Houston Primary School Parent Council

21 February 22 Chair: Nicki Barret

# In Attendance

Nicki Barrett (Chair), Jennifer Murray (Head Teacher), Amanda Johnstone (Deputy Head), Jillian McPherson (Deputy Head), Laura Masterton (Minutes)

Ann Nimmo, Bernadette Prenelle, Carol Farquhar, James McBeath, Kirsty Fowler, Kirsty Turner, Laura McLeod, Lesley Bain, Louise Hastings, Lorrie, Morven Feely, Nicola McNair, Pradipta Mohanty, Robin Livingston, Sarah Paterson

Apologies: Alexis Alexander, *Susan Flintoff*

# 1. Approval of minutes

The minutes from the November meeting were approved. *Nicki Barrett and Laura Masterton*

# 2. Chairman’s Report

*Given by Nicki Barret*

*Parental Involvement & Engagement Census questionnaire has been sent to parents via text. This is surveying parent involvement in their children’s schools. Nicki would like to see the outcomes of this with regards to the Parent Council and she encouraged parents to fill out the survey.*

*Nicki noted that she doesn’t get much feedback from parents but encourages parents to get in touch if they have anything they would like raised or which the parent council could assist on. She also encouraged parents to get involved in the Parent Council meetings and discuss issues directly.*

*Minutes of Parent Council Forum were emailed out to the Parent Council yesterday and Nicki would encourage everyone to read them. Some of the issues raised were school menus and free meals and the wellbeing survey which had caused some concerns with parents of older children.*

*Susan Flintoff informed Nicki that there are no updates for Book Club as this is still not back up and running.*

# 3. Event Committee Report

*Given by Laura McLeod and Louise Hastings*

**Tea Towels** – These were popular last year. Templates have been delivered and the plan is to start work on these soon to have them ready for after Easter. There will only be one order, no late orders will be taken as this caused issues with the Christmas cards.

**Spring Disco -** The committee are waiting for an update on if this can be run. Mrs Murray has been in touch with Renfrewshire Council and is awaiting a reply.

Nicki asked if this would this open up summer events etc. Mrs Murray thinks the council may remain cautious for unnecessary activities taking place for this reason. They won’t want to ok events and then need to take a step backwards again.

It was noted that the summer BBQ is held outside so hopefully we are heading in the right direction for events in June.

**Christmas Cards** – This was a time-consuming process and late orders and a lot of extra workload so going forward late orders won’t be accepted to help streamline the process.

**Book Fayre** – *Update given by Mrs Johnstone*. The November Book Fayre had huge support and raised over £1800 in commission. This is a great success and is amongst the highest that any of these events make in the UK. This has been amazing for the school and has made it possible to buy new books for the library as well as class novels. We are now planning another for March with some tweaks learning from the last one. Children will get to browse the books during school time, there will then be strict window in which payments can be made online. Books will only be distributed at the end of the fayre and Susan will enlist an army of parents to sort orders after the school day. This was a large undertaking last time with usual issues such as forms with missing names etc so it is expected to take a big effort again. This also offered an exciting event for the children and created a real buzz in the school. It is hoped that other in-school events such as author visits can also be reintroduced soon.

# 4. Uniform Report

Given by Morven Feely and Laura Masterton

Not much to report. We are running regular tracksuit orders one per term.

The tracksuit shorts have arrived however sizing is not as we expected from samples or our existing tracksuit bottoms. It is thought that it would be best for parents to see them in person and for children to try these on. The committee feel if they sell them alongside the tracksuits there will be a lot of sizing issues and returns which would generate to much workload. Instead, parents will be asked to visit the Schoolwear Made Easy shop in Paisley to purchase shorts where they can try them on and decide. The uniform committee will consider if these could be supplied by us once parents have had a chance to try them. **Action Morven Feely and Laura Masterton**

# 5. Treasurer’s Report

*Given by Kirsty Fowler*

As events are still limited there is not a lot to report.

Current balance: £3960.49

Money in: Easy fundraising £88.10

Xmas Card Profit £1551.38

**School Photos** – The commission for this has not been paid into our account. Nicki will follow this up with the photographer as we should have received this. **Action Nicki Barret**

# 6. Head Teachers Report

*Given by Mrs Murray, Mrs* McPherson *& Mrs* Johnstone

***Health and Safety****(Mrs* McPherson) *– In school we have a risk assessment which is updated monthly. Nicola Sturgeon will announce the latest updates tomorrow so things may change again.*

*The main precautions are based around ventilation. Minimum temperature in classrooms is 17 degrees and in gym halls is 13 degrees so ventilation in maintained staying within these ranges. The indoor air is purged every hour by ventilating the rooms and windows are kept open where possible. Periodic access to CO2 monitors is provided by Renfrewshire Council to schools. They came out and checked the working areas and gym areas which all passed. A risk assessment was done for the toilets as these do not all have external windows but a solution of keeping main doors slightly opened was approved.*

*Staff are still wearing masking when moving around the building or approaching another teacher. They can choose whether to wear them in class. Some will opt to wear a face shield in class.*

*Class bubbles no longer a stipulation allowing children to mix within stages again after this was reinstated just before Christmas. This allows year-group assemblies to take place once again and these will restart tomorrow. Teachers and pupils really enjoyed being back in touch in this way before Christmas, so this is a welcome update.*

*New guidance is that Parent Council meetings could take place in school but if these are going well remotely they should be kept online.*

***Reading Resources*** *(Mrs Johnstone) – Funding has been invested developing the reading resources for the middle school stage. The school uses the Oxford Reading Tree resources in early years which work well but were keen to replace the books at around P3, P4 end P2 stage. Children were consulted in small groups and given the chance to look through some Collins Big Cat resources (This is the reading system used it the upper school) Children were encouraged to explore and discuss the books and feedback what they were interested in. Non-fiction was big hit especially if it was a bit gross i.e. books about bacteria. You can check the P3 blog to see more details.* [*http://funinp3.blogspot.com/2022/02/selecting-new-reading-books.html*](http://funinp3.blogspot.com/2022/02/selecting-new-reading-books.html) *An order was made for new Fiction, non-fiction, and poetry literature. There was also money left to replace non-fiction literature at the lower reading bands (P1-3) The books arrived at the end of last week and Mrs White is getting these prepped to go out to library and classes very soon.*

***Health and wellbeing survey*** *(Mrs Murray )This was halted after the questionnaire for older students attracted attention. This has now been given the go ahead to be rolled out in March and will be issues to P5-7. Parents will receive a letter with details and will also be given the option to withdraw the student. The survey should take 20-40 mins depending on the child. The questions have been set by the local authority to find out what children do and what they think. Children can skip any questions they would prefer not to answer. The aim of the questionnaire is to help the local authority to plan spending and services for children in the coming years. The children will log in using their Scottish government number and would only be identified if a safeguarding issue arose.*

*An online survey like this would have taken a lot longer in previous years but we are lucky to have the technology in school to allow more children access to computers at the same time.*

*Any questions from parent? No*

***School Lunches*** *– The uptake at P5 has been significant since P5 have been included in free school meal. P6 & P7 will join free school meals from August.*

*The staff struggle with getting the younger children to eat their meals, and the waste is phenomenal, whole meals can be dumped which is sad to see. Staff try to gently encourage children but often with little success. Parents will be notified if there becomes a pattern of a child eating very little or no lunch.*

*Feedback from children - it’s not quite how mum and dad would make it, or it’s a different type of bread etc*

*It can be a big meal for the younger children, and some might be overwhelmed if they are used to a smaller lunch and not a whole meal. The smaller options such as sandwiches or baked potatoes only appear on the menu occasionally. Ideally Mrs Murray would like to see more of these lighter options. Food is now only delivered the day before it is cooked so there is no capacity to make anything else or offer bread and butter.*

*Older children make more of the meals. They come in hungrier and more up for a hot meal.*

*Sometimes it’s not about the food it’s about whether their friends have already gone out to play. We try to say they can’t leave before a set 15min with the hope that then they might eat a bit more.*

*Mrs Murray is interested to get feedback and would be keen to reinstate parental taster menus again when restrictions allow so parents can come in and try the food.*

*Feedback from parents:*

*Nicki noted that her son in P5 has positive experience and has tried a bigger variety of food since the new menu started.*

*Lesley has daughter in p5 who prefers the new menu. There is more variety than before, and it is good the children can have a hot meal on cold days. Sometimes she said they just get given a yoghurt etc even if she doesn’t want it and the only option to put in bin.*

*Bernadette has a P2 who they encourage to try the school meals, but he does also take a packed lunch some days. She would be interested to know if they aren’t eating their lunch. Parents might not realise kids aren’t eating and she would like that feedback, so you could adjust and have conversation.*

*Mrs Murray and Mrs Johnstone reassured that staff are aware of children who are regularly not eating lunch and parents would have had a call to discuss it.*

*Kirsty F asked is the children were asked for their opinions – Mrs Murray said the council consult children when menus are tweaked but they have not been specifically to HPS to speak with children. Lunches are discussed at assemblies within the school, but this feedback is used to improve the children’s lunch hall experience and elements within school control.*

**Parental Involvement and Engagement Census** – The link to the survey has been sent to parents via text. *Mrs Murray feels the responses may be fairly negative as the past 2 years the school has not been able to give parents the experience they would like or the experience that we did in the past. We have not been at our best, but this has not been a deliberate decision. However, these surveys are there to help the school plan ahead and gauge the appetite our parents have to be involved with school life. The school is always keen to encourage this engagement and for parents to be part of school life so the results will be interesting to help move forward.*

*People also have different ideas of parent engagement. This could range from parents helping with homework, attending school events or being on the parent council and everything in between.*

*It was noted that there wasn’t space to leave comments on the survey, just multiple choice questions, and this can lead to parents giving negative feedback without being able to clarify or give context. The survey is conducted by Renfrewshire Council and it is thought was structured this way so analytics can be worked out quickly and statistics drawn up.*

*Nicki asked if Mrs Murray would receive the results for all schools as it would be good to see how we compare to other schools in Renfrewshire and if there have been similar experiences across the council. The school will receive the results for Houston Primary but council wide.*

*There had not been a big uptake in the survey so far and a reminder text was sent to parents today. Laura said she would also share the link on facebook.* ***Action Laura***

***Book Club*** *We are at a stage where we could reintroduce the Book Club if Mrs Johnstone would like to consider this and contact Susan.*

# AOB

***Communications*** *– A questions had been asked by proxy about communications from the school. The parent was concerned that messages were being missed if people do not check parent pay and wondered if letters home would be reintroduced ?*

*Paper letters won’t be reintroduced however if there was an issue and someone was unable to receive messages via parent pay or text a paper copy could be supplied.*

*Text messaging has a character limit so is being used less in favour of Parent Pay. There is also a cost for sending text messages which can mount up.*

*Parents do have a responsibility to check Parent Pay and Google Classroom for communications, and it was noted that even when letters were sent home in school bags these were not always found or read.*

*Laura noted that email notifications can be set up for parent pay and that she could re-share screenshots of how to do this on Facebook.* ***Action Laura***

*Nicola noted that text alerts can also be set up for Parent Pay but it costs the parent 6p a text so you need to add credit to your account if you want to do this.*

*There was a discussion about other ways to communicate with parents and whether the Parent Council could survey parents as to how they would like communication from the council.*

*Kirsty T asked about “School app for parents” and whether this might be worth considering.*

*Mrs Murray said that the school looked at this app before lockdown but then Parent Pay superseded it and Google Classroom also came into use.*

*It was highlighted that the best way to bring up individual issues was to email the school on houstonenquiries@renfrewshire.gov.uk*

*The Parent Council was a good place to bring up more general issue.*

***Parents in playground*** *– Following on from the discussion at the last meeting will parents be allowed back into the playground for pick up and drop offs?*

*This is being held up by Health and Safety issues. A risk assessment needs to be done looking at the current playground set up since the nursery demolition, and then arrangements can be planned. There are issues surrounding the single gate at front of school which also gives access to the nursery, and which is still awaiting permanent fencing being installed.*

*Part of the old nursery ground has now been tarred and the Pupil Council have been running a consultation with the children about what they would like to do with the remaining space. You can see more information on the Pupil Council Blog including some of the children’s ideas.* [*https://hpspupilcouncil.blogspot.com/2022/02/re-designing-our-playground.html*](https://hpspupilcouncil.blogspot.com/2022/02/re-designing-our-playground.html)

*Mrs Murray is keen to get the space usable for the summer term and to reinstate the grass pitch. Hopefully we will also be able to get parents into the nursery and school again soon. It was noted that some parents have never seen inside the school building.*

*Mrs Murray thanked all the parents and carers for their support.*