



Leith Walk Primary School

Parent Council Meeting

Minutes

6.30pm Monday 24th September 2018

Present: Claire Ritchie (Chair), Rachel Guatelli (Vice-Chair), Maria Gowans (Acting Head Teacher) , Arran Finlay (Senior Education Officer, Edinburgh Council), Susan Dunn (DHT), Murdo MacLeod (Technical Operations Manager, Edinburgh Council), Alana Rowland (Acting Principal Teacher), Robbie Crockatt (Acting School Estate Planning Manager, Edinburgh Council), Katrina Walker (Secretary), Kaz Bauer, Dominika Gadowski, StJohn Bird, Vicky Konieczny, Adam Burgess, Annette Megaughin-Helder, Andrew Megaughin, Sharmin, Alessandro D'altilia, Shona MacColl-Mooney, Karen Hartnup, Laragh Quinney, Christina Hinds, Julie Duran (late arrival), Diane Douglas (late arrival)

Apologies: Will Walker (Treasurer), Marion Donaldson (Councillor), Roy Spiers, Jennifer McNamara
(Apologies if some names are misspelled or missing from the list.)

Actions are in **red**.

Head Teacher's Report

(Arran Finlay, Maria Gowans with Robbie Crockatt and Murdo Macleod)

It was acknowledged that there has been significant change since the last meeting with Maria Gowans arrival as Acting Head at Leith Walk Primary and that as a process is being followed, no discussion can be had about that change until the process is complete. Maria is here to take the school forward and the team are grateful for the support that has been received so far from parents and carers and help and support going forward would be really welcomed.

One of the points to have come out of the last meeting was the wish to look at how we use the building. Murdo and Robbie were therefore invited along to this meeting to try and help take this forward. They have taken a tour round the building and assessed what is sensible to do.

Robbie Crockatt: As Acting School Estate Planning Manager, part of Robbie's role is to ensure demand for places is being met by the schools in the city and this includes looking at investment and extensions of school buildings. His remit includes looking at classroom design and how it can best be used; when a school is at capacity, how the existing space can be utilised better; what does the learning environment look like? He explained that if those people using it can be involved in the design (teachers, pupils etc), users feel more engaged and part of the environment. These questions tie in with the consultation that Leith Walk Primary has been looking and Robbie can help offer advice and also give examples from across the city about what other schools are doing.

Robbie also explained that this is never as straightforward as one might think. Any works needing to be done need to go through procurement and in accordance with council policies etc. In addition, there are limited funds and the best use of any money needs to be considered so that ideally as many of the school population as possible can benefit from any changes and as well as future year groups that have not yet started. An example is the basement room at Leith Walk Primary as this is a good space but significant money would need to be spent on it to get it usable by the children. The same money could be used in the rest of the school and benefit the children much more with an enriched environment, as the school already has a good amount of useable space that would benefit from some reorganisation. Robbie stated that the team had therefore been focussing on the rooms from ground level upwards.

Robbie concluded by confirming that there is great potential throughout the building but there is a limited budget. He offered his help with school consultations, looking at other examples across the city, help with furniture, interior design etc.

Murdo Macleod: Agreed with all Robbie said above. Murdo explained his role within the council as the maintenance manager for council owned properties including schools. When there is a desire to mend/change existing properties he can help support this. The fortunate position is that money is available to be invested in buildings across the whole estate and while the revenue money will not build anything new, it can help with changing what we have.

Once Leith Walk Primary has decided what we would like to change, Murdo can assist with making that happen which could include painting, new carpets etc. In addition, the Council will also be assessing primary schools soon from a point of view of the most vulnerable groups and seeing if any changes should be made to make buildings more inclusive.

It was discussed that the starting point for work would be to confirm that the building was safe and dry and following the high winds, the Janitor's House was being made safe and steplejacks would be checking the school roof to ensure this was sound also. This roof soundness test should be done on an annual basis, and whilst the Janitor's House is privately owned and not part of the Council's remit, it will be monitored to ensure it is safe for the school.

Maria Gowans: Maria introduced herself and explained her role as Acting Head until Christmas. Her primary focus is to engage with the action plan, SQIP (Improvement Plans) etc. Her initial thoughts with regard to space in the school is that the library is not positioned well on the top floor as there is not access for all children. It would make sense that this was repositioned to the ground floor if possible, as there would be easy access for all children during lunchtime and break time. It would be good to involve children in the running of the library and junior librarians should be instated like they are at other schools.

One possibility is that current ICT suite could become the library and this would be next door to the STEM room. The STEM room could be improved going forward as it currently houses the basics but not much more. Maria and Arran extended a big thanks to Julie Duran for all the work she has done with regard to STEM and Science Week, including speaking to Juliet at the Science Festival. It was confirmed that the school would like to run a Science Week in March.

Maria identified another room as being suitable for reuse. This is the 'Aladdin's Cave' classroom that currently houses a variety of miscellaneous items which should be sorted through and emptied. Parental help would be appreciated with this.

Arran reiterated that everyone has the appetite for a project to work on together and it would be lovely to create a fantastic library for the children. It was asked whether Laragh and Karen would still be willing to volunteer to help identify what books we should retain, what we should remove what gaps to fill. The school was keen to start on this as soon as possible once it had been discussed with staff.

It was suggested that a focus for fundraising this year could be for the library and STEM rooms.

Adam explained that he teaches at Napier and is keen to involve his students in working with a school which could benefit both the school and students. Both Maria and Arran were keen for all help to be explored.

PEF: Maria explained that there is an ongoing conversation about the use for this money, particularly with the staff. It has been identified that the teaching element should be focussed on improving literacy and numeracy skills, and some work to up-skill the staff (to improve their own learning and teaching) would be beneficial. In addition, the whole welfare situation of children (lateness, are children fed, turning up to school etc) needs to be looked at and supported.

New Edinburgh Council lets policy: School are given 32 hours for the session. It has been identified that 12 hours could be given over to the Parent Council to use over the year including PC meetings and the Winter Fair. It was discussed that other schools have 6 meetings in a year and as we do 8 we could reduce the number, thus keeping all meetings at school for free. Other options are to look at mixing this with some Tuesday evening meetings if Scouts are definitely going ahead and the crèche can still be run.

Action Point: To check that the Scouts are definitely going to go ahead with their Tuesday evening lets and that Tom and Euan could come along and run the crèche on a Tuesday.

Action Point: To book in the Winter Fair (Saturday 1 December) for 5 hours from 10am – 3pm. Set up could be on the afternoon before (Friday).

Chair's Report (Claire Ritchie)

Claire asked about PVGs and allowing more parents to help in the school. Susan confirmed that a spreadsheet has been started about which parents currently hold PVGs and would be interested in helping out.

A message will go out to the parents asking which parents have a PVG, even if it is with another organisation. If they would like to bring it in to the school to show it, the school could run an update to it so that they are authorised for LWP and this only takes a couple of weeks rather than starting from scratch.

The PVG co-ordinator will be Jennifer McNamara.

Vice Chair's report (Rachel Guatelli)

Feedback from NE Locality meeting (11.09.18): Much of the discussion at the meeting was centred on the issue of school lets and the difficulties this poses for many schools. There is going to be a deputation put forward at the next Education, Children and Families Committee meeting if there are any volunteers wanting to get involved. There was also talk of there being a deputation on the issue of school food again. Finally Lorna Sweeney is putting together a report and will be looking for parents to feed in to this.

Breakfast club: Kaz and Rachel went down to Drummond and saw their free breakfast club in action. They get the food free from Fair Share from the Cyrenians. Rachel is keen to explore whether this could be a model for LWP too as currently our breakfast club can be sparsely attended but would benefit many families. There is awareness that Tesco do already donate food to us although it is not

always suitable (eg donuts or items such as beetroot), or exactly the right timing for breakfast club. Sponsorship of this from larger companies might be a possibility.

Action Point: Susan to email Drummond to find out how they run their breakfast club.

Possibility of Mo from the Edinburgh Tool Library coming in to cook with children: Mo has a mobile kitchen on a bike with Fork In the Road (<https://edinburghtoolibrary.org.uk/fork-in-the-road/>) and had asked if she could come back to the school following on from the project building the planters. Now that we have beetroot, herbs, potatoes etc growing it might be a good time of year to do this.

Action Point: Rachel to contact Mo and invite her to the school

Garden Committee Report (Rachel Guatelli)

Harvesting crops: It was discussed that it would be good to get classes involved now that there are crops to be harvested as so many of the children planted the seeds earlier in the year.

Installation of tap at toilet block: Murdo agreed that it should be possible to install the tap and will sort this out. There was also general agreement that the greenhouse would be replaced but due to the time of year, there was not great urgency for the new one to arrive.

STEM, clubs and Science week (Julie Duran)

Julie suggested gathering a group of parents together that might already work in STEM areas to help support the school. This group could help to decide on the theme for Science Week and other projects.

Julie also confirmed that she was setting up a stall for the next bake sale to talk to parents and gather feedback about what after school clubs would be popular and developed further. She confirmed that she had been in touch with Scouts, Brownies, Jess, the language provider and a Guitar teacher who had expressed that they would be eager to provide clubs at the school.

Parent Council calendar – upcoming dates for actions

Doors Open Day (29/30 September): We are fine for Saturday with this. The Victorian Schoolroom has a key for the gate and have been introduced to the let system. Rachel confirmed that she was still happy to run this.

Next Bake Sale: Friday 5 October and volunteers were requested.

AOB

Adam asked if there was any connection with Montgomery Street Park. The play equipment has been disappearing as it falls apart but the Friends of Montgomery Street Park have plan on their website for an improved park although it does appear to be quite old. It was confirmed that the school has adopted this area for litter picking but that there is an issue of dog mess. There is no official connection although the school could help support the Friends of the Park. Christina mentioned that the more the park is used by the children, the more others will take care of it as it will be seen by the whole community is a cherished space.

Adam asked about parents coming in to school to do a project with the children about their jobs. There was support for this from the school.

There was discussion about the information already gathered for a running track in the playground.

Action Point: Katrina to resend emails including costings for the running track

There was discussion about the very hot classrooms in the school. Murdo stated that he was happy to look at the heating, and if this is something the school can raise, the estates can look at it.

Action Point: The school to officially contact the council about the temperature in the school

The issue of notice boards on the railings was discussed and it was felt that as long as they were on the inside of the railings, there should not be an issue with this.

Action Point: Jennifer McNamara to look at this.

It was confirmed that the school calendar was to be looked at and sent out shortly.

Meeting Finished: 8.05

Next meeting: To Be Confirmed

