

DINGWALL ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

Committee Meeting – Monday 11th November 2024, 7pm

Present: Karen O’Hanlon (KOH), Karen Cormack (KC), John MacDonald, Gill MacPherson, Paul MacPherson, Nicola Wojtunik, David Genney, Alistair Rennie (AR), Nicola Mackenzie (NM), Susan Crookes

1. **Apologies:** Samantha Blyth, Hillary Cameron, John Tompkins, Kerry Webb, Cllr Paterson, Cllr Mackenzie, Cllr Maclean and Cllr Kennedy

2. **Previous Minutes:** Approved by Gill MacPherson and seconded by John MacDonald

3. **Matters arising:**

- Acronyms; will try not to use in future Minutes e.g DYW (Developing the Young Workforce)
- Pupil/parent meeting with canteen staff still to be arranged. **Action: Karen Cormack**
- 2026 Anniversary Tartan – a meeting will be arranged with Dingwall Primary and St. Clement’s schools, to move this forward.
- Enhancing autism provision in the school – ongoing
- Sensory Garden – huge progress made with Mears support. Planter, paving and soil in situ, now ready for planting with ‘sensory’ plants.
- KC confirmed that the ASN (additional support needs) department is happy to take on the planting. KOH to purchase specific plants from Simpsons. Some planting may have to wait until the spring. **Action: Karen O’Hanlon**
- The Teams link for future PC meetings to be shared more widely with the school community, via the head teacher’s Friday email. **Action: Karen O’Hanlon/Karen Cormack**
- Drama club – planning a panto in March, may need some support.
- The Leadership Team still to decide on a project to be funded by Parent Council.
- Raffle tickets to be distributed to pupils this week.

4. **Head Teacher’s report**

- Fourth year prelims will begin on Monday 18th November.
- Fifth/sixth year prelims will take place after Christmas – timetable to be issued before Christmas.
- New Chief Invigilator is Mario D’Carlo – he will run the first diet of prelims.
- Last term’s ‘Wellbeing Walk’ was very successful. It has been suggested, that next year a JustGiving page be set up for those that would like to get sponsorship for the walk.
- S4, S5, S6 options for 2025 – every few years there is a ‘free choice process’ - pupils are asked to pick any five subjects. This process will inform future option columns that meet the pupils’ needs and choices.
- Remembrance Day – staff were very impressed with the maturity and behavior of the pupils during the special assembly, hosted by senior history pupils. Such ceremonial activities don’t happen often, but they are important.

5. Treasurer's report

- **Recommendation:** Close the two existing TSB bank accounts and consolidate funds into a new account due to ongoing issues.
- **Club, Charity, and Trust Account:** Balance £8,448.36, held at Aberdeen branch. Challenges include:
 - Monthly paper statements sent to the school, causing delays in transaction tracking.
 - No online access: transactions can only be conducted via cheque.
 - Account signatories are outdated due to a TSB error.
- **Business Instant Access Account:** Balance £80.24. This account gains negligible interest (less than 30p per quarter), and its purpose is unclear.
- **Highland Council Policy:** All decisions regarding bank accounts must be fully transparent and carefully considered.
- **Recommended New Account:** Bank of Scotland Treasurers Account - Cash deposits can be easily made at the branch, online banking and any associated bank fees will be covered by the annual grant from Highland Council. **Action: Gill MacPherson/KOH**
- Paypal has worked efficiently for the Christmas Fair table fees.
- School still to be reimbursed for the 'Wellbeing Walk' snacks - £75.64
- Gill is to step down as Treasurer in the New Year. KOH thanked her for all her work with Parent Council.

6. Chair's report

- Sensory Garden funding has come from Simpsons, Mears and the Mushroom Trust.
- Dingwall Academy Parent Council will be one of the designated charities with the Co-op Community Fund next year. We will receive £500 in February, with the potential for another £3000 if enough parents sign up to the scheme, via the Coop app or in store. KOH has created a QR code for the school's use.
- KOH will share the QR code with KC, on the Facebook page, and advertise it at the Christmas Fair. **Action: Karen O'Hanlon.** Three catchment Co-op stores in Dingwall, Evanton and Conon-Bridge.
- There is a timetabled 'Employability' class option for S5 and S6. The class is working on a development project with the **Developing the Young Workforce** co-ordinator. The project involves converting a horsebox into a food trailer which would be used at school events and developing the Marie Curie garden. The pupils have all received barista training.

The estimated total cost of this project is approximately £6000. Any excess funds raised would be allocated to charity. This project would use a wide range of student skills, including practical woodwork and metalwork, business skills and food and hygiene knowledge. KOH has been assisting the class with an application for funding from the wind farm community fund. This fund covers the Strathpeffer, Contin and Strathconon catchment. However, this will take time. KOH proposed that the group be given an injection of cash (£1500) from the Parent Council to get them started. There was a consensus that this project is an excellent idea and should be supported. However, it was suggested that the class speak to other businesses that have food trailers to learn from their experiences, produce a business plan and then present their proposal to the committee. Further suggestions - the class should be looking into the hidden costs of licensing etc. We should spread the word - someone out there may have a horsebox that they no longer need. **Action: All**

KOH to liaise with the Developing the Young Workforce co-ordinator. **Action: Karen O'Hanlon**

7. AOCB

- A request for money has been received from a pupil who is a member of the High School Young Musicians group. The group is travelling to Germany in June, and each pupil has been asked to raise £600 towards the cost of the trip. After a lengthy discussion, it was agreed that it would be unfair to help one pupil, and not others, with such funding. This type of donation would need to be part of a robust process, with strict criteria, to ensure that there was a fair distribution of funds. Further discussion required.
- Christmas Fair - all of the business stalls have been allocated. There are still a few reserved tables for the school. There will be a bottle stall, BBQ and raffle on the night – all funds raised going to the school.
- Raffle tickets to be distributed to pupils – no pressure to sell – one book costs £5.
- Volunteers will be required to help on the night – KC to include a request in her Friday email.
Action: Karen Cormack
- We discussed which Councillors are invited to attend Parent Council meetings. In the past, it has always been the four Councillors from Dingwall and Seaforth area. There were no objections to inviting others, to cover the larger school catchment area.
- KOH to invite all of the Councillors to the Christmas Fair. **Action: Karen O’Hanlon**

8. Date of the next meeting

Monday 20th January, 7pm (Teams)