

Denny high school parent council meeting

Monday 21st February at 7:00 PM ; via zoom

Members present

Mr Andy Webb (Resigning chairperson), Joanne Patterson (newly appointed Chairperson) Alison Arnott, Stuart Thompson, Lesley Garty, Jillian Patton, Lisa McDonald, Jamie Vaughn-sharp (Depute), Mr Paul Dunn (Headteacher), Councilor Blackwood, Councillor Grant, Councilor Garner, Councilor Harris, Councillor Collie, Karen and Chris Procek, Isla Arnott (S6 pupil representative), Kayla Bennie and Alison Reid (school captains)

Apologies: George Arnott (treasurer), Molly MacGregor (school captain)

AW opened the meeting with a welcome greeting and comment that the number of attendees was fantastic. Members introduced themselves to the rest of the group.

First item on the agenda: School Captains

The process of becoming school captain was extensive and rigorous with lots of applicants. All had to create a short video outlining why they should be captain and what they could contribute to the school. From successful videos pupils were then asked to interview with Ms McKell, current school captains and Mr Dunn. They were asked for their insights for the school, what they would bring to the school as captain and personal qualities. As appointed captains biggest task is the communication between staff and pupils due to covid. Been working on the S6 yearbook, prom and they helped with the buddying process for the new S1 giving tours around the school and helping the S1 through their first few weeks. The other main task is fundraising. Wanted to help local charities to try to integrate the school better within the local community. Chosen charity of Homestart received #340.00 following a dress down day before Christmas and they have raised further funds with valentine packages. Following a previous school tradition for valentines day, pupils could buy a package for someone who had been kind to them or for someone who had helped them or for 'their valentine'. It was good because it made students interact with each other. School captain brings a huge responsibility and behavior in and out of school needs to reflect that. The captains try their best to set a good example to the rest of the pupils in school.

Falkirk Council- Budget update

Recent council meeting to set out the budget details for the upcoming financial year. The council need to make savings and many ideas for these savings were discussed or disregarded. Meeting was attended by Mr Dunn and Joanne Patterson (new Chairperson). Robert Naylor outlined some proposed changes for the cuts to education services but these are not finalized until a meeting on 2nd March 2022.

AW worried about cuts to services and the impact they would have on the education of our children.

PD recognizes that the Local authority must make cuts , imposed by government and councillors need to look at all areas of public services. School plan is to look ahead to the next school year, what the pupils will need from their education and how that fits in with proposed cuts. Will need to wait until the final budget in march.

JP- the more dramatic options (leaked onto social media) such as shortening the school day was not going to happen .

AW- council need to make cuts but education services are important. Form class has already been lost as part of budget cuts. Choice and opportunity for pupils in school need to be protected.

Councillor Garner- education and social care are two areas where we strive to protect from cuts at any budget. SNP are in minority so need help from other parties to support budget. SNP been forced to bring their budget forward. SNP wont reduce pupil:teacher ratios. Some measures wont be liked but need to try protect education. Council tax may be a way and falkirk council have had the lowest in Scotland for many years.

Karen and Kris Procek- worried about reduction of services. Have the needs of children been put second to council budget needs.

PD- budget cuts might mean some senior pupils will not be offered the subject courses they want. Staff shortages in more specialist subject areas

Councilor Blackwood- education and social care are his party's priorities too.

AW- Bigger issues are the provision of more education with less funds. There must be ways that services can be provided such as consortia.

PD – stop the taxis and buses taking senior pupiuls around different schools. Deliver the classes remotely via IT. That is the future. The IT teaching skills of staff have greatly improved since covid. This will have an impact and help with some savings

ST- there were already cuts this year for seniors, detrimental to pupils. Every year the school has stepped up and managed the cuts but diluted the syllabus as a result

K&KP- once the council budget is decided when is the school in a position to decide the impact and how will that be communicated to parent council and parents

AW- in the past the budget impact has been communicated to PC and discussed at PC meetings in detail.

PD- further down the school there will probably be bigger practical sets (max 20) and teaching sets (max30). Not ideal but it then means that any changes to services are spread throughout the school and its not just senior pupils that are affected.

COVID19 Update

As of 28th February face coverings in classrooms are no longer mandatory but still in the corridors. Can have larger gatherings which means the return of assemblies albeit on a smaller scale. These should really boost the cohesion of the school and help strengthen/build the sense of community. Large school

events such as remembrance or holocaust day have been sorely missed. First will probably be S6 prom assembly. Going back to one lunchtime may be difficult due to the school role increasing from 1200+ to 1400+. Would be too crowded. Might be that breaks are together but lunch still staggered. The different bells can be unsettling. As headteacher I still make a return of numbers of pupils with covid.

SQA Update

Current plan; exams will be going ahead as previous years however there will be subject modifications and some papers may have a different format. The exams will be in the hall due to large numbers and in classrooms for smaller pupil numbers. Any modifications made will depend on the subject area. Pupils and teachers will have to research each subject separately on SQA website

ST – its important to give pupils the experience of exams in the big hall conditions if going onto further education.

PD school requires invigilators. AA, ST both offered their time for this. Mr Dunn to pass onto Ms McKeown who is overseeing the invigilation process.

Staffing Update

Still covid absences on a daily basis. JVS and PD try to cover as best they can.

MR Dewar physics is leaving for a promoted post. Lots of candidates for the post so PD hopeful to fill the post quickly. History dept are 2 teachers shorts. In negotiations with one potential teacher and possibility of history probationary teacher.

Isla Arnott Pupil's Rep

Exams- there is mixed feeling about them. Hopeful that when the promised help from SQA comes out things will become more settled. With regards to the joint senior/junior lunch breaks and breaks there was an overwhelming view that it would be too squashed and would not be good. Senior pupils , in the main, have expressed that they will continue to wear masks in class when rules are relaxed, juniors may take more advantage of the new rules. Overall the pupils feel there is less disruption and the school has settled down

AW- asked if there were any opportunities for school to offer support to pupils mentally to help them prepare for exams that they have never had to do under the upcoming conditions. What will the school do to deal with real anxiety

PD – there will be assemblies for senior pupils but he wants there to still be a pressure on pupils to work to their best. The school has continued to gather evidence as it did last year as contingency and there will be increased pressure in subjects to continue this until exams. Therefore should anything change pupils have opportunity to succeed. Covid has meant that exams are not the only opportunity with increased reliance on folios and other pieces of classwork also counting towards some qualifications.

AOCB

Parent JP – noticed a lack of boys becoming involved in school life in the senior phase. They do not seem to be interested in positions of responsibility. Son in S3 does not have enough role models to inspire him to try for positions of responsibility.

PD- the school needs role models but it currently does not seem cool for senior boys. The captain teams are deficit of boys. This years senior cohort seem very strong on female side. Maybe the females are too opinionated for the boys. In terms of appointing the leadership team the females interviewed better than the males thus were appointed the majority of roles.

Isla- theres an even split of boys and girls on the yearbook committee. Currently the juniors don't see the seniors which would make it difficult to show role models

Councillor Garner- perhaps get ex head boys to come in and speak to senior phase

PD-males need opportunities as they get further up the school

ST- only S6 are braided up currently following covid. Its evident that there are no S4,S5 prefects

LG – twin boys in senior phase not aware of the opportunity to be a prefect or not getting information about this. Her boys withdrew from STEM due to the overwhelming female numbers after a drive to encourage females to STEM club.

PD- there's far less opportunities for interaction between seniors and juniors. There have been no assemblies and no senior help in S1/S2 as there would have been pre-covid times. Hopeful that the future will bring normal mixing again and see seniors of both genders having a key role in the school.

AW – this is my last meeting as chair. I've been pleased to serve on PC for last 5 years and looks forward to the new chair Joanne Patterson taking over.

PD – thanked AW for all his support. Especially when he was new to the school. Andy has made an immense contribution to the school.

Joanne Patterson to take over from now on.

Next meeting Tuesday 10th May 2022 @19:00 via zoom