

# Friends of Balmedie School Meeting

18 February 2021 20:00 – 21:00 (Virtual – Microsoft Teams)

Attendance			
Claire Walters	Jill Mitchell	Wendy Harding	Lindsay McKay
Cathy McCullagh (Chair)	Lynne Patterson	Kelly Golightly	Maureen Smith
Ann-Marie Bruce	Rob Ashfield	Gwen Thomson	Hazel Helen Brodie
Theresa Thomson	Kirsten Farquhar	Susan Chalmers	Michelle Smith
Dougie Ford	Patricia Rodrigues	Eileen Cowie	Kelly Buchan
Nicole McAllister	Laura Simpson	Barry Milne	Mandy McRae
Laura Martin	Barry Johnston	Gordon Andrew	Margaret Nicholson
Amanda Russell	Carolle Clements	Becky Keddie	Zara Grant
Carina Eloff	Carla Mylles	Amie Crowder	

Apologies			
No apologies received			

## Agenda

No.	Detail	Owner
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcome</li> <li>Approval of Minutes from meeting from 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020</li> <li>Treasurers Update</li> <li>Fundraising Activity</li> <li>School Report</li> <li>AOB</li> <li>Closing Remarks</li> </ol>	

## Minutes

Item	Detail
01	<p><b>Welcome</b> to all. Thanked everyone for attending.</p> <p>No apologies noted.</p>
02	<p><b>Approval of Minutes from meeting from 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020</b></p> <p>Minutes were summarised by CM and approved with no amendments noted.</p> <p>Actions outstanding from previous Minute:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>P3 representative</li> <li>Constitution Amendments - Amendments to be drafted by Ann-Marie Bruce for approval at the next meeting</li> </ul>
03	<p><b>Treasurers Report</b></p> <p>Accounts prepared by Theresa Thomson. Thanks to Theresa for arranging Christmas Trail Finder</p> <p>Christmas trail fundraiser raised £247.00.</p> <p>Parent Council Fund provided £342.14</p> <p>Closing funds <b>£6,246.90</b></p>

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04	<p><b>Fundraising activity</b></p> <p>Fundraising activities not discussed</p>
05	<p><b>School Report</b></p> <p>Cathy McCullagh (CM) thanked parents for the questions submitted and asked parents to use the hand raise function if they wished to ask further questions of Mr Ford.</p> <p>Dougie Ford (DF) responded to 3 main lines of questioning received:</p> <p><b>Report Cards and Parent Consultations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DF has Headteacher weekly meetings with the Director of Education to share issues or concerns.</li> <li>• A guide for schools around parent consultations was received this week.</li> <li>• DF requires to consult with staff to agree working time agreements now and in term 4 to provide consultation meetings and reports.</li> <li>• The school has been given autonomy as to what this will look like.</li> <li>• DF proposed that an online call will be offered ~5-10 mins plus some form of written report for parent information and which facilitates transition to the next year stage</li> <li>• Direction has been taken from the Local Authority that this is best to take place when children have returned to school ie P1-3 return on Monday and expected return of mid March of more children based on infection rates although recognise there are no guarantees.</li> <li>• DF expects by mid March, if infection rates comes down, to be preparing for other year groups to be returning to school. Based on the review basis of 2 – 3 weeks, when data has been reviewed, potentially there will be only one more phase of returns pre Easter holidays with more children returning after the Easter holidays.</li> <li>• If that is the case, reporting and Parent Consultations are in the plan for term 4 and DF proposes to have consultations early in Term 4 aiming to talk about engagement with online learning, return to school and a shortened report provided in June. DF will take this proposal to staff for discussion over the coming few weeks.</li> <li>• It is challenging for teachers to report on pupils when learning is online. Engagement with online learning across the school is not as high as DF would want it to be although DF recognised demands on parent and working circumstances. DF recognised that families are doing their best and some children are engaging with online learning but that this is increasingly a challenge as online learning continues for an extended period.</li> </ul> <p><b>Return to School</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The School's priority remains the health and wellbeing of children.</li> <li>• Half of the school will have years groups and the other half will accommodate the Hub in coming weeks; this will be a strain on staff with agreement on staffing arrangements only reached today.</li> <li>• Primaries 4-7 Hub will be in the upper stages area of the school (25-35 children expected) plus any additional children of categories 1 &amp; 2 key workers.</li> <li>• The school will keep the ratio of support high with teachers, PSAs and specialist staff in attendance.</li> <li>• Class teachers for primaries 1-3 will be in school 19th Feb to prepare with support staff timetabled to P1-3 to enable max support across all years.</li> <li>• Staff in school numbers remain limited.</li> <li>• No change to risk assessments; self tests are now available to those staff working in the Hub and are being undertaken twice weekly with effect from today</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NHS briefings show Aberdeen city cases at 32/100k and Aberdeenshire at 40/100k which are some of the lowest statistics. Cases are dropping in the city by 40% and by 30% in Aberdeenshire. If this trend continues across the country, DF expects phasing of more groups into school is likely. The R rate has been below 1 in Aberdeen city and Aberdeenshire for a number of weeks.</li> <li>School risk assessments – 2 metre distancing for adults, minimised adults in grounds, only essential staff in school continues – with a relaxed notion of contact in P1 and nursery, although staff keep a distance wherever possible plus hand sanitising continues.</li> <li>The only change to the risk assessment is staff self testing.</li> <li>DF will continue to review scenarios for staff testing positive or a child testing positive. DF recognises that the testing of staff could result in a last minute notification of a positive test to the school.</li> <li>Thanks was noted to Denise Smith for converting the Scottish Government guidelines which enabled the school to implement staff self testing more easily.</li> <li>Scottish Government has provided additional funding to schools – amount unknown – some funding allocated remains unused at present and the school is expecting further funding to be allocated. Potential to utilise for more teaching hours or additional PSA hours. Hours will be used to support children who have missed learning or struggled during this period.</li> <li>Spending has been given to baseline assessment for literacy (reading) and maths. Spelling baseline assessment already exists. The school will use baseline assessments when children return to the school to identify gaps on what was missed during online learning and also what hasn't been retained due to lack of practice. DF is not an advocate of additional homework for 'catch up learning'. Literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing are a priority with the need for happy, engaged, secure children to enable learning rather than additional work for children who may already feel stressed and pressurised due to work missed; DF recognised the need for respite and a need for gradual return to a more comfortable level that children are happy and learning.</li> <li>DF thanked staff for their response in lockdown and their evolution of support based on previous lockdown experience as staff gained in confidence and learned as the situation evolves.</li> <li>DF noted that there is a fair proportion of children who are not involved in online learning to any degree and that the situation has stagnated for many. Children from each year group need kick started back into learning.</li> <li>Transport will resume as normal for Hub and also return to school for Early Years</li> <li>School lunches prepared and back to normal including free school meals P1-3</li> <li>P1-3 in school uninterrupted. All Hub children located in upper stages areas from tomorrow to ensure content and secure with change</li> </ul> <p><b>Dalguise</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school only has guidelines effective until March – these are that trips are not to take place. It is highly unlikely that residential trips can go ahead this school year, dependant on vaccinations.</li> </ul> <p><b>Transition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ellon Academy has shared information with parents; information is expected from BoDA next week.</li> <li>Recognised challenge for P7 parents who may not see children into school until after Easter.</li> <li>Ellon and BODA are working behind scenes to make the situation work</li> <li>Curriculum delivery in Term 4, eg sex education which has been missed, is being considered. Reconfirmed the need to prioritise health and wellbeing. Academy are committed to picking up some areas and may cover this in s1. Primaries and secondaries will work together to pick up what's been missed</li> </ul>

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	<p><b>School Improvement Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SIP is being finalised and updated; previous plan is no longer valid, most is going into covid recovery and online learning. Plan will be released shortly.</li> <li>DF would like feedback from parents about online learning and performance of school to support parents. The support and love from the school community has been immense. DF recognised that sometimes parents felt in the dark. DF wants to embrace and galvanise the positive and also get feedback on what could be improved. DF suggested working with PTA members for year group feedback via an online survey. Will be considered in the current School improvement Plan activity. Information will be shared with the Academy.</li> </ul> <p>DF hopes schools blogs provide as much information as possible.</p> <p><b>Questions</b></p> <p>Forum opened up for questions:</p> <p>Kelly Buchan: queried about provision of sex education acknowledging P7s missed it last year and are now in S1; assumption shouldn't be made that the Academy will pick this up</p> <p>DF: advised there is more chat around transition than there was last year. Academies have advised that this is the intention and this has been specifically discussed. Will agree adjusted curriculum with secondaries in term 4 and will share concerns about P7 last year with Academies. P3s next year are critical year group for the return to school considerations; likely to have had most significant impact on core learning. Recognised impact on all other year groups. Staff are monitoring and tracking progress through online engagement to identify if additional support needed. Large implications on support; grateful for Scottish government funding for additional teaching hours and potentially additional PSA support. Need to consider if the staffing numbers are out there. Will look to ascertain if staff can offer extra days to utilise the money and will consider other Local Authority recommendations. Looking at cluster level solution as well as a school level solution. Will use the money to support the recovery of children's learning.</p> <p>Kelly Buchan: Will children have to repeat learning from time not in school or will they carry on?</p> <p>DF: Teachers will assess and make decisions. Work will be revisited to check stage. Where work is evident they will be pushed on with learning. Logistical challenge to look at the number of learner groups in each class. This will be a challenge for the teachers when children return. Stage partners or class teachers might come together to split the classes into sub groups. This has been done previously on numeracy and literacy. Staff will use time to review and prep. Children won't be issued with assessment after assessment. Recognise that upper stage parents will be impacted by the delay to their children returning to school. Can't predict or expect when children will return.</p> <p>Zara Grant: some curriculum has been missed including mental health; how will support be provided? Will guidelines of groups up to 13 allowed outside be used?</p> <p>DF: follow Local Authority guidelines including support for vulnerable families or children eg visual aid or hearing support. Partnership with social work continues. Active Schools are trying to deliver more remotely. ASV offering online PE and Dynamic Earth are preparing online learning. Library Service is looking to provide Eat Them to Defeat Them campaign online via FB. Remote work for P3 (in class when back) and P4 (online from home). When school fully back, some rules may be relaxed with some clubs and community services reinstated. Unknown if this will be before summer – depends on success of vaccine. Where the school identifies partners remotely, they will work with them eg wellbeing mindset rebooted for after easter holidays when hopefully the full school will be back. Acknowledged some technical issues previously and school has evolved to embrace the new technologies. Consider if PTA forums continue remotely. School will continue to develop scope of</p>

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	<p>using technologies in the future. Could also reduce costs by making learning accessible to a wider group</p> <p>Theresa Thomson: Are nursery hours likely to increase to 1140 hours?</p> <p>DF: ambition to provide 1140 hours as soon as possible. Senior practitioner to be embedded and then recruitment to take place. Loss of one staff member – role being recruited - plus support for staff absence. When fully staffed, will be in a position to provide more hours. Michelle Smith (senior practitioner - nursery) is working on staff availability, recruitment and rotas. On track to achieve 1140 hours but some staffing challenges. After Easter hols, likely to get direction from Early Years team that they can accommodate parents who want 1140 hours. Every school in Aberdeenshire is looking to take this forward as quickly as possible. Positive move with asymptomatic testing plus the vaccination programme; optimistic that can deliver additional hours as soon as possible.</p>
	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>No AOB raised</p>
	<p><b>Closing Remarks</b></p> <p>Mr Ford recognised it is socially and emotionally important for children to return to routine. The first 3-4 weeks will be to get back to routine and back to basics as well as supporting those who need it. DF is digesting all the volumes of information and consolidating it to try to limit the overwhelming amounts of information available. The team are trying to be ahead of the game as much as possible; normally a week behind in the current climate.</p> <p>Cathy McCullagh thanked attendees with extra thanks to Mr Ford and his team for all their hard work.</p>