



# Minutes of Marr College Parent Council Meeting

## Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021 (via Zoom)

- Present:** Hilary Ramage - Chair, George Docherty – Head Teacher, Kate Dunn – Treasurer, Lindsay Campbell - Secretary & Katherine Woodhouse – Minute Secretary
- In Attendance:** Neil McLean - DHT, Robert McLaughlin – PT DYW
- Council Members:** Clair Milne, Emma Inglis, Lindsey Connell, Jackie Lennox, Kirsty Broadfoot, Laura McGarrity, Angela Malcolm, Cllr Peter Convery & Cllr Bob Pollock
- Forum Members:** Carolyn Adams, Claire Kirk, Colin Pow, Esther Blair, Geoff Coxon, Gillian McWhirter, Heather Steele, Howard Ramsay, Jacqui Hillan, Jackie Houston, Janine Barrett, Jeff Lawlor, Morven Lee, Patricia Rowley, Susan Abbott, Susan Graham & Vanezza Easton
- Apologies:** Ady Allan, Katie Atkinson & Cllr Craig Mackay

	<b>Action</b>
<p>1. <b><u>Welcome and Apologies</u></b> Hilary welcomed those in attendance and apologies were noted.</p>	
<p>2. <b><u>Captains Report</u></b> Kathryn and Robyn provided an update from the Captains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remote learning is going well so far using Microsoft Teams and a variety of learning methods, allowing students to be flexible, independent and manage their time. The use of Twitter has also proved beneficial.</li> <li>• Fundraising activities have raised £6000 so far this session. This included a national fundraising initiative, 'Decembeard', which was introduced by Mr Baillie and 8 teachers took part.</li> <li>• The school newsletter can be accessed online during remote learning. It is produced monthly and includes important updates.</li> <li>• The Foodbank appeal ran just before Christmas where students were invited to bring in donations – this was very successful with around 1000 items donated.</li> <li>• Random acts of kindness – coloured cards corresponding with house colours were given out and students were asked to write down any acts that had made a positive impact on someone else. These were then displayed in the window at the main entrance.</li> <li>• In the run up to Christmas there were several events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Virtual Christmas concert - recorded on YouTube on the music channel.</li> <li>○ Rewards afternoon comprising of different activities, during which the S1s received ice cream from the Ice Cream Factory – the captains thanked the Parent Council for organising this.</li> <li>○ 12ks of Christmas - an event organised by Mr Reid to encourage young people to exercise, where every day a different distance was posted which could be completed by walking, cycling or running.</li> <li>○ The Night before Christmas competition organised by two S6 pupils – teachers brought in anything they wished to donate and the items were given to children in Ayrshire to ensure no child missed out on receiving a Christmas gift.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p>3. <b><u>Approval of Minutes</u></b> The minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 were approved by Lindsay Campbell and seconded by Kate Dunn.</p>	
<u>Matters Arising</u>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BGE reporting – George advised an update would be provided later in the meeting.</li> </ul>	
<p>4. <b><u>Remote Learning – George Docherty</u></b> George outlined how remote learning was going so far.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initially, the school had been ready for a week of remote learning after Christmas, but this has now been extended by a further 2 weeks, however preparations have been ongoing for this scenario since August. All work has been transferred to one platform, MS Teams. Unfortunately, there were technical issues with Teams on Monday which occurred across Northern Europe, however this has now been resolved.</li> <li>In terms of resources, a Digital Fire Drill has been promoted within school as a one stop shop as to how remote learning will work. All resources can be found on the school website and are easy to access. There is also a student/parent 19-minute support video which goes through everything you need to know. Details of a National e-learning offer from e-Sgoil, working in partnership with Education Scotland, has been shared which will complement the work of schools through remote learning and teaching.</li> <li>George had asked staff to share their experience so far and presented a series of slides provided by each department which gave a flavour of their approach to home learning. These included a combination of live lessons, learning plans for the week, Flipgrid videos, details of how to contact the teacher, weekly catch-up sessions, video tutorials, etc. The aim is to provide a continuation of teaching rather than just revision.</li> <li>In addition, virtual assemblies for all year groups are being held weekly and over 650 students have attended so far, with very positive attendance from 1<sup>st</sup> years. S2 engagement appears to be the lowest at the moment.</li> <li>Tracking the engagement of young people is being done through check-ins and also by tracking the performance and quality of the work using Insights tab, quizzes and questionnaires. There is also a 'whole school' form for staff to complete if they have a concern about a young person being able to access information. This goes direct to guidance staff so they can try to help and support.</li> <li>Progress will be reviewed in various ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff gathering and sharing practice</li> <li>File forms and feedback</li> <li>Monitoring levels of engagement</li> <li>Parents focus groups to get more detailed views</li> <li>Benchmarking against local and national guides to establish if there is anything that is not being covered.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>George asked if parents had any concerns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patricia did not realise there were live lessons and feels it is difficult for parents to work out what their child should be doing as the homework app is now not being used. Hilary advised that a communication was issued through Expressions or e-mail which had a lot of information about remote learning. George added that a communication went out last week to advise there would be some live lessons. It had been decided to only use one platform (Teams) so that is why there is nothing on Satchel One. With regard to assemblies, George scheduled assemblies into young people's calendars, however he will also put an announcement on Teams. He has posted a recording of today's assembly on Tasks.</li> <li>Jackie H felt that there is a lack of routine for the young people and asked how many live lessons can typically be expected in a week for an S4 student. Quite a large amount of work is given out at the beginning of the week and young people are left to get on with it. She felt there was a lack of structure for the students and it will be hard to keep them motivated. George advised that no schools in South Ayrshire are putting a number on the live lessons they provide. There is a lot of disparity across the country with local authorities – some schools are not doing any live lessons, so he feels that Marr is doing quite well. It is difficult to provide live lessons when staff are working from home and some have children of their own at home as they are not entitled to places at the childcare hub. Having work issued at the beginning of</li> </ul>	<p>GD</p>

<p>the week works well for some young people and allows them to manage their time and plan accordingly. Other people do not have access to the resources to be able to do live lessons every day. In terms of structure he has advised young people to follow their timetable as much as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hilary suggested asking for feedback from parents through Expressions or via a questionnaire to get a feel for how children are coping. In terms of focus groups, these would probably have to be set up through Eventbrite.</li> <li>• Geoff advised that he is a university lecturer, and all their degree courses and exams had to be moved online very quickly last year. From his experience he has found that some students thrive on online learning whilst others loathe it. However, he felt the most important thing for everybody is to have as much face-to-face time as possible with the students through a mix of some online learning and scheduled time when pupils know they can interact with the teachers. If this is scheduled it prevents the young person feeling isolated. George advised that some staff are looking at recorded lessons in order to provide greater interaction, as that is what was lacking before. Geoff felt this was one of the greatest positives as it gives the student control. However he felt they only work well when followed up with face-to-face feedback. George advised they are trying to strike a balance between independent learning and feedback.</li> <li>• Esther asked what the expectations were, both from SAC and the National expectations. She agreed that face to face feedback is paramount. George advised that John Swinney set out the salient points from Education Scotland. He stressed that Marr does not want to be just providing the minimum requirements and does not think they are as they are providing live lessons and live check ins. In addition every member of staff has been provided with the best quality laptops to enable them to provide the best possible remote learning.</li> <li>• Janine said it was clear that some parents are anxious about the impact this will be having on their child's education. There needs to be a structure which is easy to understand and there also needs to be direct communication between children and teachers. Key workers who are working from home should be able to access childcare. Parents' expectation is that educators are giving their children what they require and there are concerns that they are going to fall behind. George reiterated that they are delivering well above the minimum expectations in terms of live lessons. The key worker childcare eligibility has been made clear by SAC in that teachers who are working from home are not eligible and this is clearly an issue. Jackie suggested that if teachers were to work from school they would be eligible for childcare, however George pointed out that this would go against the current guidelines of working from home where possible.</li> </ul>	GD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colin said that a good proportion of teacher's time is taken up with preparing lessons and suggested the use of pre-prepared lessons to free teachers up so that they are able to provide more face-to-face feedback. The Western Isles have a lot of pre-prepared lessons and surely this would be a more economical way of approaching it. George advised that they have access to e-Sgoil and have asked staff to look at that to see if there is anything they can use. They are also looking into Lockdown Live sessions but do not yet know how useful they will be.</li> <li>• Laura noted that there was an obvious anxiety amongst parents of children in senior school which is understandable. It has come as a surprise to most parents that teachers cannot get childcare and, if availability is limited, it would be good to prioritise those in the senior school in terms of teaching and feedback.</li> </ul>	GD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jackie asked how online learning will affect the grading of Highers as some key assessments were supposed to be taking place at the moment. George is waiting to hear from SQA as to whether they are changing their requirement for evidence gathering. He will be attending a Head Teacher's meeting tomorrow and hopes to have clarification soon. All key assessments and prelims will be postponed.</li> </ul>	GD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• George considered that, as parents do not have access to Teams, they could try and put some of the learning outlines on Satchel One for parents to review. Most parents agreed that it would be useful to have something on this platform. George will speak to staff about this and look into it and feedback to Hilary and Lindsay before the next meeting.</li> </ul>	GD

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Esther asked if parents should expect to hear from the school if a young person is not doing the work. George confirmed that this is the case as engagement is being monitored.</li> <li>• Lindsay raised a couple of issues that had come up on Facebook where parents were saying that some of their children's lessons are clashing. George will follow up on that with Laura.</li> <li>• Hilary agreed to raise some of the issues discussed at next week's Parent Council Chair's meeting to get the message from parent's across with a view to getting further support.</li> </ul>	<p>GD</p> <p>HR</p>
<p>5. <b><u>Update on SQA and Reporting – Neil McLean</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neil advised that the SQA had announced that assessment of learner evidence cannot be taken at this time. It is important to maximise learning and teaching time with a view to assessments coming at a later stage. The SQA update yesterday advised that more detail in each subject area will be published, so the school is currently awaiting further information on this next week.</li> <li>• George will push back reporting times so that reports are meaningful after the prelims. Neil advised that the earliest date the prelims could take place would be the first week in February but he felt that this would put too much pressure on young people. The school will have to plan around what happens in the next few weeks. SQA suggested they will be looking at the details of submissions from school and are likely to push that back slightly.</li> <li>• Esther asked if any of the S4-6 students were being encouraged to give their opinion on what would work so that they have a voice. Neil had spoken to some of the young people and they are worried about having to go through into prelims without speaking to their teachers. He agreed it would be good to get their views on this.</li> </ul>	
<p>6. <b><u>Careers Support – Robert McLaughlin</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The careers evening will be held on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> February and will take the format of a virtual live session starting with curricular options (Gillian), careers and pathways (Robert) and apprenticeships (Gemma).</li> <li>• There had been 26 responses from parents willing to provide information on their careers, with a good mix of contributors. The aim is to ask these parents to prepare a careers insight video which should be 1-2 minutes long about their career journey, description of current role, highlights of job and top tips. There is an example provided which Robert can share.</li> <li>• S6 were surveyed to find out what career path they wish to pursue and got 303 responses. Robert shared the feedback from pupils which included a variety of different career options. This will be useful to see if there are any gaps in the information that is being offered so that any missing areas can be targeted.</li> <li>• A DYW noticeboard has been set up on Teams for S4-6. Any information from college, universities, workplaces, work experience, open events, etc should be posted on this. Any useful information will also be duplicated on Twitter. There are a whole host of virtual open days at colleges and universities and this information will also be posted on the page.</li> <li>• Looking at options deadline of 17<sup>th</sup> March.</li> <li>• George added they are aiming for one options evening to get people together and signpost where people can access all the resources/videos, etc.</li> <li>• Esther advised that the technology sector is exploding at the moment so it would be good to have areas such as AI covered at the careers evening. Jacqueline suggested contacting Ayrshire Chamber as they may have people within the Chamber with contacts who would be able to help.</li> </ul>	<p>GD</p> <p>RM</p>
<p>7. <b><u>Website – Neil McLean</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neil advised that the website had been re-organised and simplified to make it easier to navigate. There is now also a specific Covid section. As there are so many different online areas being used he asked whether parents used the website as a point of contact and, if so, to provide feedback on the new format. A section on Reporting has now been set up which provides an overview of BGE and how to interpret the</li> </ul>	

<p>report. He encouraged everyone to have a look on the website and provide feedback before the next meeting which would be helpful.</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>8. <b><u>Next Month's Agenda Items</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remote learning will be a regular agenda item at the moment.</li> <li>• SQA update</li> </ul>	
<p>9. <b><u>Next Meeting</u></b>  The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 at 7pm via Zoom.</p>	