Houston Primary School Parent Council

23 May 22 Chair: Nicki Barret

# In Attendance

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

Aileen Shaw, Ann Nimmo, Bernadette Prenelle, Carol Farquhar, James McBeath, Kirsty Turner, Laura McLeod, Lesley Bain, Louise Hastings, Lorraine Wilson, Morven Feely, Nicola McNair, Sarah Paterson

Apologies: Alexis Alexander, Kirsty Fowler

# 1. Approval of minutes

The minutes from the February meeting were approved. Nicki Barrett and Morven Feely

# 2. Chairman’s Report

*Given by Nicki Barret*

This will be the last meeting of the school year. It has been a good term with everything starting up again and everyone is excited for the summer fayre. We are still looking for more helpers. It would be great to have as many volunteers as possible so everyone can have a chance to take part and enjoy some of the night with their kids. This event is not about making money it is more about getting everyone back together and enjoying the school community.

Nicki attended the most recent Parent Council Liaison meeting and will distribute the minutes of these.

Please encourage parents to join the Parent Council Facebook page where we share updates and news about the school community.

Following on from the last meeting Nicki chased up the commission from the school photos which we still hadn’t received. We were given a commission of £1000 which was a bit disappointing. As discussed at the last meeting as of August we will be moving to Tempest photography for school photos.

# 3. Treasurer’s Report

Kirsty Fowler sends her apologies. No update given.

# 4. Event Committee Report

*Given by Laura McLeod and Louise Hastings*

**Summer Fun Night**

Lots of preparation going on in the background for the summer fun night. Order forms for tickets have been sent out. This included a section asking for helpers. We still need about another 12 volunteers to allow everything to run smoothly. Nicki asked Mrs Murray about getting P7 helpers as in previous years. Mrs Murray agreed and will pitch this to the children now they are back from Loch Inch.

The entertainment for the night has been booked; Bouncy castle, photo booth and alpacas. There will also be the usual game stalls and tombola. Children are being asked to bring in donations for the tombola for dress down day on the 1st June.

Mrs Murray highlighted that with the position of the new nursery things will need to be laid out differently than in previous years. The social committee have been working on a layout plan as well as an indoor contingency plan if the weather is bad.

Nicki asked about ticket payment. Tickets are paid in cash. Ellen from the nursery office is helping with this and Kirsty is collecting the cash to deposit in the bank. Nicki is happy to help with tickets.

**Tea Towels**

Tea towels have arrived and have been handed out to the nursery children. The rest of the school should receive theirs by the end of this week.

# 5. Uniform Committee

*Given by Morven Feely and Laura Masterton*

The Summer order has gone out and is now with “Schoolwear Made Easy”. This will be delivered to the school hopefully by the middle on June and Morven and Laura will sort and distribute it. Orders are down this year but it has still been a great response. This could be due to people planning to order online.

Not many children have bought the shorts so far. We have asked SME for an update on numbers but haven’t received this. We are not sure if this is due to having to order directly from SME or down to sizing.

Next year will be Morven’s last year on the uniform committee as her youngest child reaches P7. An appeal was made for any volunteers to join the committee to learn the ropes and join Laura once Morven has left. Bernadette Prenelle offered to join the committee from August.

# 6. Book Club

*Given by Aileen Shaw and Amanda Johnstone*

Lunchtime bookclub has not resumed yet but it is hoped that this will return next year. This relies on parent support to run and it is hoped that there will be a number of parents willing to give their time once things resume.

There are plans to refurbish the school library and designs are underway to remodel the current area. The two book fayres which were held this year raised around £4000 which is a huge amount and this money will be used to stock the library with new reading material. The size of the school means that reading materials are handled by a large volume of children and are continually needing updated so this will be a great boost. Classes will get a time slot each week to go and use the new library space.

The school will also be working towards the Reading Schools Award through the Scottish Book Trust. Teachers used the last in-service day to discuss this. This was received well amongst staff who were keen to identify elements we want to reintroduce as well as new ideas going forward.

Previously the school held author visits, had storytellers, parents coming into class to read books, Skoobmobile. There will be a big push next year around reading for enjoyment and parent involvement.

# 7. Head Teachers Report

*Given by Mrs Murray,*

As we approach the end of term, we are finishing in a much better place with life starting to get back to normal. Some covid precautions remain in place mainly ventilation, CO2 monitors, hand sanitizing and where possible, distancing.

**Health and Safety** – We are still waiting for the new fencing go up around the playground and the flattening and finishing off of the grass area. There is still no date as to when this will be completed.

The fences are essential to create a barrier between the P1 playground from the nursery car park as well as to stop high school children walking around the side of the nursery to cut across Houston Road. This is a big concern especially after the road accident at the end of the Easter holidays.

**Parent Survey** – We received 107 completed surveys and 31 started and didn’t finish. The questions were phrased in terms of “business as usual”, which has not been the case for the past few years, meaning the school were not able to do things to their usual standard. The results are still useful to help understand what parents want. Questions were fairly vague so it would be useful to know what it is that parents would like to see from the school to turn a ‘don’t know’ or ‘disagree’ response to a ‘good’ or ‘strongly agree’.

Areas for improvement have been highlighted and are being incorporated into our school improvement planning which takes place at the end of each year. Parent engagement will be a big focus. Information and homework is currently uploaded to Google Classroom (GC) and photos of the activities going on in school are uploaded to the Class Blogs regularly.

These activities are built into teacher’s time and are used as way to engage with parents, however viewing figures especially on the blogs tend to be low and parents do not seem to be fully engaging with them. We need to explore what parents want and what other ways they would like to engage with the school. The reduction of restrictions and opening up of the school building will also play a huge factor in the ability of parents to engage.

Nicki raised that some people, herself included, are just not good with technology and find GC etc frustrating.

Perhaps the school can work on helping parents get more comfortable with the technology, there are guides available and perhaps more could be produced. Mrs Murray commented that installing the GC app has made usage much simpler for her.

Mrs Johnstone noted that the staff are happy to help anyone struggling with GC and have helped parents in the past. Anyone having issues should get in contact with the school office and help can be provided. Teachers made sure to provide homework jotters so children would have a place to write their work and not just be doing everything online.

She also reminded parents that teachers also add messages and information to the stream section of GC and not just the homework tab. This is something that perhaps we could highlight again to parents.

A discussion took place regarding using an alternative app but it was agreed that a change at this point may cause more confusion and create more work to implement.

These improvement plans are not always something new but can also be a continuation of work from last year. The new approach to spelling which was implemented last year will continue and our new approaches to reading and STEM work will also be put into action.

There have been a number of new staff who have joined the school in the past year and it is important to ensure there is a consistency with teaching methodologies. Mrs Stevenson and Mrs Neilson are currently on secondment coaching on numeracy and SEAL frameworks. They will come into the school and provide training to keep all staff up to date.

Mrs Murray is part of a number of forums and highlighted that HPS are not alone in exploring how to improve engagement and it is impossible to please everyone all the time and people. If parents were being bombarded with information or questionaries they would get fed up. It is also important to have time limits and deadlines to ensure things can move on and be completed.

**Anti-bullying Policy** This forms part of HPS’s wider relationships policy which is up for review after a 3-year period. A questionnaire was sent out to parents via parentpay to ask their experiences and opinions. So far, they are pleased with the responses.

**Summer Term** Last term was very hard with staff absences across whole school not just teachers. Adjustments had to be made to school lunches and other services with staff all pitching in to help. This strain has eased with Covid restrictions relaxing, and we are looking forward to a great Summer Term. Mrs Murray is delighted Loch Inch trip went ahead this year and the children all had an amazing time.

Every class will also get on a trip before the end of June. The biggest challenge in this has been arranging bus travel as the pandemic has caused the closure of some local bus companies and there has been high demand from all the local schools. P2-6 will visit the Glasgow Science Centre and P1 will visit the National Museum of Rural Life

**Health Week** – was a great success. Thanks to Mrs Farquhar for coordinating everything and all her hard work. The teachers held a focus group with the children after the week to get their feedback. They said they has an amazing time and talked about cooking, making fruit pictures doing taste tests etc and not just all the sports they tried out. Some of the comments reminded us that you don’t have to do a lot for it to be a great experience. Many of the children loved getting to visit Crosslee Park where they did relays and races. The children did a circuit using the path behind the school and the hill down to the underpass and again they all had a ball. Health week was all funded through the school but these are some examples of how you don’t have to spend much money to give the kids great experiences.

**Sports Day** is scheduled for Wednesday but forecast is not good. We really want it to go ahead as we are all looking forward to it and we want the school to be back out in the community.

**Summer Fun Night –** The main focus of this year’s event is not about making money but being ‘back out there’ as a school council and part of the community. Mr Murray is delighted at the hard work that is going into organising the night and giving the opportunity for everyone to come back together and have fun.

Thank you to all the parent council members for their support and help over the past few years that even when things weren’t going the best you have had our backs and having your support has meant a great deal.

# AOB

**P.E. Uniform** Nicki – A parent has emailed asking for clarification about school P.E. uniform. Can navy leggings be worn?

Mrs Murray - Navy leggings have always been an acceptable bottom half to the school tracksuit for the girls. Mrs Johnstone has added this information to the uniform information for the P1’s

**Parent Council Committee** Nicki – Has been chair for 9 years and feels its time to pass the baton on and is hoping that someone else would like to take over as chair. Nicki would be more than happy to talk someone through what is involved. The main jobs are chairing the school council meetings once a term, liaising with Mrs Murray and other teachers and attending the Parent Council Liaison meeting.

Nicki will chair the AGM at the start of next term but hopes someone else would like to take over from there. We are also still looking to fill the post of Vice Chair. To ensure we comply with the school council constitution it is important that we fill these roles next term. If anyone would like further information please get in touch with Nicki Barret.