

Parent Council Meeting Monday 22nd Feb

- 1) **Welcome** was given, by Neil Skene chair of Inverurie Academy Parent council to everybody in attendance and to Mr Graeme Cowie, Acting Rector as this was his first meeting in post.
- 2) **Introductions** of those present PC Members Neil Skene, Tracey Skene (minutes), Fergus Boyle
Parents V Johnson, A Gault, S Cunningham, S Owen, M Wilson, J Whyte, E Ball, G Carnegie, Staff G Cowie ,L Moggach, P Fraser, K Arthur, D Lynch Councillor Martin Kitt-hayes
Apologies S Strachan, E Watt, S Grant, V Napier, S Tribe, M Stansfield, J Taylor
- 3) **Approval of minutes** of 19th November P Fraser and D Lynch subject to date change of Christmas Concert date to 21 Dec not 21st sept.
- 4) **Matters arising**

Constitution, no comments have been received, Neil will email to contact list and then wider parent forum for approval ACTION Neil Skene

Question regarding large number of teachers moving on/retiring Fiona Cruickshank to still reply if there was an underlying issue.

G Cowie replied staff shortage was perceived to be an issue at parent drop-in evenings but Inverurie Academy is well staffed at present, but there is a general shortage Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire wide with numerous vacancies advertised . Business breakfast No update as yet, but G Cowie replied S3 start work experience Aug/Sept and PC sponsorship money to be used to thank local businesses that support the school. A follow-up business breakfast to thank local employers/organisations for their support could be considered.

YPI £250 is to be given Ms Gollop gave her thanks and Fergus Boyle to be PC representative at presentations on Tuesday 1st March

Email Disclosure – response from SPTC was that it is good practice for all emails to be BCC and IAPC will honour this

5) **Chairs report** Neil represented the Parent Council at the interviews and selection of G Cowie as Acting Rector and in the interviews for Deputy Head Teacher positions.

6) Rectors Report

G Cowie welcomed the opportunity to share some of the success and challenges the school has experienced since joining Inverurie as Acting HT on 7th December.

Pupils

G Cowie expressed how warmly he had been welcomed by pupils. At first, most were quite reserved in manner, reluctant to participate in assemblies and “fine” was the standard response when asked about their learning on his visits to class. Now, learners are much more proactive saying hello in corridors and becoming accustomed to talking about their lessons.

Through assemblies, key values such as honesty, respect and diligence have been emphasised. Themes have included:

“Hard Work Beats Talent When Talent Doesn’t Work Hard”.

“Behind Every Behaviour Is A Need”.

“Teenagers Will Make Mistakes But There Is An Expectation They Must Learn From Them”.

F-A-I-L is an acronym for “First Attempt In Learning”.

Exploring some of the successes, these included:

- Football, Rugby, Swimming, Golfing, Horse riding and Bowling Achievements that pupils had shared with him.
- Performances including Rock Challenge rehearsals, Christmas Concert, Ongoing Musical Competitions and Board Exams, Music and Magic Support for Friday’s Rotary Fundraiser for Floods.
- John Muir and Dance Leadership Awards. Maths Challenge Awards.
- Positive messages from local retailers commenting on behaviour at lunchtime.

Regarding teenagers making mistakes, G Cowie expressed frustration about how the actions of a minority can label young people with a bad name. It is in the school’s interest to promote positive messages. However, he addressed the altercation which led to a number of S3 and S4 boys being excluded from school. He confirmed how rumours and social media make these situations difficult to contain. In order to support all concerned, he alluded to this in his weekly update to reassure the school community this won’t be tolerated but also how supportive parents were in working with the school to discourage this aggressive behaviour. He hopes some positive learning can come from this given the remorse shown by many involved.

Finally regarding pupils, the theme of “good getting in the way of being excellent” has been discussed at assemblies where senior students have been encouraged to reflect on their attainment. The SLT and Guidance have been encouraged to challenge apathy, complacency and a culture of dropping subjects. Generally, learners have been asked to adopt a more focused work ethic but reassured that it is everyone’s responsibility to raise attainment.

Parents

G Cowie commented that it was useful to meet informally with the parent council in December. Also, the Working Time Agreement ensure he was fortunate to meet many parents at the S2, S3 and S4 parents' evenings which had been scheduled after his start date. He had promised to hold drop-ins for different year groups and although this had been delayed due to flooding, some 70 parents attended across all meetings. Furthermore, the Curriculum Information evenings allowed parents to ask questions about the timetabling process. Reflecting on all these meetings and feedback from parents' evenings, similar issues came up on a few occasions:

Communication, Homework, Staffing, Behaviour, Course Choice Forms, Smoking, Good Support From Guidance Staff, Some Praise For New Staff, Timing of Reports, Curriculum Content in S1 and S2.

In all these cases, SLT have managed to offer some feedback and reassurance but all of the parental engagement events have allowed discussion to take place. There was low attendance for the senior curriculum info evening and although it was promoted in G Cowie's update, he conceded a text reminder could have been sent earlier.

G Cowie picked up on staffing specifically. Although there has been a high turnover, there exists a perception that classes can't be covered. We are actually very well staffed considering there is a real shortage across neighbouring authorities.

Generally, G Cowie alluded to how many challenging issues had arisen since December but the level of support from parents even in very sensitive circumstances had made incidents easier to resolve.

Staffing

Continuity, consistency and provision of staffing is a big challenge. While we have some general cover in PE, History and Science a rota system is in place to make sure it is not the same classes effected all the time and that senior certificate classes are least affected.

We have lost two teachers in English but letters are going home to parents to confirm we have specialist teachers who can cover. We still have vacancies in ASL and are reviewing how we manage caseloads and the Hub facility. In PE, we have made an appointment and we will have additionality in the SLT from April.

Congratulations go to Linda Moggach who was promoted to a Faculty Head role. While this is a great personal achievement, she is a valued and respected member of staff who contributed much to the wider ethos of the school and will be difficult to replace.

Wider Community

G Cowie spoke about the forthcoming work experience which will see current S3 pupils placed with local employers after the summer holidays. He tried to promote this in the local press to give employers suitable warning that youngsters may be

approaching them with self-found forms. It was disappointing there was going to be a significant charge for this.

G Cowie made available a report he had prepared for area committee.

Finally, G Cowie thanked Ms Lynch for the work done coordinating volunteers who helped with the rest centre during the flooding. It was welcomed that the First Minister attended to thank volunteers but all are fully aware of the ongoing operation to get back to 'normal'.

Question _ any issues with Advanced Higher music provision when replacing L Moggach?

Probationer in place at moment but securing another probationer might not be desirable as more experience to deliver certificate courses and Music Technology would be best for the Faculty

Question - Given the gaps in teaching at the moment do children need to catch up?

If necessary, Mr Cowie discussed the lesser of two evils being a position where rotas are put in place so it is not the same class that are left without a subject specialist. Furthermore, priority will always be given to senior pupils as they are working towards National Qualifications. Mr Cowie is actively recruiting to ensure vacancies are filled and for example, PE has been filled.

7) New school update Parent council met with Craig Clement and two other council officials, but there wasn't much to report apart from the continuing promise that Stake holder groups will be consulted soon, PC challenged to find relevant groups which should be invited (this item will be standing item on agenda)

Question will meetings be well advertised? Yes the public need to be assured that the new school will be fit for purpose especially as it is a community facility

G Cowie told the meeting that Head of Departments are already holding meetings to discuss their resourcing needs to best deliver the curriculum.

Cllr Kitt-Hayes explained that the funding was guaranteed with an expected start date of 2018 complete 2020, ongoing consultations will affect the final cost.

Scottish government want 3 schools built under the same contract HUB NORTH is the contractor. He explained about the constraints faced by Inverurie Academy and the need for minimum impact on the present school, local community and the size of site. Budget looking at being around £55 million with a swimming pool and lots of work to be done on the design of public and private teaching areas

ACTION MARTIN KITT HAYES AND G COWIE TO ARRANGE MEETING WITH CRAIG CLEMENT AND INTERESTED PARTIES

8)Website /social media feedback it was felt that daily bulletins are very helpful , acting rector reports have been well received, Text alerts welcomed, but there can be a problem with poor mobile coverage in some areas. Facebook to be used as feeding information but not as platform to ask questions or discussions. G Cowie will answer questions from official school website

Parent council links on website P Fraser will check these and alter if necessary to make Neil the point of contact for this, she also gave a reminder to reregister for alerts on council website for snow closure/transport especially if this was done last year and to unregister when child leaves school

G Cowie discussed the flood closure. He assured everyone that where ever possible the School will always try to remain open as we can offer a service and education to non-bus pupils. However, it was quite clear this couldn't happen in January as the school was needed as a rest centre. Text messages and the website were used to keep parents informed as it was quite clear many were facing difficulties with flooding at home too.

Question re show my homework.

It is 95% accurate at present there is a slight problem with s1s2 pse classes , but a Text alert will go out to inform parents of progress with this

9)Treasurer report Howie was not present and had not forwarded on any information.

10) AOCB

Question was received via email – how to engage wider parent forum

It was felt that as there was a good turnout at this meeting and several apologies it suggests we are getting to the PF although more attendees always welcome, email distribution list is increasing gradually.

G Carnegie volunteered to join the PC

School Captains are to be invited along to next meeting

11) Date and time of next meeting Tuesday 24th May at 7pm