

Crieff High School Parent Council

Draft minutes of meeting held on 14 December 2020

Virtual meeting via Zoom 6.30- 8.10pm

Present: John Donnelly (JD) - Headteacher/Campus Leader, Morag Fotheringham (MF) Rooney Kilgannon (RK)- Head Boy,

Cathy Tilbrook (CT) - Chair, Betsy Vielhaber (BV) – Secretary, Alison Ritchie (AR), Gillian Rose, Fiona Perry, Catriona Cunningham, Nina Stenhouse, Emily James, Lucile Black, Sam Walker, Julia

Apologies: Morven Harrower, Billy Russell, Lilly Cannon, Suzanne Harvey.

1. Welcome and apologies

2. Discussion on mobile phone policy & education on social media issues

AR introduced the discussion, suggesting that the growing issues around young people's mobile phone use, technology addiction, social media and fake news are of increasing concern to parents. Many of these are clearly explained in the recent Netflix documentary 'The Social Dilemma' which had been recommended to view before the discussion. Asked whether other parents share these concerns and if so, how we can help mitigate the issues for young people. Opened to group for discussion.

Points raised:

- Agreement that many children are very attached to their phones. Concerns that many phone programmes are designed to be addictive and distracting.
- CHS / PKC policy encouraging pupils to bring devices into class was raised. This puts pressure on parents to provide mobile phones for pupils at an earlier age than many would like.
- It was noted that there is a campaign in the US to prevent children under 14 years having access to phones with internet access.
- Parents noted evidence that many pupils are still accessing phones during class (e.g. communicating with parents).
- Parents felt that they would like to hear from teachers whether phones are useful in class or a distraction from learning.
- Different schools in PKC have different policies (e.g. Bertha Park does not allow phones in class).
- One parent suggested that their child was sometimes allowed to use their phone in class as a 'reward' for finishing work.
- Could consider different policies for younger pupils (S1-3) – less need for device on school?
- Is there a problem with access to laptops etc that requires use of phones?
- Suggested that pupils could watch 'The Social Dilemma' in PSE and discuss issues raised.
- Would be useful to know how other schools are addressing these issues (in Scotland / UK / globally)

MF—confirmed that current mobile phone policy is due to be reviewed. Although devices are sometimes used as a teaching tool, they can also be a distraction. Some teachers ask for phones to be handed in at start of class. PSE curriculum does discuss some of these issues, although there is more focus on online safety etc.

JD said that there has previously been an issue with pupil access in school to laptops etc but that resources are now much better and this shouldn't be an ongoing reason for use of personal devices in class. JD does not want phones to be used in class as a reward or treat. He will address this with staff.

Issues around addiction to devices were discussed, especially over lockdown when isolation added to pressures. What can we do to support young people and provide other experiences for them to help with health and wellbeing. Peer support is important. Some parents commented that the social aspects of gaming may have been helpful in preventing isolation during lockdown, but risks of addiction do need to be taken seriously. There is also a fear of 'missing out' if not constantly engaged in online groups.

MF/JD noted that these issues are discussed in PSE/PSU. Would be useful to have parent input to these points.

Action 1 – Subgroup to be convened to develop proposed actions and input to the new CHS mobile device policy (volunteers - Alison, Nina, Catriona, Sam, Emily, Fiona)

4. Headteacher's report:

See attached report.

Pupil attendance - JD noted that pupil attendance is back up after dipping after 2 cases were identified. CHS attendance has been better than other schools in P&K.

Parent and carer engagement evenings.

School is trying to figure how to manage since in person nights are not possible. Report sets out proposed dates for reports and parent nights. One school is trialling an online system with web-based booking. CHS is hoping to follow this approach, especially for S4-6 pupils.

CT asked how S3/S4 subject choices will be handled since usually this involves a parents evening. CC agreed and said it also impacts S1 decision making.

JD noted that there are currently significant demands on teachers and there is a risk of overload, especially with report writing due next term. But he will take it on board and try to come up with ideas, e.g. virtual meeting for S1 parents on subject choices.

SQA exams – update on decision to cancel all 2021 SQA exams

Although December prelims are progressing as planned, there is no decision yet on whether to go ahead with planned prelims in February. Decision will be taken by departmental staff (may be more useful to focus on other ways to gather evidence for candidates). Some parents commented that it was useful for pupils to gain experience of exam conditions, although others felt that there was likely to be a move (even in Higher Education) away from formal exams. Parents commented that it would be important to understand the timing of assessments that will count towards estimated grades, and ensure that different subjects do not schedule important tests too close to each other so that pupils have sufficient time to prepare. JD committed to provide more information next term, when clearer guidance is available from SQA on evidence requirements.

Action 2 – JD to circulate information on process and schedule for senior pupil assessment and SQA evidence gathering.

Some pupils have had to revert to online learning whilst self-isolating over recent weeks, and there was positive feedback from one parent on how well this had been managed by the school. JD confirmed that, following feedback from lockdown learning survey, in any future complete school closure, the school will move to timetabled live classes for online learning.

5. Discussion on bullying reported in media

CT noted that a parent raised question about article in Courier that listed reported instances of bullying across all schools in Tayside and suggests high levels of reported bullying at CHS. MF responded to this and clarified that CHS has a strong approach to bullying and has focused on encouraging pupils to report any incidents that might constitute bullying (even very low level).

Robust reporting helps guidance staff to track issues so these can be resolved quickly and any trends or patterns quickly addressed with pupils more widely (e.g. through PSE classes). Emerging issues have included use of racist language in some year groups

MF explained that they are planning to develop an anti-bullying policy, involving the Pupil Council, and promote this widely within the school. JD noted that in pupil survey, 39% of pupils agreed that school deals effectively with bullying, which is a large increase on previous responses (many students answer don't know, perhaps as they have not experienced bullying issues).

CT thanked MF and JD for the helpful explanation which may suggest that CHS is fully reporting on bullying issues and perhaps other schools have been under-reporting.

6. Mental health and wellbeing survey

CT explained that this item related to questions raised by a parent at the last meeting in relation to the pupil survey on health and mental wellbeing

MF provided background information on the Shine survey, which has been widely used (by 259 schools in Scotland) to obtain local data on mental health and wellbeing issues so that school can target their pupil support more effectively. There is good evidence that enhancing pupil health leads to enhanced attainment.

Areas covered by the survey included:

wellbeing; strengths and difficulties; school life and future choices; emotional health and support, including loneliness; sleep (links to use of technology and mobile devices). The survey did include 2 questions on self-harm. All questions had a "prefer not to answer" option and the survey (which was optional) was carried out in PSE with guidance support available.

MF confirmed that the data obtained will be used to develop school strategies to support pupil health and wellbeing.

Action 3 - MF to bring a further update to Parent Council meeting when data has been analysed.

7. Head Boy/Head Girl update

RK provided an update:

Following discussion at last meeting, Remembrance Day was marked with a video for all classes, prepared by Prefect Team, which was well received. A talent show was also organised to support House charities. S6 dancers won. Also arranged an art exhibition to allow students to see work. Other fundraising activities planned: Films, baking competition. RK concluded that they have had a good session despite Covid.

CT noted that they have done well and parents love to hear about these activities (and ideally see pictures / video on social media etc)

8. Minutes and actions from last meeting (28/10/20)

Action 1: CC to assist BV in creating and distributing electronic card for teachers so parents can sign. Completed.

Action 2: BR to provide cheque for cost of cakes. Completed.

Action 3: BR to provide cheque as contribution to Breakfast Club. Completed.

Action 4: All parents to complete the annual school evaluation survey. Completed.

Action 5: JD and KT to develop more detailed assessment of curriculum options for discussion at Jan 2021 meeting. In progress.

Action 6: JD to discuss website option 2 decision with LF and both to liaise with GR on next steps. In progress.

Action 7: CT to circulate info on social media topic for parents to prepare for Nov meeting. Completed.

Action 8: BV to investigate potential and costs for masks or snoods with CHS logo or pupil design. Completed. Discussed idea of mask as fund raiser. BV presented costs and samples. Will deliver the samples to Head Boy, Girl and JD to examine. All agreed the students might have best ideas of designs that would sell.

New Action 4 – BV to share samples with school and senior Prefect team to get pupil feedback on potential designs.

New Action 5 - Discuss proposals further at next meeting.

Action 9: JD to invite Morag Fotheringham to next meeting for discussion on wellbeing support and inclusion. Completed on tonight's agenda.

9. Any other Business

None suggested

10. Date of next meeting – Thursday 28 January 2021, 6.30pm

To include – Parent engagement survey results; Assessment of curriculum options, including S1/2 subject choices.