

**Grove Parent Council**  
**Ordinary meeting minutes**

Virtual meeting, Tuesday 17 November 2020, 7:00 pm to 8:40 pm

**Attendance**

- |                              |                                       |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Kulsam Ali                | 12. George Gilvear                    |
| 2. Stephen Bain, Treasurer   | 13. Graham Hutton, Head               |
| 3. Lynn Barry                | 14. Tara Javed, Chairperson           |
| 4. Clare Biggans             | 15. Clare Jefferson, Clerk            |
| 5. John Blicharski           | 16. Fiona McLaughlin                  |
| 6. Shady Botros              | 17. Selu Mdlalose, Deputy Chairperson |
| 7. Jim Cochrane              | 18. Doreen Phillips                   |
| 8. Andy Creamer, Deputy Head | 19. Anna Robb, Chair of BFCC          |
| 9. Andrew Fraser             | 20. Derek Scott, Councillor           |
| 10. Karen French             | 21. Danny Steel                       |
| 11. Jennifer Gallagher       | 22. Hannah Steel                      |

**Item 1 Welcome**

1. Tara Javed, chair of the Grove Parent Council, chaired the meeting. She welcomed everyone and made specific mention of two guests. The first was Anna Robb, chair of the Broughty Ferry Community Council. The second was Lynn Barry in her capacity as both a Grove parent and in her new role involved with Parent Council as a Business Support Officer, Children and Families Service.

2. Tara provided an overview of the role of the parent council. The Parent Council is a group that is selected to work on behalf of all parents/carers on educational matters that are of importance to all. The Parent Council does not get involved in individual matters relating to pupils, families or school staff.

The Parent Council acts to:

- Support the school in its work with pupils
- Represent the views of all parents and carers
- Encourage links between the school, parents, carers, pupils and the wider community.
- Work in partnership with the school on many issues
- Provide a voice for parents in schools and within the council on issues that are important to them
- Improve the school's understanding of how to engage parents

As a Parent Council:

- We will use the skills, knowledge and experience that parents can offer
- We get involved in the recruitment process
- We get involved in school inspection process and members will be invited to meet with a member of the inspection team.

The Parent Council is designed to be flexible and to ensure that we represent our own school community and interests. It is important to remember that everyone's contribution is important and we work as a team. We respect each other's point of view.

When meetings take place virtually, within our homes, we need to be aware that some of us may not have a separate room to go into for the meeting and that some participants maybe sitting around family with children that could overhear.

If you feel that you have to raise an individual issue that is bothering you or your children, share your concerns directly with the school as a first point of contact. If you strongly feel that you have to raise it with the Parent Council then feel free to email the Parent Council and we will be in touch.

## **Item 2 Apologies**

- |                             |                    |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Louise Abercrombie       | 5. Ewen Jenkin     |
| 2. Elaine Dawson            | 6. Deepa Narayanan |
| 3. Craig Duncan, Councillor | 7. Hong Zhang      |
| 4. Elaine Hodge             |                    |

## **Item 3 Approval of the previous minutes**

The minutes from the previous PC meeting of 22 September 2020 were adopted without changes: proposed: Stephen Bain; seconded: John Blicharski.

## **Item 4 Matters arising from previous minutes**

**1. Wi-fi in Grove Academy:** After the last meeting, Councillor Derek Scott followed up on the wi-fi issue and received a detailed response from Corporate IT. In summary, the wi-fi was not operating in some areas of the school and Corporate IT worked on this with the manufacturer of the routers as there were some technical issues with the new hardware that they need their help to resolve.

Andy Creamer reported back on the current progress on wi-fi. For a number of weeks, it looked like the issue was resolved. However, at the weekend the manufacturer did an upgrade and the wi-fi problems resumed. Colin Hastie (from Corporate IT) was able to sort out the problem. Now that he is aware of the nature of the problem, going forward, emerging issue should be quickly resolved and all signs are that the wi-fi system is on track. The wi-fi issue is linked to there being two types of routers in use and there will be ongoing discussion with the manufacturer.

The wi-fi issue also relates to the options for hosting alternative parent evenings such as virtual or telephone discussions. Graham provided feedback on this issue in his report.

**2. Duke of Edinburgh.** There are two staff members leading the Duke of Edinburgh Award at Grove (Ashley Williams and Pam Maclean). Pupils will be invited to register in the spring as there are no winter expeditions. Those pupils that are currently registered are encouraged to keep progressing on the other three aspects of the award in the meantime. Grove Academy hope to have additional staff members support the DoE team at Grove.

## **Item 5 Correspondence/meeting attended**

**1. Pupil Parking and Safety Meeting, 28 October 2020.** Jim Cochrane sent an email to Wendy Cringle, the Secondary School Representative, to draw her attention to two on going parking and safety issues at Grove Academy. These are as follows:

- **Bus stop results in pupil overspill onto the road:** The positioning of the two bus stops on Claypotts Road outside the school are in very dangerous and

hazardous spots. The pupils congregate at the stops and spill onto the road. The railings outside the main gate does not help matters. Pupils trying to get past are require to move onto the road to get past pupils waiting on the buses.

- **Car park at the start and end of the day:** We need to find some way of stopping parents driving into the school car parks to pick up their children. These cars block the main route into the school for emergency vehicles if there was to be an issue. This issue happened very recently (in early October) at 8.45 when the fire alarm was set off. Parents had filled the access to the front of the school. They also block Claypotts Road outside the school dropping off their children, causing major traffic holdups. This issue has been raised with the community police but we have not had much feedback.

In the discussion, Graham explained that this was a long-standing cause for concern. Limiting access to the car park while keeping parents out, could make it cumbersome for deliveries. If an access barrier is installed, there are questions about who would monitor and control access. Graham would prefer pupils walk to school to gain the health benefits, and recommends that if parents need to drop pupils, to use Albert Road or Deepdale Road.

Tara outlined that peak congestion times were at the start and end of the day. Shady explained that barriers can have access codes to allow access which can frequently be changed, or remotely operated. Graham felt that at this time the Grove budget was too tight to consider a barrier. Jim will follow this issue and continue to highlight it with the Council via the Pupil Parking and Safety Meeting.

2. Tara reported back on the **Citywide Parent Council Meeting** held on 3 November 2020 at 18:00. In attendance were the chairpersons of the various parent councils at a city-wide level and representatives of Children and Families Service. Key points mentioned in this meeting were as follows:

- Dundee's Children and Families Service are engaging with SQA at early stages to see how they can support the moderation of the exams.
- There was a discussion on the SQA with concerns raised about what would happen to children that have to self-isolate. At present no one had an answer. However, it was mentioned that may mark this down as medical or mitigating circumstances as but no decision has yet been made. Children and Families Service will send an updated briefing as soon as the decision is made but it was felt that whatever is decided it will be fair for the all pupils.
- There was an update on Covid 19. All adults and pupils in S4 to S6 are to wear masks in both the classroom and corridors. Secondary schools can decide for themselves if they want to make masks compulsory for pupils S1-S3. There was lots of discussion in various schools about masks. A number of schools decided for the junior pupils (S1-S3) to wear them as well. This additional measure has been supported in schools. The usual medical reasons for not wearing still stand.
- At the school gates and in grounds of school adults should also wear masks where they are unable to maintain the two meters distance between persons.
- Dundee schools will remain open in all tier levels. All students to attend school unless self-isolating or close contacts.
- Dundee City Council work closely with Public Health and they have a good working relationship with them.
- In the first week back in October there were more Covid cases in schools since in August. This could be due to the break with people going away on holiday or mingling

in out of school clubs etc. The incidence of Covid in the schools across the city has quietened down now.

- There was no transmission in school in Dundee with all transmissions from outside community.
- If a Covid case does not relate to school then the information will not be shared by the school i.e., although a child is at the school but has to either self-isolate due to symptoms on holiday etc, or close contact from outside school and have not been in school, then their information will not be shared with the school community.
- It should be noted that information about Covid cases in the community is often shared on social media. So, you may see something shared on social media relating to the school. Dundee Council is guided by Public Health about close contacts.
- Concerns were raised with university students attending schools. The Council is working very closely with the universities to minimise risk in order to keep staff and pupil safe.
- If at any time we cannot maintain fulltime school and move to blended learning at least the extra laptops have been ordered. A shortage of laptops was identified across all Local Authorities.

3. There has been a request from a university research student where they would like the participation of P6 to S2 children on the subject of Dundee dialect. The project is entitled *Wha kens best? Exploring children's dialect biased social learning* and lead by researcher Rachel Moreno, Dr Lara Wood, and Dr Neil Kirk. Clare will circulate the link to parents.

4. Anna Robb, chair of the Broughty Ferry Community Council (BFCC), attended the meeting to foster closer working relations with the Grove Parent Council. Anna explained how she came to attend the meeting. At the most recent BFCC there were some concerns raised in relation to lunchtimes and the business of Brook Street at that time. In the meeting, Councillor Derek Scott and Doreen Phillips updated them on the efforts that staff at Grove Academy were making to address this, which is much appreciated. The BFCC hope to strengthening the relationship between the school and the community council.

A discussion was held around pupils in the Ferry at lunch time. Many parents contributed to the discussion. Graham thanked Anna for her support. He explained that he had been to classes and virtual assemblies where he has explained to pupils how to behave in school and in the community, to wear face covering and respect the community especially the elderly. Within Grove Academy, pupils do not need to socially distance due to the bubble system. There is a staggered lunch time so only half the school go to the Ferry at a time. Hot meals are now available in Grove. Graham has frequently gone down to the Ferry at lunch to advise pupils. Tara felt extremely complex situation and hopes that by working together we can make the Ferry safer for all.

5. The Grove Parent Council received a letter from Paul Clancey (17 Nov 2020) to inform us that the report will be released 18 Nov 2020 on the school learning estate formal consultation; specifically the closure of Braeview Academy and Craigie High School and the re-delineation of existing school catchments to form a new single catchment area for a new joint secondary school/community learning campus from August 2024; and the expansion of the catchment area for Grove Academy from August 2024 to embrace the current Craigiebarns Primary School catchment area.

## **Item 6 Report by Rector, Graham Hutton**

Graham Hutton, Rector of Grove Academy, presented his report on achievements, events, future events and staffing since the last meeting in September 2020. The main items discussed are as follows:

- The return to school following the holidays has gone very well. There is great compliance from young people.
- Within the school building, windows and doors need to remain open to allow for the free flow of air.
- Hoodies (navy or black) are temporarily permitted to keep pupils warm as are coats as long as they do not impede learning.
- All pupils from S1 to S6 are required to wear facemasks which makes enforcement easier as there is no need to distinguish between year groups. Medical exemptions are permissible. Universal face coverings also protect staff. There is almost perfect compliance in wearing face masks. On a daily basis, about 30 of 1300 pupils require the school to provide masks.
- Graham provided background to the decision making on wearing masks. He said that he consulted with pupil representatives, staff union reps and the parent council. All were in favour of universal face covering from S1-S3. He said the decision was made at the Grove level, as Dundee City Council gave each school the choice.
- The roll out of the Grab a Hot Snack started up this week. This may take some pressure off the Ferry as pupils will be able to get meals in the school.
- Within Grove, staff have to start 2 meters away from pupils and each other.
- To date, Grove has had five positive cases of Covid (including one member of staff).
- A positive Covid case results in a great deal of work for staff. For instance, when a S6 pupil was diagnosed, Graham had to make 19 phone calls on the Saturday night; 5 phone calls on the Sunday and a further 13 calls on the Monday to inform about self-isolation.
- The use of rigid seating plans is useful to know where pupils sit and which pupils sit in near proximity. These seating plans assist when contact tracing.
- The PE department is now permitted to do lessons indoors but the pool and fitness suite is still off limits. PE will remain outdoors for as long as weather permitting. Graham commended the PE department for their outstanding work during this time.
- There will be no National 5 exams. Instead there will be professional judgment with three pieces of evidence per subject. There is a working group looking at the detail. Probably there will be three assessment periods of a fortnight, which will be scheduled to allow the submission of scores by early August.
- There is a working group looking at Highers and Advanced Highers. At this stage, these exams and their prelims seem to be going ahead.

There were a number of questions and responses. The main points were as follows:

- The first assessment period will fall in December and Mrs Barbour is working on the dates for these.
- Parents feel that the information on the SQA site is difficult to read.
- The weight given to the results of each assessment period (Nat 5) will not necessarily be balanced. This is best demonstrated by the music department where performances are delayed due to Covid so the assessment will be end-loaded.

## **Achievements and Events**

Due to Covid, many of the regular activities are restricted. However, these are the main achievement and events that have taken place since the last meeting:

- The three school captains are appointed: Morgan, James and Rachel.
- Ross Alexander beat Finlay Hazelwood at the Ballumbie Golf
- Ryan Arnott received his cap for representing Scotland School Boys against Northern Ireland and Australia at U18 level.
- Four Sports Ambassadors were appointed
- Two former pupils and two current pupils represented Grove Academy as a case study for the OECD review of the Curriculum for Excellence
- The Modern Studies Department held the mock courts.
- The Art and Design Department ran an Autumn design competition
- Remembrance Day ceremony was held outside using the old cross memorial.
- The Tracking Reports have been issued to various year groups.

There is not planned parent contact evening due to Covid restrictions. However, the council is looking at software to permit a virtual face-to-face consultation. This will need to be approved as suitable by the union reps to ensure that it compatible with the working time agreements. In the interim, any parent with concerns should contact their child's guidance teacher in the first instance.

There is a working group looking at recovery post-lockdown. One of the interesting findings is that the S3 curriculum with the reduced subject is working well, but recommend seven subjects for S4 (to widen the curriculum and provide pupils with more choice).

### **Future activities**

There are few future activities except for the classroom door decorating competition for Christmas.

### **Staffing**

Graham provided an overview of the current staffing at Grove Academy. Andy undertook an audit of 'spare' capacity. Currently there are only 52 spare periods which amounts to two staff per period as in-house capacity. Staff have done extremely well in difficult circumstances and thanks are extended to all. There are 3 new staff recruited.

Graham thanked Andy for stepping in over the last year filling in as Head on 2 days per week. Graham concluded his year as President of School Leaders Scotland and he will return to a full-time capacity.

### **Item 7 Covid measures, particularly any issues around masks and also the heating/ventilation of the school during the winter months**

Graham provided an update how the heating and ventilation works during the winter months. There needs to be free flowing air to reduce the chances of Covid infection. Heating in the school can be uneven. Work was carried out last winter to try remedy the school heating.

### **Item 8 Rationale and process for deciding to extend the wearing of face masks to S1-3**

This item was dealt with under Graham's report.

### **Item 9 Any Other Current Business**

**Should the PC retain the Grove Facebook page? Does it detract interaction by parents/carers on the official Grove departmental twitter accounts?** A discussion on whether it is useful for the Parent Council to have a Facebook page (which was started 5 March 2015, and I have maintained since then). It was felt that to some extent the Facebook page detracts from the various official departmental twitter accounts and it takes a lot of time to administer especially the DMs which are often hard to resolve since they are individual issues and it can lead to confusion as there is duplicate messaging. In the lead up to the next Parent Council meeting we will wind down the use of the Facebook account to inform users that they need to migrate to twitter / use twitter to stay informed (as well as the website, school app, school text, bag drops), and then probably at the end of January delete the Grove PC twitter page. However, the final decision on whether to delete the account will be made at that meeting.

#### **Item 10 Items for the next meeting**

Items for the next meeting include:

- Wifi
- Facebook
- Parking

#### **Item 11 Dates of next meeting**

For the 2020/21 session, these are the proposed dates of the Parent Council meetings:

Tuesday 26 January 2021

Tuesday 23 March 2021

Tuesday 1 June 2021