

# Ellon Academy Parent Council Meeting Minutes

**2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020**

All participants again took part virtually due to current Government guidance on social distancing. The attendees were restricted to Senior Leadership Team from the school and the current Committee members.

Attendees: N Topping (Chair), D McCulloch (Vice Chair), K Gray (Previous Chair), A Blanchard (Treasurer), H Wilson (Acting Secretary), P Buchan (Rector),  
T Booth (Depute Head Teacher), F McLachlan (Depute Head Teacher)  
Apologies: P McCabe (Depute Head Teacher), Susan McGill (Business Manager)

## 1. Minutes of the previous meeting

These were posted on the Parent Council Facebook Page on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020. No comments were received on the page or privately to any Committee members regarding corrections. All present were content with the accuracy of these minutes.

## 2. Treasurer's Report

A small step forward – we have managed to access the balance of the Parent Council Bank Account and the bank has facilitated a transfer of £110 from us (Parent Council) to the Ellon Academy account. This money is a contribution towards raw materials required by the Technology faculty to allow them to continue producing much needed PPE (face visors) for our local NHS, carers and other key workers. Specifically, this provided acrylic sheets for use in the creation of face visors.

We wanted to thank and support our very own Technology heroes at this difficult time.

## 3. Rector's Update

### Recruitment

- Mrs Kim Hall (Depute Head Teacher) retires at the end of this term. Mr Niall Corser has been successful at interview and will be full time permanent Depute Head Teacher from August 2020.
- Mr Graeme Cowie, experienced Deputy Head Teacher from Fraserburgh Academy will be joining the team in August 2020, taking over from Mr Peadar McCabe. This is a transfer facilitated by Vincent Docherty, Head of Service. He is an experienced former maths teacher, Principal Teacher and Depute Head.
- Dr J MacPhee will be 0.4 FTE Acting Principal Teacher Science when Dr M Cruickshank (current Principal Teacher of Science) reduces his time to 0.6 FTE.
- Acting Principal Teacher Guidance interviews on Wed 3rd June (Mr N Corser's PTG post – 0.4 FTE job sharing with Ms M Watt 0.6 FTE). Mrs L Donald (PE) has now been appointed to this post.
- Acting Principal Teacher of Equity and Progress (0.2 FTE) interviews on Wed 3rd June, covering Mrs D Dunton's maternity leave. Mr Adam (PE) has been appointed.
- Appointed Mr A Scott as a Technical Teacher
- Mrs L Moir returns to her Technical Teacher post in August following her maternity leave
- New English Teachers have joined the staff – Mrs H Leith, Mrs S Coles and Miss R Craig
- New PE Teachers have joined the staff – Mr J Faulds, Ms H Scott and Mr S Aitken.

- 1 FTE Maths vacancy advertised (Mr Roddy Lees is retiring at the end of this term)
- 1 FTE Drama vacancy advertised
- Allocated Probationer Teachers for the following subjects:
  - Biology
  - Chemistry
  - Drama
  - French
  - Modern Studies
  - Physical Education

#### School Finances

- The Director of Education in Aberdeenshire has mooted that any “carry forward” may be taken back into the centre due to Covid19. This will impact adversely on Ellon Academy as our Business Manager has carefully managed finances with plans for the future in mind.
- It has been communicated that there may not be a supply teacher cover budget for the coming year. This means that the school will need to rely on the teachers it has as it will not be able to bring in additional staff. This may have an impact on staffing capacity for teaching and covering classes where teachers are absent due to illness or self-isolating (as a result of the Test and Protect scheme).

#### Digital Platforms / Online Learning

- TB provided an update on the ongoing production of weekly Lockdown Online Schedule. The aim is to send this out via Xpressions / email to parents/carers at 10am every Friday.
- The school has received some good feedback directly from parents about the usefulness of the learning schedules. A substantial amount of information is shared in these documents and parents are encouraged to discuss these with their children to support them in their home learning and to help them to plan their week of learning.
- There has been a request from a parent that there be a different format available to allow parents to print out specific sections of the timetable (to save printing costs and resources). Both versions will now be available every week on the website on the Parentzone page.
- A number of devices have been loaned to pupils with little or no access to IT. The school is continuing to receive new requests from parents who are encountering problems with pupils not having suitable devices at home or having to share devices with siblings or parents.
- There was an initial shortage of resources available to the school, however, more devices have been sourced and the school is prioritising those in most need.
- Aberdeenshire Council have been approached to provide dongles to support connectivity for some families who were experiencing difficulties.
- One of our new English teachers is a certified Google Classroom trainer and she has been very helpful in producing a video and PowerPoint to support teachers who were new to this platform. It is hoped that she will be able to produce some similar resources to help pupils and parents for whom this platform is equally new.
- Google Guardian- this is an add-on to Google Classroom and allows parents to receive notifications relating to assignments and work which is set for pupils. It also allows teachers to communicate with parents to provide progress updates. A substantial amount of work is involved in introducing this as it requires all parent and carer email addresses to

be uploaded and this in turn requires all parents and carers to be contacted and asked for their specific permission for their details to be held on an additional platform (GDPR). Current permissions only allow the school to store these details on Seemis.

- A mini pilot is currently underway in the school using one member of staff who is also a parent of a child in school. It is hoped that this will identify whether the resource may be useful.
- Glow Meet - Following feedback from parents and teachers, Aberdeenshire Council is lobbying the Scottish Government to allow schools to use the full functionality of Glow Meet which allows teachers to communicate in real time with groups of pupils to provide interactive and face to face online classes. It is only authorised for use one way at the moment but it does have the option to allow two-way video filming. The school does not use this feature yet but it is hoped that teachers will use this to improve the learning experiences of our young people.
- The school has received feedback that pupils are finding it difficult to navigate some of the learning materials themselves. Glow Meet will hopefully allow pupils to access more easily teacher explanation/ feedback which will help with their understanding.
- There is an update and IT meeting this week with Paul Cruickshank who has been working for a number of years now on the digital educational offerings available in Aberdeenshire.
- Risk Assessments are required for this activity and these are being progressed through Education Scotland.
- There is going to be a video conference for all Aberdeenshire Schools exploring the use of Google Meet and Microsoft Teams.
- Paul Cruickshank, former DHT (Ellon) and now an Education Officer for Aberdeenshire Council has also been working on the Bring Your Own Device project. This has been discussed a number of times in our Parent Council meetings and involves allowing pupils to bring their own registered devices from home and allowing them access through the school wifi when we are allowed back in the school buildings. There will be further updates provided to parents as this progresses.
- Graeme Slapp (Technology Development Manager for Aberdeenshire Council has been working on 360 safe and BYOD too and will report progress shortly.

#### Memorial for Harvey Western (4C2)

- All families have been sent an email with details of an initial memorial for Harvey on Sunday 7th June at 7pm to help in supporting his family, one another and to remember Harvey.
- Parents are reminded that support is available through Guidance and Pupil Support Teams.

#### SQA Estimates Update

- All estimates were submitted to the SQA before the deadline on Friday.
- The process is now all driven by the SQA and pupils can expect results in the normal way on 4<sup>th</sup> August.
- Pupils are encouraged to sign up to MySQA, the text and/or email service which allows them to find out their results earlier on Results Day.
- The school expects to hear more from the SQA about the Results Service (Appeals) later this week. This will be different for this year because of the new method of assigning grades.

- The school is now working on resulting entries for pupils sitting National 4/SCQF level 4 (or below) qualifications or pupils entered for standalone units, for whom it was deemed appropriate, at National 5 level or above.
- Pupils and parents will be made aware by letter before the end of term if any candidate will not be awarded their unit or award. This is deemed fair as these pupils would be made aware of this information in a normal year in person and as this is not possible this year, a letter appears a suitable alternative.
- The SQA have stated that no pupil should be disadvantaged by the Covid 19 situation.
- The school must however have evidence of a pupil attaining the required standards and the pupil must have been on track in their school work.
- Clear advice has been provided by Aberdeenshire Council to help teachers to decide if there is sufficient evidence for pupils to pass these units.
- This advice is quite technical but it is being considered how this can be shared with parents if they wish further information.

#### Timetable Change

- The timetable changed virtually on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June.
- All pupils should now be allocated to Google Classrooms.
- Usually there will be some changes at this time of the year when pupils receive timetables, but this year pupils have simply been assigned their Google Classrooms based on their requests from their choices forms earlier in the year.
- Actual Timetables will not be provided to most pupils.
- A small number of pupils have received these as it was decided by Guidance that this was an adjustment which was suitable for them this year.
- Given the hard work going on around planning for the return to school, it is obvious that most pupils will be provided with new timetables as they return on a part time basis in August.
- This is a very complex process given the advice received recently from the Scottish Government.

#### **4. Covid 19 Update**

Many questions have been received by the Parent Council from parents via the Facebook page, by email and through conversations. These questions are listed below with the answers provided by the school:

##### Home-schooling

#### **A. How will those with ASN will be supported both on the return to school and with distance learning as it seems this will be continued in part after the summer holiday?**

**So for example:**

- **access to PSA support**
- **access to support technology eg laptops and will these continue to be shared (cross contamination)This is particularly in relation to in school learning as we are aware laptops are being sourced to support home learning for those, with or without ASN, who don't have access to a laptop at home.**
- **IEP reviews and implementation**
- **MAAPM reviews and implementation**
- Pupils with additional support needs are being well supported by the school at the moment.

- The school is considering the range of plans needed to ensure our pupils who have additional support needs are supported through their transition back to school. It is recognised that the school will look very different from the school they attended before lockdown and this may cause particular challenges.
- It is recognised that some of these pupils will need specific and substantial support to adjust to the requirements of social distancing.
- The school's enhanced provision hub has very positive relationships with families and pupils and these relationships are continuing through lockdown.
- The transition for some pupils may start at a different time and look different for some pupils as we strive to meet their needs.
- Some of our pupils may be remaining at home initially as they are required to shield. These pupils will continue to be offered particular support as they continue to work from home.
- Mel Wilson and her team are working very hard to maintain contact with these pupils.
- There are of course limits to what can be provided at this time. Parents are thanked for their patience and understanding.
- On return to school, each child's needs shall be considered to assist them.
- Laptops and other devices have been provided to a number of pupils already.
- Please engage directly with Mrs M Wilson, Principal Teacher Additional Support Needs and her team if you have specific concerns about your child's ASN needs.

**B. With blended learning for some time to come, can there be continuity/balance from departments in terms of the volume of work set - suggest 1-2hrs max per week per subject (1 or 2 tasks/assignments on google classroom? Some tasks posted are taking hours & when more than 1 assignment is posted that subject is dominating the week. It becomes simply unmanageable. A number of parents have reported difficulties with overwhelming workloads.**

- The school does not wish to be too prescriptive with requiring pupils to work at certain times as they recognise that every family situation is different.
- Pupils should do what they can.
- Each pupil will take a different amount of time for each piece of work.
- Please feedback to individual teachers if the tasks are taking a very long time. This homeworking is new to us all and teachers may need feedback to help them set the right levels of work.

**C. Some parents are encouraging pupils to work for a certain time on each subject rather than completion of all tasks set. The reasoning for this is that some pupils find that some subject tasks are taking a very long time to complete e.g. English. One parent reported their child spent three days on one subject.**

- Again – the school does not wish to be too prescriptive. Pupils should do what they can.
- It is up to individual families and children to work out what works for them at this difficult time.
- If you have particular concerns about one subject, please contact the teacher or your child's guidance teacher. Some individual teachers may be experiencing technical, home responsibility or health issues and this may affect the work set.

**D. Parents are reporting that home learning is taking much longer than the tasks would at school. Challenges around motivation, understanding, explanations not always being**

**easily understood, insufficient underpinning knowledge (or forgotten) , access to support, confidence levels of individual children etc.**

- The school understands that each family at Ellon Academy will have a unique set of circumstances. This may affect an individual child's ability to engage with certain tasks. Further guidance and support will be provided shortly to families where the school have identified that a particular child is not engaging with school work.
- Letters will be emailed to families to offer this additional support.
- Please contact the subject teacher or guidance teacher if you have specific concerns.

**E. Technology difficulties reported by a number of parents. Both home based difficulties and connection based. Sometimes not possible to access certain sites e.g. scholar (through GLOW).**

- TB will investigate to identify if there can be more specific support offered through the school.
- It is acknowledged that this is a very new situation for parents, pupils and teachers.
- There are many different devices being used, a variety of operating systems and a huge variation of technical ability for all three groups. Furthermore, we have all been thrown into this situation at very short notice. We understand that there will be challenges for everyone.
- Scholar has opened up all their courses to all. There is usually only feedback accessible if you are signed up to the subject.
- The school has not been informed of any connectivity problems by Scholar.
- There were some initial difficulties around access to Google Classroom.
- Any teacher can reset passwords for GLOW (and many have been doing this regularly since the school buildings closed).
- The school is hoping to streamline technology support to assist parents. Further information will be provided when this is available, if this is possible.

**F. Some children are attempting to work independently. Some parents have been shocked when they have checked up that their children have not completed some (or many tasks). Many parents were not aware of the failed hand-ins.**

- Please refer to the section earlier in the minutes discussing Digital Platforms
- The school is hopeful that the add-on Google Guardian will help parents to be notified of both impending and expired deadlines for school work.
- The school understands that this process is new to all and there will be times when work is not submitted for many different reasons. Pupils are being given the opportunity to learn to manage their work through this experience.
- The school is also currently compiling a list of pupils who are not engaging in specific subjects or school work more generally. Families will be contacted shortly to primarily offer help and support if this is required at this difficult time.

**G. Why is there a blanket ban on video teaching in Aberdeenshire? Other councils are offering this. Even the primary schools in Aberdeenshire are using seesaw to provide videos of teachers to help to stop the loneliness of home learning. No direct, real time contact with teachers.**

- Please refer to the section above on Digital Platforms.
- PB confirmed that there has been guidance received from Aberdeenshire Council that they cannot use platforms such as Zoom and Skype due to child protection concerns.
- As noted above, Aberdeenshire Council is currently lobbying the Scottish Government to allow them to use Glow Meet to facilitate face to face teaching sessions for pupils at home.
- The timescales suggested for this were two weeks.
- The school wants to offer more interactive learning to pupils as it is recognised that this would make the work much more accessible and provide the much needed social interactions which are currently missing from school work.
- There are challenges however regarding teacher training – some teachers are much further down the ICT skills path than others – but training/support will be provided to build confidence.

**H. Parents who are working full time either at home or at work cannot be full time teachers too. A number of parents are struggling to provide the support their children need to engage with online learning.**

- Parents are not expected to be teachers.
- All the materials the pupils need should be provided by the school.
- If you have specific concerns, please contact your child's Guidance Teacher.
- The school appreciates feedback at this time as this distance learning situation is new for all of us. It is essential you contact the school if you have concerns.

**I. Some pupils are not engaging in school education. Even with guidance being aware, there is still no engagement and increasing push back by teenagers. General guidance would be appreciated. Ideas. Parenting is very lonely at the moment.**

- The school appreciates that the last ten weeks have been particularly challenging for some families and individual children.
- At first, the priority had to be the Health emergency. The school has been gathering information from across the faculties about engagement from pupils at all stages in the school. Guidance teachers have already been very busy contacting individual parents where we are aware there may be specific difficulties and our Pupils Support and Community, Learning and Development teams (Graham Wilson etc) have been engaging with individuals.
- There will be letters being sent out by email shortly where the school has identified that there may be issues offering more support.
- Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have specific concerns about your child.

**J. Relationships are stretched- some to breaking point. Restrictions of privileges may have been an option before but not now. Genuine concerns for welfare and education. More interaction from teachers is really needed- not just nagging from parents. Different voices are essential. Other schools appear able to interact more with pupils.**

- As referred to in answers above, the school does understand that these are very difficult times.
- The school is working with Aberdeenshire Council for technology based solutions to assist parents in providing more "voices" for children to listen to through Google Meet.

- The school is also hoping to be able to use Google Guardian to notify parents of work deadlines so that parents can engage from a point of knowledge with their children to support their learning.
  - If you and your child need specific and individual support, please do not hesitate to contact your child's guidance teacher. There is a variety of support available.
- K. It would be good to have a clear indication to parents and pupils of time expectations now that the new timetable is in place and pupils are no longer "consolidating" their learning. Peterhead Academy say there is an expectation of 4 hours per day for an S4 pupil in order to cover the work set for 6 National 5 subjects.**
- The school does not want to be prescriptive about time taken for individual pupils.
- L. Perth and Kinross Council (using a quick questionnaire on social media) have put out a wide parental consultation regarding week on/week off versus 2/3 days every week. It would be good (and easy) to gauge general parental thoughts regarding how blended learning would work best for them.**
- The school will be engaging with Parents about the Return, Restore and Reset programme.
  - It was suggested by a Committee member that a survey could be run by either the Parent Council or the school to gather opinions on specific questions.
- M. Will pupils be receiving a copy of their timetable? Some appear to have received this- and many not. It may assist some pupils to organise their learning at home.**
- Pupils should now have been allocated their Google Classrooms for the year ahead.
  - Please check with your child that they are able to access these for all subjects they were expecting to be studying this year.
  - Individual timetables will not be provided to pupils at this stage as it is now known that pupils will not be returning to school full time and thus new timetables will need to be produced to facilitate social distancing for the foreseeable future.
  - A small number of timetables were issued by Guidance where the specific needs of pupils suggested that these would be helpful.
  - The school suggests that parents discuss the work set for individual subjects with their children. This information is currently published at around 10am every Friday for the following week to assist parents and pupils to plan their learning. For some subjects, your child may need to check emails, google classrooms or teams.
  - If you have any questions about the work set, please contact your child's teacher or guidance teacher (or encourage your child to do this)
- N. With staff splitting time to in school & online working what provision is being made to ensure that staff do not have extra workload burden?**
- It is hoped that National Resources from Education Scotland will be provided to assist all schools in providing concurrent school and home learning.
  - It is expected that the school work will be presentations and teaching and the work at home will be work that can be completed by pupils at home with minimal assistance.
  - Principal Teachers in each Faculty have been carefully planning to facilitate concurrent home and school learning.
  - Appropriate online materials are being sourced to assist pupils at home.



## Return of Pupils in August

### **A . Will pupils definitely be returning on the 11th August? Will there be Inset days?**

**Also- East Renfrewshire schools are returning some of their transition pupils on a rota basis from 15th June. Will our transition pupils be attending for transition days?**

- There has been discussion throughout Scotland following the First Minister's announcement about pupils returning to school in Scotland from 11<sup>th</sup> August.
- There has been some confusion across the country about the actual return dates for both teachers and pupils.
- It has now been confirmed that Ellon Academy pupils will be returning to school on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> August 2020.
- Monday 10<sup>th</sup> will be a holiday. Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> August will be an inset day which will be used to ensure that teachers and the building are ready to welcome pupils back to school.
- Primary 7 parents will receive further letters to keep them informed of what is happening.
- It is hoped that some form of transition events will still take place in July but the school is not in a place to provide any details as yet. This is a very fluid situation and pupil, parent and teacher safety is paramount.

### **B. Will there be any change to the start of the school holidays as a result of them going back a week early?**

- This is a national decision and we have not been informed of any changes yet. This is not a simple decision as there are a number of legal requirements regarding days of education provided and the holiday entitlements for teachers.
- We will inform you of the details as soon as we are informed ourselves.

### **C. Concerns about social distancing and hand hygiene on return to school. Differentiation made between primary pupils having hand washing as part of their routine pre-lockdown, and this being left entirely up to secondary pupils to complete by themselves (and thus it did not happen).**

- Considerable guidance has been issued to schools.
- There is advice included on hygiene and specifically on hand washing.
- It is likely that there will be more supervision of pupils on return to school and measures will be put in place to ensure appropriate levels of hand washing.
- The school is working on both a risk assessment and what they will do to mitigate risks on the return to the school building.
- It is suggested that all pupils bring their own "tool kit" for school when they return in August. Pupils will not be able to borrow items from friends or teachers, and therefore it will be essential that they arrive at school prepared to participate fully in lessons. Any family with financial difficulties will be able to approach the school for assistance with these items.
- Tool kit requirements will be communicated in due course, but it is expected to include such items as tissues, pens, pencil, ruler, eraser, sharpener, colouring pens / pencils, sanitiser gel etc.

### **D. How will school transport work? (social distancing/staggered start times)**

- School transport is being considered centrally by Woodhill House staff.
- Maxine Booth (Quality Improvement Officer) is working on this.
- This is a very complex issue and social distancing will be expected - impacting on numbers of pupils who can travel on each bus.
- A reduced service is expected due to the complex issues faced in ensuring the safety of all.
- Taxis will also be affected as pupils will not be able to share taxis due to social distancing.
- It is understood that a number of the bus drivers may be shielding or have underlying conditions.
- There may be staggered start and end times to school but this is all part of the huge project and planning going on to facilitate children returning to school.
- Further information will be passed on to you as we receive it.

**E. How will distance and school learning be split (half week/alternate weeks). Who will provide the resources? What subjects will be taught this way? Have any timescales been provided for how long this blended learning will be in place?**

- At this time, the school has not been provided with any timescales of how long the blended learning will take place for. This will be dependent on National and Council Guidance.
- Part days are unlikely as this would not work for school transport and would require further cleaning in between cohorts.
- The school is currently being divided into learning zones to assist with planning. There will be restrictions on how many rooms pupils may visit in one day and which other pupils they will come into contact with. The school day will look very different for both pupils and teachers, but the aim is to keep everyone as safe as possible.
- Aberdeenshire Council have suggested that the school will not have a supply teacher budget next year so the school must ensure that the pupils who are expected to attend school can be safely supervised by the numbers of adults in the school building – as you may imagine, this is very challenging given the unknowns of this.
- The school is working on how many pupils will be able to attend school each day. The school may contact parents to gain an understanding of which families will be intending to send their children back to school. They are aware that there will be many different family situations and health and wellbeing is the priority at this time for all of us.
- A scoping exercise is being completed by Susan McGill and the janitors this week to work out how many pupils can safely be taught in each room in the school. This is complex as in practical subjects various aspects must be considered (PE, Home Economics, Art, Technical Workshops, Music rooms etc.)
- At this time, it is expected that most rooms may be suitable for 8-9 pupils (possibly 10). This will not be possible in most rooms. Furniture will be rearranged in each room to keep pupils and teachers at the appropriate distance from one another.
- Pupils movement around the school is likely to be very much restricted – possibly to individual rooms or individual floors for year groups for each day to restrict cross contamination of facilities.
- The school is looking to make use of all entrances and exits to assist with social distancing.
- One way systems will be in place with signage and floor markings.

- Senior pupils timetabling will be more complex as the year groups mix more due to the timetabling of particular exam classes.
- A parent mentioned the Glasgow model of Monday, Tuesday in school for one group of pupils, Wednesday being a deep clean day, then Thursday Friday for the other cohort.
- The Senior Leadership Team is confident in the abilities of the school cleaning team to be able to clean appropriately each day (and throughout the day) to hopefully allow groups of pupils to be in school being taught over the five days to maximise the face to face contact for individual pupils.
- No set model has been decided upon yet but this has been whittled down to 2 working models.
- Susan McGill has had success with the Council in arranging the fixing of the school sinks and “birdie baths” which were broken before shutdown. This will assist with the expected emphasis on handwashing when pupils return to school.

#### **F. Will lunches run as normal? (menu/times)**

- At this time, it is expected that pupils will not be allowed to exit the building at lunch times (except in a controlled manner under supervision of a teacher or other adult).
- To be clear, pupils will not be allowed to exit the school to buy their lunch in Ellon.
- Very limited catering facilities will be available; primarily for those who are entitled to free school dinners.
- They will most likely receive a “packed lunch” type of meal.
- Pupils will be encouraged to bring a packed lunch from home which will be consumed in a classroom with the group of pupils who had been working together directly before lunch.
- Hands will be washed before and after lunches as per the guidance. Again, this will be supervised by staff.
- This is because it would be impossible to provide school catering within the guidance provided by the Scottish Government at this time.
- It is not yet clear whether the timings of lunches will be affected / staggered.

#### **G. Travel to school.**

**Will guidance/support be given to pupils who walk to school?- particularly transition pupils who will walk alone ie social distancing conduct / ability to report others who do not follow social distancing rules on the various routes to school (bridge/narrow river path etc)?**

- The school will be in contact with parents and pupils closer to the time when they return with guidance.
- As has always been the case, your child’s journey to school and their welfare on this route is your responsibility as a parent.
- It will be expected that you discuss your child’s route to school with them and you make sure that they understand their responsibilities on this journey – particularly around social distancing and respect towards others.
- You and your child may wish to alter your child’s route or method of travelling to school as a result of this conversation. This is your decision.
- If it is brought to the attention of the school that there are issues on the way to school, relevant parents will be informed of any inappropriate alleged behaviour as happened previously.

- It is vitally important at this time that we all take responsibility for our own behaviour and children should be aware of this.

**H. If lunches were to go ahead (appreciate this may be impossible to social distance) are pupils to remain on campus? How will pupils be encouraged to stay on campus? How will this be supervised?**

- Please see full answer above on lunches.
- Pupils will be required to stay on campus and will be supervised by members of staff.

**I. Will hand sanitiser be available in all rooms given limited access via social distance rules to sinks & perhaps the need to eat their break in rooms to ensure social distancing?**

- Foot operated hand sanitiser units have been ordered for each exit / entrance.
- It is recommended that each child brings their own mini bottle of hand sanitiser with them for use during school.
- It will be essential that each pupil brings these to school every day.
- Sharing bottles of hand sanitiser is not recommended as there is often a need to touch shared surfaces to use these.
- It is not financially viable to provide foot operated sanitisers for every room.
- If individual pupils have difficulties in sourcing or affording individual bottles, provision will be made by the school but pupils are encouraged to bring their own supply each day to reduce contact with other pupils.

**J. Should changing rooms need to be closed? (can't social distance or leave clothes etc in them) will there be a relaxation on uniform to allow for social distanced PE?**

- The Senior Leadership Team have not yet made decisions about PE provision. This will be included in the general plans which are still being discussed.
- At this stage, the Senior Leadership Team will be encouraging the wearing of appropriate school uniform.
- Possible temporary changing of uniform requirements was discussed at the meeting as it was pointed out that items such as blazers, formal trousers and ties are not easily laundered and there may be parents who are keen to wash all clothes much more regularly than normal given the current pandemic.
- The school will ensure that they update parents before the end of term with their final decision once advice is taken on this topic.

**K. Practical subjects will be greatly hit with limited practicals able to take place - due to cleaning/use of equipment etc (based on current info but subject to change) what provisions are being made to enable pupils to gain the national qualifications in these subjects?**

- Professional School Groups exist for each SQA course subject and these are gathering concerns and issues across Scotland. It is expected that Guidance will be provided at a National level in relation to what can or cannot be done for each subject.
- There may be alterations to the subject syllabus; particularly in light of the fact that every state school pupil in Scotland will be facing a substantial amount of time using the blended learning model.
- The Senior Leadership Team are currently gathering feedback from all Faculties on specific requirements to ensure all matters are considered. For example, this includes considering how many pupils can be accommodated in Science laboratories, how to

facilitate paintbrush cleaning in art, and how equipment can be cleaned between uses in music and business.

- It may be that the material examined (if there are exams) will be cut to 50%, 60%, 70% or 80% of the current material. This information must come from the examination body (the SQA) – we await guidance.
- Every school in Scotland is in a similar position in gathering information and waiting for further guidance.

**L. How will the use of toilets be managed to ensure social distancing & cleaning between pupil use? Particularly given the suggestions that toilets may be a place where cross infection may be most likely.**

- The sinks which were broken before lockdown are being fixed.
- It is being considered that every second toilet may be blocked off.
- The hand dryers may be switched off and paper towels supplied to prevent the air (and anything in it) being circulated.
- Supervision requirements are being considered.
- It is being suggested that cleaners may be in the building during the school day to provide additional cleaning.
- We are lucky at Ellon Academy with our new building which is relatively easy to clean and our toilets are generally in a very good condition.
- Many aspects of this are still being considered.

**M. Will the children be in social bubbles at break and lunchtimes? As well as in class groups? Will they simply go home for lunch if doing a half day?**

- At this point, the plan is that pupils need to have their movements restricted around the school building .
- Secondary schools are different from primary schools because of the number of subject specialists they have contact with and the amount of contact they would usually have with many others in a school day.
- This provides a much bigger challenge to ensure that these schools meet the Government recommendations for social distancing etc.
- As a result, it is expected that pupils will spend break and lunch times with the class they were in immediately before break and lunch and they will consume any snacks and lunches in these classrooms while under supervision of school staff.
- There will be visits to the toilets to wash hands both before and after break and lunches.
- There may be supervised visits in this group outside, but social distancing will need to be ensured and the journey to and from the classroom must also be considered. For example, if the pupils are on the top floor, they will all need to proceed in a safe way down the stairs and outside via an appropriate door without encountering other groups.

National Strategies / Resources

**A. How does the school intend to use the National Guidance to inform how schools will return?**

- The Scottish Government have produced National Guidance to assist schools in planning the specific return for their establishment.
- The link for the guidance is here:  
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-re-opening-schools-guide/>
- There is also advice published by the Scottish Government relating to the Scientific basis for the advice to schools:  
<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-and-analysis/2020/05/coronavirus-covid-19-schools-early-learning-and-childcare-settings---scientific-evidence/documents/coronavirus-covid-19-scientific-evidence-on-schools-early-learning-and-childcare-settings-26-may-2020/coronavirus-covid-19-scientific-evidence-on-schools-early-learning-and-childcare-settings-26-may-2020/govscot%3Adocument/Scientific%2BEvidence%2BSchools%2Band%2BELC.pdf>
- The Senior Leadership Team has started to consider the many aspects covered and will engage with parents when it is appropriate to do so. It is a very long document and many of the topics impact on one another.

**B. Will there be National resources provided for online work when blended learning is introduced in August?**

- It is hoped that Education Scotland will provide resources to assist teachers across Scotland to support pupils as they embark on the new blended learning model of teaching.
- The school has received no details of these yet.

**C. What is being done at a National Level to support schools?**

- Work is ongoing to ensure that Google Meet (Video conferencing facility through Glow) can be rolled out safely across Scotland

Senior Pupils

**A. How is it possible that courses will be fully delivered in time for next year's exam diet given that in school teaching provision is limited & online learning/access will be limited for some pupils?**

- TB has been attending SQA Co-ordinators Meetings including Rob Fraser from the SQA.
- It is understood that the SQA is aware that with the new blended learning model in Scotland, it may be impossible to deliver the entire syllabus for every subject in time of the exam diet next year.
- John Swinney has not yet been able to confirm that exams will definitely go ahead next year due to the changing picture in Scotland.
- Professional School Groups (representing each exam subject) have compiled concerns and issues to be fed back to the SQA.
- The SQA are currently concentrating on moderating and processing the exam results for this year's senior pupils. This is a huge job.
- It is expected that there will be some alterations to the courses this year and teachers are pushing for this information as soon as possible so that they know what they should be teaching.
- There may be reductions in the material required to be taught.

- Time in school will provide some experience of using appropriate equipment in practical classes
- Teachers are also being encouraged to keep close notes on attainment throughout the year in case pupils are assessed in a similar way to the process this year. They will therefore be collecting lots of evidence throughout the year. This in itself will be additional workload for teachers.

**B. Some senior pupils are feeling under a lot of pressure to submit work but are not feeling that they are receiving sufficient support / teaching. It is not enough to simply receive a PowerPoint or set of instructions. Some parents are finding that there need to access separate resources to support their children. Some parents don't feel able to support their children in this way and are worried that their children are falling behind.**

- Parents are not expected to be teachers.
- The school does not wish to be prescriptive in relation to how long individual pupils should spend on each subject and pupils should simply do what they can.
- If individual pupils are concerned that they are falling behind, they can contact individual teachers or guidance staff who will seek to support them further.
- Parents can also contact Guidance teachers if they want to check anything or request additional support for pupils.

**C. Sixth years and their parents are feeling cut off from the school. There have been requests from parents that there is some form of recognition of their time at school.**

- The school is discussing a planned event for those leaving Ellon Academy this year to mark the end of their time at the school. More details to follow.
- A virtual Prizegiving event is being planned
- PB said that a Parent has volunteered to organise an additional hoodie order for those that wish. The school will need to approve any additional wording for these as in normal practice as they have the school name on them.

Primary 7 Transition Pupils

- Second letter for primary 7 parents went out to Headteachers today
- Parents will receive communication from the Academy via their young person's primary school. All communication from the Academy is circulated to in zone and out of zone primary schools on agreed dates.
- There is a video provided on the Transition page referencing appropriate uniform.
- The class lists for new pupils will be shared on Friday (pupils are very keen to find out which classes they will be in).
- Each letter being sent has a Facebook link (which can be accessed even if parents are not on Facebook).
- Enhanced transition letters will be sent out week beginning 8<sup>th</sup> June and these meetings will take place week beginning 22<sup>nd</sup> June. These meetings are for pupils who have been identified by their primary schools as requiring this support. These meetings will include – parent, pupil, P7 teacher, Principal Teacher of Guidance, Teacher and when appropriate, Graham Wilson (Pupil Support Worker) or Tom Richardson (Support for Learning Teacher). The meeting will be chaired by either Fraser McLachlan (Deputy Head Teacher) or Mel Wilson (Principal Teacher of Additional Support Needs). Due to the current restrictions

these meetings are planned to be virtual. It may be possible to run these as socially distanced in person meetings, but this decision will be made closer to the time.

- It is recognised that anxiety amongst primary seven parents will be heightened as the plans for first year are very different this year.
- The school is working very hard to keep communications channels open
- There is a possibility of an event in late July in the school involving small groups of parents having a tour.
- The school is taking advice from the school Educational Psychologist (Gail McDonald) to assist with the plans.

## **5. Communication**

- Communication continues to be vitally important.
- PB is providing weekly updates every Friday to ensure parents are aware of changes.
- Guidance continue to be very busy responding to requests from parents and contacting those who have been identified as requiring additional support at this time.

## **6. AOCB**

### **What is happening with the money paid towards the Prom?**

- Once pupils have officially left school (31<sup>st</sup> May), it is not possible for such a school event to take place.
- The Prom has therefore understandably been cancelled.
- The decision by the Prom Committee is to donate these monies to a charity and the Prom Committee is currently seeking suggestions for appropriate charities to support.
- There is usually a surplus of monies raised by the Prom Committee and this is usually donated to a charity.
- Neil Corsar (DHT) is in touch with the Prom Committee to support them at this time.

### **What else is the School doing to prepare for the return in August?**

- The ventilation system has been problematic in the school since it opened.
- Work is being completed on this to ensure that the school is a safe place for all to work in.
- The Local Authority will be providing all signage and floor markings so that it will be clear what to do when pupils enter the school buildings.
- There will be an "Infection Control Room" to manage any pupils or teachers who exhibit symptoms of Covid 19 during the school day.
- Full PPE will be provided for the staff employed to manage these rooms.

### **What will happen if parents make the decision that due to family circumstances, their child cannot return to school immediately in August (grandparents living in the house, shielding parents etc.)?**

- There is a Seemis Code for Covid Related parental choice absence. This means that pupils will not be disadvantaged by not returning from an attendance perspective.
- The school wants to work closely with parents to ensure each young person is supported during this difficult time.

### **Should Parent Council Meetings be opened up to more parents?**



- This is a really difficult question as we would normally welcome any parent who wishes to attend.
- The practicalities of allowing many other parents to attend and take part in these meetings are simply prohibitive with our technology at this time.
- Parents are encouraged to contact the Parent Council (through the Parent Council Facebook Page or email) to ask questions if they are likely to be of interest to the wider parent group. These will be passed on to the school leadership team and we will minute answers.
- If parents have questions specific to their child, they are encouraged to communicate directly with the school via Guidance staff.

#### **Should Parent Council Meet once more or twice more before the end of term?**

- It was acknowledged that PC meetings are taking a significant amount of time for the Senior Leadership Team, but it is useful for all and allows parents to ask questions and for information to be communicated to the Parent Forum.
- The Senior Leadership Team was thanked for their time and efforts in answering the many questions parents have at this exceptional time.
- The Parent Council will meet twice more this term – 16<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> June.
- Questions will be submitted in advance to the Senior Leadership Team to assist in best use of our time and full answers.

#### **Next Parent Council Meeting**

- Next meeting date: 16<sup>th</sup> June 2020