Houston Primary School Parent Council

16th November 2021 Chair: Nicki Barret

# In Attendance

Nicki Barrett (Chair), Jennifer Murray (Head Teacher), Amanda Johnstone (Deputy Head), Jillian McPherson (Deputy Head), Laura Masterton (Minutes)

Bernadette Prenelle, Allison Livingston, Ann Nimmo, Nicola McNair, Kirsty Fowler, James McBeath, Kirsty Turner Lesley Anne, Emma Bull, John, Louise Hastings, Laura McLeod

**Apologies:** Morven Feely, Alexis Alexander,

# 1. Approval of minutes

The minutes from the September meeting were approved. Kirsty Fowler and Laura Masterton

# 2. Chairman’s Report

*Given by Nicki Barret*

The Parents Chair meeting has taken place. Nicki will distribute minutes when she has them. **Action: Nicki Barrett**

The Vice Chair position is still vacant if anyone would like to take it up. Laura Masterton has been assisting Nicki in the interim.

# 3. Treasurer’s Report

*Given by Kirsty Fowler*

Events are still limited. Money has come in from:

* Christmas Cards (Total TBC)
* Easy Fundraising £50.41

Paid Out:

* Zoom subscription £107.90

The account total is £2800.

There were issues around accessing the bank accounts which have now been resolved. Three past council members have been removed as signatories and Nicki and Kirsty are now the two names on the account. Kirsty will look to put in place more governance around the account and what procedures should be followed. **Action: Kirsty Fowler**

# 4. Event Committee Report

*Given by Laura McLeod and Louise Hastings*

**Christmas cards** This event went well, and it is hoped the cards will be arriving in school very soon. Nicki brought up a parents comment that they did not order due to a spelling mistake on their child’s card and another comment was made about a half-finished card which the child did not have time to finish colouring. It was asked if teachers could check these over if time allowed. Mrs Johnstone added that teachers would normally go over ideas with the children and phrases such as Merry Christmas would be written on the board. Mrs Murray highlighted that if a child had completed their card, it would be difficult for a teacher to then edit this with corrections.

**Christmas Fayre** – The Committee asked Mrs Murry if this was feasible. Unfortunately, guidance around this has not changed so we would be unable to hold one again this year. It was noted that other schools were doing online events, and this was something to explore.

**Christmas Raffle** – Mrs Murray believed that this was a feasible idea. Discussion took place around how we would accept payment for this. Parent Pay may cause an issue as money deposited here goes straight into the school account. Mrs Murray agreed that money could be sent into school for raffle tickets and there was a discussion around money handling and the best way for this to take place. Paypal was also suggested and perhaps paypal pools. It was raised that paypal pools have been closed but further investigation into this could be done. It was agreed that going forward it would be good to have a system in place to take online payments and that this should be explored. The events committee found the use of BACS transfers for the tea towels to be very time consuming and unworkable going forward. **Action: Laura McLeod, Louise Hasting, Kirsty Fowler**

# 5. Uniform Committee Report

*Given by Laura Masterton*

**P7 Hoodies**

Hoodies have been delivered and given out to pupils. Orders ran smoothly without any issues.

**Tracksuit Shorts**

An update has been given that tracksuit shorts are ‘on the water’ being shipped to the UK. It is hoped these will have arrived by the next tracksuit order in January allowing parents to order shorts in time for spring.

**Donation**

The committee has reviewed their accounts after a successful year and would like to make an additional donation of £2000 to the school. This will include some of this years funds which may mean a smaller donation from the uniform committee in August but it was thought it was more useful for the school to receive this now and put it to good use.

# 6. Headteacher’s Report

*Given by Mrs Murray*

**Staffing** –

Mrs Moruzzi has joined P4/5 temporarily due to Mrs Steele’s absence.

There are a number of staff due to go on or return from maternity leave. Renfrewshire Councils policy for pregnant women is to take up home working from 28 weeks. **(This has recently been reviewed and will impact on staffing plans shared with the Council at the recent meeting.)**

Miss Kidd has now moved to home working under this policy and is preparing planning for the school as well as supporting children in the local community who are self-isolating. Miss Bremnar has joined the school in Miss Kidd’s absence.

Mrs Stefanatos (P6) will also take up this position from the 2nd week of December. Her class will be covered for a couple of weeks until Miss McGowan returns in January and will take over her class.

Mrs Ellis will then move to home working from the end of January under the same policy. Miss McCafferty will return around the same time and take over this class

Miss Irvine in the ELCC recently got married and is now also Mrs Murray. Correspondence has been marked with ELCC and School for clarification.

**Events**

Thanks was extended to the events committee who supported the Halloween fun day which took place in school. This event was organised to replace the Halloween disco which was unable to go ahead. The children had lots of fun.

Bookfair update from Mrs Johnstone – This will run in school from17th – 24th Nov. A letter and leaflet went out to parents and information was posted on parent pay. Classes will have a scheduled time to visit the bookfair and write down a wishlist of books they would like to purchase. This year parents will be able to log in to the website and pay for any items they would like to purchase. Parent volunteers are lined up to come into school and sort these orders which will then be distributed to children by the pupil council. Thanks was extended to those who have volunteered to help with this event. Last year the school made £1600 commission from the book fair which was spent on books to enhance the accelerated reading program as well as class novels and it is hoped this year’s event will be as big a success. The event was also a highlight for children who enjoyed the experience.

**Christmas**

Council wide restrictions remain in place which mean we are unable to open the school to parents and carers for school shows. Work is being done to once again share something online similar to last year’s Christmas countdown. Some changes in rules mean that children can now move around their classrooms more freely and singing can take place in larger spaces such as the hall. This means that children have more opportunity with what they can do for their shows, and it is hoped this will be even more festive than last year. Christmas jumper day will also take place, and this may be combined with a Santa Dash type event if weather permits, with a view to raise money for a nominated charity.

**Pantomime**

Mrs Murray wanted to gauge parent opinion on bringing M&M productions into the school again this year to run the annual pantomime. Restrictions for children in school have reduced meaning that they can now mix within classes and in the playground. In response to this Mrs Murray feels the school could take a step forward and proposes that the pantomime be held in two groups within the hall with ventilation in place. Children would sit within their class and year group within the hall. Parents present unanimously agreed that they would support this move. **Update 24 Nov** – the risk assessment to go ahead with the pantomime, together with the guidance from RC means the Pantomime can’t go ahead as wished.

**Local Christmas Event**

The Fox and Hounds are holding a local Christmas fair on Wednesday 1st December and have invited the local schools to have half an hour on the stage. Mrs Murray is keen for us to be involved to reconnect with the local community. Details are still to be decided but it is hoped children would be able to take part by singing some carols or similar.

**Beat the Street**

Mrs Murray extended thanks to the parent council for promoting this on social media and to all who took part for helping us to finish on the leader board. The school has been awarded a prize of £350 in decathlon vouchers which will be used to purchase sports equipment.

**Covid update –** Children no longer have to stay within bubbles. After the October holidays desk groupings were returned to normal layouts and children can now take part in more collaborative work.

The school is still operating staggered play and lunch times as this has been seen to be beneficial for the children, giving them more space to play and reducing the amount of bumps and scrapes and it is hoped that this format will continue with a few adjustments.

The old nursery building has now been demolished and the landscaping of the area is almost complete. Hard surface has been lain as budget allowed and the remainder of the space will be grassed creating additional playground space. A decision was made to leave existing bushes in place to provide a buffer to the grass hill. It is hoped that the project will be complete with fencing removed by Christmas. Children will then help to plan how the new space will be used.

**School Meals**

With the introduction of free school meals for P5 from January and P6 & 7 from August 2022 the decision has been made to reinstate Houston Primary kitchen as a cooking kitchen. This means that meals will once again be made in house, rather than delivered from Bridge of Weir. Lorna Gallagher will be returning as catering manager from January. Mrs Murray is delighted with this decision and welcomes the return of our school meals being made in house and feels the pupils will benefit from this improvement. The school remains vocal of staffing issues surrounding support staff and noted that this coupled with challenges with teaching staffing has put a lot of pressure on staff. Mrs Murray extended thanks to Mrs Johnstone and Mrs McPherson for their support during these challenges.

Nicki thanked the staff on behalf of parents for all the work and effort they put into the school.

# AOB

Nicki – It was noted that there had been a lot of issues with this year’s school photographs. The biggest concern was the lack of communication and the resulting frustration as parents were unable to get in touch with the photographer. This in turn caused issues for office staff and the school who then had to field questions and problems. Mrs Murray has had a discussion with the photographer who admitted the service had not been satisfactory this year. A decision has been made that going forward photos will be taken by Tempest Photography. This is an established company and communications so far has been excellent. It is hoped that this will help alleviate the past issues which have arisen and make next years process run more smoothly. Tempest will provide all the support needed reducing the need for parent helpers. Photographs are set to take place the week after schools return in August and will involve P1 and P7 class photographs as well as individual and sibling photographs for the whole school.

*Laura – Will parents we allowed back into the playground for pick up and drop offs ?*

It is anticipated that once the groundwork in the playground has been completed, parents of nursery and P1 children will be allowed to return to the playground. A path will be marked for parents dropping children off at the ELCC and Primary 1 parents will be allowed into the P1 area standing back from the doors. Precautions will be set in place to ensure that the playground remains a safe area for children.

Laura noted that she now works for St Vincent’s hospice and would be happy to liaise if any fundraising took place. Mrs Murray shared that pupils from the school band had been asked to record a song as part of St Vincent’s “Light up a Life” online event and were delighted to take part.

Mrs Johnstone highlighted that if parents have any queries or worries to not hesitate to get in touch with the school.

A discussion around the school’s social media accounts took place. The school has a Facebook and Twitter account as well as the class and school blogs with can been viewed on the school website. Mrs Murray said the school had lots to share and celebrate and they try to use these platforms to do so and hope to do more of going forward. The Parent Council also has a Facebook page get in touch with Laura Masterton if you would like anything posted on here.

# Next Meeting

TBC