

GLENURQUHART PRIMARY SCHOOL

PARENT COUNCIL

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, 2nd September 2020 at 6.30 pm

Chairperson's Report

Session 2019/20 got off to a slightly later start for Parent Council as despite arranging our AGM for September 2019 we were unable to proceed due to lack of attendance. Thankfully when we were able to reschedule in November 2019 we appointed Suzanne Haviland as Secretary, Kath Jones as Treasurer (Fiona Mackenzie as second bank signatory) and Jenny Neill as Vice Chair. Discussions then followed at our first formal meeting of the school year around the issue of how we might encourage more parents to attend in the future due to the number of members who would be leaving at the end of 2019/20 session, me included.

The school year had started off like any other school year with the sponsored walk and the P7 residential trip. My daughter thought this was just the best thing ever and had so much fun with her teachers and classmates at Loch Inch. I cannot thank everyone involved with this great experience enough and I really hope this trip can go ahead in 2021 for our current P7 class. We had discussions around the support of swimming lessons provided during school time as the P7 trip does involve water sports so confidence in the water can make these activities more enjoyable. While we had not yet planned any fundraising events we had begun to discuss what we might do in Term 4. Following the parent survey regarding swimming lessons we decided at the next Parent Council meeting in January 2020 to seek funding to help with the cost of the bus. We were fortunate enough to secure funding from Soirbheas to help ease the financial burden of swimming transport costs and I have been assured this grant may be deferred until we need it. With the school play approaching prior to the Easter Break our next meeting was planned for our return in April, however, due to the unusual situation we found ourselves in this meeting was postponed.

Lockdown has been a positive experience for some and for others a very stressful one. It has highlighted just how invaluable our education system is and how unprepared any of us were for the situation that we found ourselves in. I would never have imagined my children staying home from school for months and being denied the chance to see anyone other than those they live with at home. Mrs Laird and her Team thankfully were able to rise to the challenge and get some online learning organised for the children and have video calls using Google Classroom, we even had

virtual transition week for the P7 class with GUHS. It has highlighted how technology can help keep us all connected and I was grateful my children had Chromebooks and could still learn while I worked from home. It also highlighted for me as a parent how personal circumstances were going to affect the learning experience of every child differently. With that in mind my main message in this report is that we must support the school in every way we can to get every child back to where they should be. Be kind and understanding as we cannot expect this prolonged period away from learning to be resolved overnight. The impact of not seeing friends and family for several months has meant a difficult transition back to school and daily life. This will be a long journey back to "normality" whatever that is going to look like now. Face coverings, hand washing and physical distancing are going to be here for some time and I am sure Mrs Laird and all of the staff will ensure they do not dilute the learning experience. The teachers have made a lot of changes in line with Highland Council and Scottish Government guidance but parents also have a role to play to ensure our children stay in school full time. We must all try to behave in a way which will ensure school remains safe and open for everyone.

On a positive note, Parent Council held our final 2 meetings of the 2019/20 session for the first time online during June 2020. Google Meet will be the new way to get together each term and it worked really well for us when we discussed the various options for the return to school in August. Although there was some guidance the official information from the Scottish Government was not due to be released until late July 2020 therefore the decision was taken by all that there was just too much uncertainty at that point to issue a plan. As Mrs Laird had various scenarios worked out it made more sense to wait for more clarity before deciding what August would bring. Although this was not the end to our school year we had planned I am thankful that everyone has been able to return to full time education and I hope that remains the case for every family in our community and throughout the country. I know now that I could not survive another period of home school and I truly appreciate what a great job Mrs Laird and all of the teachers and staff at GUPS do.

Finally I would like to offer my sincere thanks to all who have helped and supported me during the last year attending meetings along with your valued input. I may be leaving Parent Council at the Primary School but no doubt I will see some of you again, perhaps at the GUHS Parent Council in the future!

Regards

Lynn Milton
Chairperson GUPS Parent Council (outgoing)

