

**Earlston High School Parent Council meeting (via Zoom)  
Thursday 18 March 2021**

**Agenda**

Welcome  
Approval of previous minutes  
Update from S6 Head Team  
Head Teacher's Update including SQA  
Learning and teaching  
Supporting our most vulnerable  
Treasurer's Update  
Additional points  
Date of next meeting

**Attendance**

Gordon Craig  
Claire Karr  
Justin Sinclair  
Mel Brookes  
Ann Louise Kieran  
Dean Sewell  
Damian Hayes  
Annie Jones  
Jill McDonald  
Karen Wexelstein  
Kate Richards  
Abraham Daniel  
Kirsty Nicholson  
Fiona Donaldson  
Jill McDonald  
Shaad Mehdi  
Heather Thores  
Kevin Greenfield  
S6 Head Team

**Welcome and apologies**

MB welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Minute of the previous meeting**

Minutes from the previous meeting on 13/01/21 were proposed by Claire Karr and seconded by Mel Brookes.

**Update from S6 Head Team**

The S6 Head Team reported that on-line learning had, in general, been positive and staff had done well in the continuity of learning and engagement.

Regarding the return so school, it was clear that a lot of hard work had been undertaken by staff to make this possible and as effective as possible. Some pupils in S4-6 had found it challenging to concentrate on one subject for a full day, but it was noted that it did allow for an uninterrupted focus in one area and teachers were finding it helpful.

The S6 Head Team was in regular contact with other S6 teams and with Scottish Borders Council. Joint sessions were being facilitated by SBC with an upcoming one looking at the Scottish Parliamentary Election in May.

### **Head Teacher's Update**

JS noted thanks to staff and pupils for their continued resilience and support during challenging times. The key message from EHS was 'Be kind to yourself'. Pupils were being reassured that it is ok to be anxious and that it can take time to adapt to the return to school. Staff were being encouraged to give pupils breaks during longer lessons and allow pupils to take time out if required.

The timetable for the phased reopening up to the Easter break was noted. EHS was following guidance from the Scottish Government and prioritising classroom time for S4-6, who were in 4 days per week. Testing protocols were also in place for all S4-6 pupils and staff.

Under current plans EHS would reopen fully after the Easter break with 2m social distancing requirements removed and a testing regime in place for all staff and pupils. It was not clear, yet, whether face masks would still be required. Testing consent forms would be provided to all S1-3 pupils before the Easter break.

It was noted that input would be sought from the Parent Council, as EHS moves forward in recovery planning, particularly building on existing work and supporting mental health.

### **SQA**

It was confirmed that the model being used this year was based on demonstrated attainment. There will be no national exams. Assessments will be managed by schools with provisional results provided to the SQA. Quality assurance of the system included SQA sampling of assessments and continuing discussions vis moderation teams across SBC.

The majority of assessments were scheduled to take place after the Easter holidays with a provisional timetable planned to be issued by 19 March. For any assessment taking place beforehand, pupils will be informed. It was confirmed that there will be no study leave. Pupils will be given time for study in school.

### **Learning and Teaching**

DH reported on the delivery of learning. Most of S4-6 were on track to complete learning content by Easter. They will then move into revision. For S1-3 the focus has been on wellbeing and reconnecting during the phased return. Online content will continue up to Easter but live online lessons will be challenging as teachers will also be covering lessons at school.

It was noted that work had already started on capturing the positive outcomes from the enhanced use of technology in delivering teaching. These included:

- The head start provided by the inspire learning programme.
- Enhanced lesson planning.
- Being able to identify learning gaps in real time.
- Additional communication of monitoring of engagement.
- Access to documents outwith school hours.
- More direct reporting.

There were also plans being developed to trial an online parents evening.

It was reported that EHS was liable for the repair/replacement of tablets provided via the inspire learning programme. Views were sought from the Parent Council on whether a contribution to repair costs should be requested from parent/guardians. In response the following points were made

- It should be made clear upfront at EHS has to bear the costs of repair/replacement.
- Although a contribution to costs could be requested it could not be demanded.
- One option could be: first repair/replacement free, then contribution requested for any subsequent repairs/replacements.
- Flexibility should be considered where the damage is clearly accidental or an actual fault with the tablet.

### **Supporting our most vulnerable**

JM updated on support for vulnerable pupils. It was noted that a significant amount of support had been provided from parents and community groups in addition to the school support. The Hub had continued to work well but numbers had to be managed carefully. Priority had been given to S4-6 pursuing qualifications and S1. The mentoring programme was continuing but would scale down as pupils come back to school.

It was clear that many pupils were anxious about returning to school. Although the environment was familiar, the interaction was different because of the covid adaptations. An example was given of face masks making communication challenging in some circumstances.

### **Treasurer's Update**

There was no specific update at the meeting. It was noted that a financial report will be circulated following the meeting.

*Following the meeting it was reported that there were still issues in accessing the parent council bank account and setting up registered authorised signatories. It was hoped that this would be resolved soon.*

### **Additional points**

The following additional points were made in response to questions raised:

- Consideration was being given to starting S3 on their S4 timetable earlier than usual.
- Building on the plans to involve the Parent Council in recovery planning and capture positive outcomes from the enhanced use of technology, it was agreed that there would be merit in investigating lessons learned from the pandemic, in general, and where adaption could be adopted long term.
- It was not currently possible to use the school changing rooms. Therefore, the request that S1-3 do not wear uniforms up to the Easter break was to facilitate pupils' participation in physical activities.
- Members acknowledged the significant amount of work undertaken by MB in liaison with the school and other Parent Council chairs.

### **Next meeting**

TBA