**Firrhill High School - Parent Council 2022**

**AGREED minutes**

**6.45pm 28 February 2022 via Microsoft Teams**

**Present:**

Tim Wallace (Chair), Graham Hamilton (Headteacher), Stuart Barlow (Vice Chair) Jane Williams (Secretary), Cllr Arthur, Ross Isdale (Depute Head) Roxy Nicol, Tracey Brown plus 6 additional Firrhill High parents/ carers

**Apologies**

Cllr Rust, Louise Wilson, Crerar Christie, Jenny Orr (Treasurer), Margaret Hampton,

1. **Welcome, introductions and apologies**

The Chair started the meeting by welcoming all those in attendance particularly Ms Kerr who was there to discuss Rights Respecting Schools Gold Award and Ms Nicol to discuss careers

1. **Approval of minutes**

The minute of the previous meeting Monday 29th November 2021 were approved

1. **Matters arising**

All matters arising were covered by the agenda below.

1. **Community Council**

A representative from Colinton Community Council was due to attend and speak to this item but unfortunately was unable to attend at the last minute. Cllr Arthur advised that the Community Council were keen to engage with young people. It was agreed that this should be taken forward via the School and that the Headteacher was happy to be contacted direct by the community council to discuss.

1. **Rights Respecting School – Gold status**

Ms Kerr updated the Parent Council on the excellent progress that the school was making in relation to retaining their Gold status. They are currently doing lots of work gathering and evaluating evidence to support their renewal and were considering what the next steps were. Ms Kerr was keen to gather views on how to increase parental engagement on this topic. Would a workshop be useful and how effective are existing mechanisms to get information out to parents? e.g. the Equalities newsletter, Twitter account. She encouraged people to get in touch if they had views on this.

Mr Hamilton took the opportunity to thank Ms Kerr for the fantastic job she has done first in obtaining gold status and then making sure that Firrhill retains that status. Gold status is not easy to get there are only 20 schools in Scotland with that status.

1. **Careers update**

Ms Nicol spoke to the Parent Council about her role as the careers liaison officer for Firrhill and Balerno Schools. Her role is to be a link between school and employers. She has organised a number of face to face events with pupils to help ensure that pupils are ready for the world of work and to make sure that all pupils have a positive destination. The aim is to target those pupils who need this support. She is able to organise work placements etc.

She is also working closely with nurture group as well as with younger pupils in the P7 transitions groups so the aim is to work with all ages and all stages. She is always looking for parents and carers who would be willing to come in and speak to pupils so please do get in touch with her if you would be able to do this.

It was agreed that the Business and Enterprise Working group would be a good group to link in with Ms Nicol. This group had previously run a careers fair and Mr Hamilton indicated that the school would be interested in this event running again. He also took the opportunity to highlight some of the great work Ms Nicol and the deputes were doing with pupils who don’t engage as much with schools

The Parent Council thanked Ms Nicol for her very informative update and indicated it was very positive to hear about all the work that was going on in this area.

1. **Chairs update**

The Chair advised that he attended the locality meeting on the 1st Feb which discussed the National Parent Involvement Census, the Wider Achievement Strategy and received an update from the School Estates Manager on the School roll

A general discussion took place on the City Plan 2030 and how the plans for the Firrhill catchment were going to be affected by the fact the Ministry of Defence have now announced that they will not be moving until later than originally planned.

One of the main issues for Firrhill is the lack of social space for the school and the age of the building. The school is full particularly in the lower school and the average room use is very high with 84% of the rooms being used all of the time. Some rooms are used over 90% of the timetable. It is a 60 year old school and the high room use is starting to show.

The Chair also advised that a discussion had taken place on whether a mobile phone policy was necessary for High Schools. The Headteacher confirmed that there was not any major issues with inappropriate mobile phone use at Firrhill and that as long as this continued to be the case that phones were used at the right time and in the right place that a policy was not necessary at this time.

1. **Headteachers update**

Covid-19 Update

The early part of the term proved challenging with higher than normal staff and pupil absences due to covid cases but also the tightened regulations on isolation as a result of the omicron variant. The first day of teaching (Jan 6th) Firrhill had 12 teachers to cover (9 due to covid). The changing of isolation rules reduced the challenge but every week we have averaged one or two staff out due to covid. Pupil absences have fallen but are still running a bit higher than normal for the time of year. Overall attendance is about 91% compared with around 94% pre-covid.

The removal of face-covering requirements from 28 February is generally being viewed as a positive change and the return of assemblies from 1st March will be a big step back towards pre-covid normality. School is awaiting an update on what will change for schools from March 21st .

Staffing Matters

There have been a small number of staffing changes since the last Parent Council meeting. : Departures Ms Masters, our PSO, left us at half-term to relocate to Cornwall. We are interviewing on February 28 for a replacement.

Arrivals Ms Duffield joins us as a new permanent Drama teacher. We have appointed four new permanent staff for August in Mathematics, Physics, Home Economics and English. Interviews are ongoing for other August-start vacancies.

ICT Update

Teaching staff have been issued with their iPads. A wide-ranging programme of professional learning is in place for staff over the next few months to get teachers up to speed before pupil iPads arrive in school after the summer holiday (scheduled between August and October). Our next training afternoon, 18th March, is focused on strategies for teach using the iPads.

SQA 2022

SQA Have decided to follow Scenario 2 for examinations this year. That means that the examination diet will go ahead as planned with the following adjustments:

1. SQA will issue revision materials for pupils to assist them in preparing for examinations in some subjects

2. In many subjects, but not all, SQA will issue a list of the topics being covered in the examination (this will enable pupils to not have to prepare topics that will not be assessed)

3. The SQA will take a more generous approach to grading

4. There will be a revised appeals process this year, post-results SQA has indicated that the additional revision materials and topic information will be published during the week beginning March 7th .

We have not had sight of these materials/information beforehand. There is an indication that SQA will provide revision support for all courses with an exam. Looking at the information SQA has released it appears that where information has already been communicated earlier in the session on what content is to be assessed a study guide will be issued. Where information on assessed content has not been already issued that will be issued from March 7th but it does not appear there will be a study guide published.

The information from SQA heavily implies that grade boundaries will be adjusted to take account of lower-than-expected performance nationally. However, there is no guarantee of this in what SQA have said and you could read it that is results were higher than expected grade boundaries may be set higher. Similar to last year, there will be an appeals system (rather than the pre-covid PRS). We await further information on this but essentially candidates can submit an appeal (if they do worse than their estimate) and the evidence we hold would then be sent in and this would be marked, along with a clerical check of the examination paper, to ascertain the appropriate grade to award. To make the process as transparent as possible we are going to share the evidence that has been used to derive estimate grades so there is no misunderstanding of the estimate being submitted and to avoid any unnecessary debate post-results on whether estimates were appropriate (as that would then relate to a potential appeal).

We are currently consulting staff about the appetite and appropriateness of Easter revision classes for pupils. Depending on that response we will then make arrangements, if required, and communicate those to pupils.

Financial Situation

Although the future seems a little les predictable in terms of budgets and funding the school is currently in a healthy financial situation.

1. **2021 Assessment results**

Mr Hamilton then discussed in depth the Firrhill results from 2021 across National 4s, 5s Highers and Advanced Higher.

Overall, the results were excellent and saw improvements across all the deciles. Firhill results also favoured compared to the “virtual comparator” across all deciles the only exception to this was SIM decile 8 where Firrhill performed slightly less well. Overall the school were very pleased with these results as they are generally outperforming their comparator and that is the toughest group to benchmark with.

A discussion took place on SIM decile 8. Many young people’s whose families are in the army fall within this decile and the school noted that during that year there had been larger than usual % of pupils joining them only recently which may have impacted on this. The school was liaising with the MoD on the impact mobility was having on young peoples’ qualification results.

Cllr Arthur noted the very positive results and the work the school has taken and continues to take in relation to them. It was noted that Firrhill has a very diverse catchment

The Headteacher also advised that the improvements is part of a four year trend and were not just due to the different arrangements for COVID in the last two years.

The Chair asked Mr Hamilton to pass on this thanks to the teachers and staff and said the results were a great credit to the pupils and staff at Firrhill.

1. **Working groups update**

Tim was pleased to advise that the call had gone out for more volunteers and this had resulted in 4 new volunteers for the Health and Wellbeing group, 2 for Business and Enterprise and 2 for Fundraising. The relevant working groups lead will be in touch with the volunteers.

In terms of update for this meeting only the lead for the Fundraising Group was able to attend this meeting.

Fundraising Group

* Stuart updated the meeting that they had provided £3k funding to the school since the last meeting. The majority of that funding was for a pop up sensory room. He was pleased to report that for a relatively small amount of funding he felt they had been fund something special.
* The nurture project was also looking for some funding for a bike project which the Fundraising group were planning to support.
* In terms of fundraising then the plan was to run a school quiz after Easter.
* Mr Hamilton advised that it would be good if the date didn’t clash with any school events so that teachers could attend.
1. Any other business.
* A parent advised that she had attended a locality group for primary school parents with children with Additional Support Needs. She asked is there a representative who attends from the secondary school and is this something the school would be interested in. It was agreed that she would forward the information to Mr Hamilton
1. Date of next meeting : Monday 16th May 2022 6.45pm (Please note:; subsequently date was changed to **Monday 23rd May 6.45pm online)**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be at Firrhill High School in the Library.