

Douglas Academy Parent Council Session 2020/21

Minutes of Meeting, 24 March 2021

1. Welcome and Apologies

Attendance

Scott Taylor (Chair), Barry Smedley (Head Teacher), Danielle Hawkins (Teacher), Caryn McDade (Secretary), Rachel Lowther, Mascha Rietdijk, Michelle Stewart, Andrew McLean, John Jeffers, Caroline McCorkindale, Michael Lodhi

Apologies

None

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting of 4 November 2020 were approved.

3. PC Forums Updates

Online Learning

RL updated on the EDC meeting on online learning which she attended. With only 3 weeks of mixed learning the session was more about feedback from parents on their impressions on how things were working.

The issue of potential stress among teaching staff was raised. BS outlined the range of support available to staff for stress.

4. Return to School and SQA Assessments

Return to School

BS outlined the changes that had been implemented following the “soft start” return of pupils 2 weeks previously. The blend of online and live teaching was proving challenging however the design of the timetable at DA, with 45 minute spaces between lessons, is helping to mitigate some of the issues. Return of live teaching of practical subjects for S4/S5/S6 was going well and pupils and staff were positive about the progress being made in completing course work.

The PC asked BS to formally record their thanks to Barry and all the staff for everything that had been in place for pupils return to school.

Assessments

BS confirmed that the advice from the SQA was they required 2 pieces of empirical evidence for every course therefore in reality any assessments done prior to

Christmas 2020 could not be used and no assessments done from January to March 2021, when learning was remote, could be used. He indicated that he was meeting PT's the next day to consult on the draft assessment calendar. He outlined the key points of the assessment plan at DA:

- There is flexibility to tailor the content of an assessment to the course work that has been taught.
- Rather than do one very long paper pupils will generally sit no more than 2 assessments per subjects and more papers will be taken within a double period of 1 ½ hours.
- Assessments will run from 30 April to 7 June and those subjects which require more teaching time will be scheduled towards the end of the assessment block.
- There will be no study leave and all pupils will continue to attend school for teaching or independent study with teacher support if required.
- Every pupil will be provided a personal assessment timetable.
- Grades require to be submitted to the LA by 11 June for quality assurance and to the SQA by 25 June.

BS indicated he was confident that this process was as robust as it could be to give credibility and confidence in attainment. He highlighted pupils would have the best possible chance to demonstrate their attainment. All pupils will be able to take up the opportunity for study technique learning.

5. English Text Selection

RL raised concern over the nature of the English texts selected this year. Agreed that RL would email BS separately on this issue and that it would be discussed with the English PT.

6. Gender Based Respect

There was a wide ranging discussion in the light of recent events, and widespread media and social media coverage, on the issue of gender based respect. The role of the school in supporting young people who have experienced inappropriate gender related abuse was discussed and BS highlighted that the school already become involved where this is reported and take action on it. The difficulty of addressing this issue in a meaningful way in PSE was recognised given the breadth of issues which are required to be covered in this course.

It was recognised that gender based respect is a societal issue and there needs to be a national approach to addressing the issues. It was however accepted the school have an important role, together with families, in reinforcing the message that inappropriate language based on gender is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

7. Head Teacher's Report

BS provided an update as follows:

Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the first Parent Council meeting of 2021. I have a number of important updates that I will share with you this evening.

Staffing

- Miss Danielle Hawkins and Mrs Amanda McVicar were appointed to the permanent and temporary DHT posts respectively.
- For next session, we have a number of permanent appointments. These are in Business, Home Economics, Guidance, Principal Teacher of English and Depute Head Teacher. We have 25 applicants for our Business post; 3 for Home Economics; and 35 for Guidance. All of these posts will be interviewed after Easter. The PT English and DHT posts will be advertised after Easter and interviewed prior to the summer break.
- We also have temporary posts in Business, Physics and an Acting PT Computing. There were 14 applicants for the temporary Business post and 16 applicants for the temporary Physics post. The Acting PT Computing will be advertised and interviewed after Easter.
- We have requested 4 Newly Qualified Teachers for next session. The subjects are Maths, Physical Education, Music and Art & Design.

School Business

1. The vast majority of our engagement with young people and their families during January-March has been done remotely. All of our information evenings have been very well attended and feedback from parents & carers has been overwhelmingly positive. Our Options process is complete and members of the Senior Leadership Team and Guidance staff will now be engaging individually with pupils to ensure they have made appropriate choices for next session.

Achievements and Additional Opportunities

- A group of our S5 and S6 debaters won the inaugural GB-India Debating Matters Competition, defeating a team from Salt Lake, Kolkata in the final. Raj Bhaumik, Eoghan Connolly, Maeve Connolly, Imogen Milling, Tom Milling and Adam Nicolson were crowned champions of the international event, impressing judges with their well-researched arguments and passionate delivery. Debating Matters is a well-established annual competition that reinvented itself this year in response to the challenges of the pandemic as a virtual event featuring young teams from Great Britain and India. We have had a number of successes in this competition over the years. These include winning the Scottish and NI finals from 2013-16; reaching the UK semi-finals three times; runners-up in 2015; and

winning the STV televised Debating Matters Scottish Independence Referendum competition in 2014. This success was recognised at the Scottish Parliament in a motion by Gil Paterson (MSP).

- Gil Paterson also raised another motion congratulating our pupils for organising an online event, in partnership with Gavin's Mill, focusing on climate justice. The event took place on 5th March during Fairtrade Fortnight to raise awareness of the challenges faced by farmers in the Global South and the critical support they require at this time.
- Our school was featured in Education Scotland's National Overview of Practice Papers: Supporting pupil engagement, participation and motivation. These papers are published to provide an overview of how schools are approaching remote learning and share good practice from schools across the country. Our school was a featured Case Study on 'Monitoring engagement through shared lesson observations'. The case study highlighted the outstanding and innovative approaches our staff have engaged in during lockdown. All of which were focused on trying to provide the best learning experience for our young people during the period of online learning.

8. AOCB

ST formally recorded thanks to MR for her work on the PC and wished her well with her family's move.