to inspect the structures and advise on next steps.

The parent council agreed that we would view it as important to do what we can to preserve this play equipment to help support positive play at break times – even if this requires some funding from parent council funds.

Jackie also advised that there are discussions ongoing as to ways to make the field better suited to winter weather.

Query re: ASN

Aileen advised that she had received a query from Andrew Sheridan, School Group Manager (Inclusion and Additional Support Needs) that she would like some input on. This relates to all additional support needs both emotional and physical. This has been sent to all parent councils in Midlothian.

1. As a parent council, how would we canvas parents for views

We agreed we would do this via electronic communication methods including email and social media if we were given a list of specific questions. As a group, we felt this was too broad a question to fully answer.

2. What are parent's concerns regarding additional support needs provision and support

Lack of funding, lack of provision space, long waiting lists for external agency support.

3. Have schools noticed an increase in need for additional support needs provision?

Yes, the parent council (parents and staff) recognise there is an increase in need for additional support needs support.

Any other business

None

Date of next meeting – Wednesday 3rd February 2021 at 6.30pm on Zoom