

Beeslack Parents Association meeting 15/6/16

Present

John Phillips, John Ryan, Lynn Black, Bernie Gage, Julia Robertson, Bruce Dunlop, Rev I Cathcart, Virginia Nixon + 4 others...?

Apologies

Sarah Keer-Keer, Pam Stewart

Minutes of previous meeting

Approved

Matters Arising

JP reported back on Midlothian Council consult leading to a big change in policy that recognises iphones and tablets as powerful tools, whose productive use should be allowed in schools. One potential problem recognised is those children who don't have access to these. There may be a possibility of the council providing them.

Other issues include how usage should be monitored, pupils using facebook to criticize or be offensive to teachers. Some discussion ensued on the alternatives regarding blocking inappropriate content, education, and sanctions. Midlothian Council have monitoring software. LB recognised that the job of the school is to educate young people in appropriate use, and the need for teachers to be up to speed in order to be able to do so.

LB has been in discussion with Open Reach about width band availability and set-up of Wi-Fi and possible use of Swan network.

4. Question on composite classes

Parents of S5 pupils have been surprised at the number of multi-level classes which can include N4,N5, Higher and Advanced Higher. Of particular concern was for those aiming at Higher, that this arrangement will allow sufficient teaching for the exam as they have only one opportunity to sit it, but also concern for those sitting N5 who may be too intimidated to actively participate in lessons.

JR addressed these concerns and acknowledged that the falling numbers on school role lead to constraints in number of teachers and therefore subjects that can be offered. Re-structuring the senior level to include S4/5/6 has the advantage of allowing free choice of subjects. But in some cases making classes viable for a higher subject may only be possible by combining with N5 teaching - this year's Higher French being an example. While this could be regarded as a compromise, LB and JR pointed out that teaching bi-level classes is not new and that there can be advantages in the overall experience for the young people, and that the teachers are fully committed to providing the required teaching. Improved co-operation with other secondaries is also increasing the possibilities. Using the timetabling

software and offering free choice of subjects allowed all but 6 out of 344 pupils to have their first choice of subjects, and all but 9 out of 104 moving to 3rd year. Further conversations were necessary with those 6 as well as others wanting to re-course or where teachers see that a pupil may not be in the most appropriate class. There continues to be flexibility to adjust choices. This has been a huge change for the school. It is still only week 2 and there is a commitment to make it work for the young people.

Addressing the particular concern about science and Maths classes, JR/LB are confident they will be able to find a solution to providing single level classes in these subjects.

5. School Improvement Plan

LB outlined the evaluation of National Improvement Framework at staff Inset day and Improvement Priorities for 2016/2017, including:

Improve attainment particularly in literacy and numeracy

Formative support for level 5 and level 6 students and low attaining 20% in S4

Assessment of capable learners

Visible learning - Introduce the work of John Haillie

Continue to engage other professionals to help inform classroom practice

Continue programme of class visits with focus on learning and teaching. Develop system for peer observation

Improvement through self-evaluation. Faculties to develop systematic approach to self-evaluation, become confident in use of Insight.

Curriculum planning and curricular pathways

Learning and Teaching focus groups

Interdisciplinary learning, to include employability in 2nd year and one of sessions in S3

Linking professional development to School Improvement Plan, raising attainment.

Developing pupils- enhance the voice of pupil council eg via focus group, questionnaires.

6. Head Teacher's Report

LB advised on staffing updates, recent appointments, posts currently advertised and interviews pending.

Suspended timetable well organised with trips to Malawi, Battlefields, Strasbourg and 130 pupils heading to Alton Towers.

School show Little Shop of Horrors, had gone very well and been well received.

Building:

-Money secured to fix pot-holes, work to be carried out in the summer break

-3G Pitch- tender out, due to be awarded and construction due to be completed in September. Funding coming from Army, Sport Scotland, Penicuik Athletic YFC, school and Midlothian council.

-Water coming in to the building during the recent flood was because the drainage failed and not the recent roof repairs.

7. Timetabling

Covered under item 4

8. Treasurer's Report

Fundraising and Expenditure for this session left the account balance at £500.35

9. AOCB

None

Date of Next Meeting- AGM Monday 12th September