

NOTES FROM CURRICULUM SUBGROUP MEETING ON 29TH JANUARY 2018

1. **Present:** Helen Coyle (Chair), Debbie Kennedy, Kay Douglas, Fiona Liddle, Moira MacDonald, and Sarah Moran (Sarah joined the group in October 2017)

Apologies: Ross Annan

2. **The notes of the Meeting on 5th June 2017 were approved.**

3. **Action Log:**

- a) **Foreign Language Provision:** We await the outcome of the forthcoming City wide 1+2 changes and will keep this under review.

ACTION – HC to ask David Dempster on an update on Language Provision in the school and its link to the above.

1+2 languages has been adopted across our cluster and is starting in the high school in session 18/19. All pupils entering S1 will continue with French AND German. They will do 2ppw of 1 and 1 ppw of the other before switching half way through the year so both languages have equal exposure. We are still going to offer Mandarin (new start) as an option instead of the 2 European languages. It is currently envisaged that pupils will choose either French or German to continue with into S2 and beyond. A language will remain compulsory until end of S4.

- b) **Attainment Review Yearly Meetings with Head Teacher** – This was held in November. David Dempster gave a detailed breakdown of the 2016 examination results to the Group. This was the first year that the new Qualifications were in place across all year groups. The results were excellent and show that the school continues to maintain its high academic status both nationally and locally. However, some issues around assignments/resources were identified in the areas of Higher Health and Food Technology, Graphic Communication, Design and Manufacture and Engineering Science. However, these are being addressed and the school is seeking support from the City Council and the SQA.

ACTION – HC to follow up with DD.

This has been followed up and DD is confident that there will be improvements this year.

ACTION – HC to follow up with DD.

Following our yearly Attainment meeting, the above-mentioned courses have indeed shown improvement compared to the previous year's exam results. However, some issues were raised within the subjects of Higher Photography, Art and PE. As with before, these will be followed up over the course of the year.

ACTION – HC to follow up with DD.

Steps are being undertaken to ensure improvement in attainment.

- c) **Schedule of Visits by Faculty Leaders:** Mrs Alice Clegg, Curriculum Lead for the Performing Arts (Drama, Media and Music) gave a talk to the wider PC in March. This was a very interesting, enthusiastic and inspiring talk about developments in this area of the curriculum.

It was suggested that the next Curriculum Lead to be invited to speak to the PC should be the CL for Physical Education. In light of wider developments within this field and the promotion of physical education, particularly the development of Sports Personality of the Year, it would be valuable to hear more about its place within the Curriculum for Excellence.

ACTION – HC to follow up with DD.

Mr Else, Curriculum Lead for PE has agreed to come and speak to the wider PC on 13th March.

Agreed and in diary

- d) **Communication with Parents:** Parent Pay has now been introduced and email communication to parents has been extended in recent weeks. Twitter is also being used more frequently, particularly for PE and more recently for Boroughmuir Careers, which is excellent. However, some members had alerted the group to the lack of an up to date Daily Bulletin on the website. For those parents of children in the younger years, the bulletin is considered an important form of, as other forms did not always make their way home.

ACTION – HC to follow up with DD. Communication has now been improved with regular emails to parents, tweets and the daily bulletin uploaded onto the school website. Furthermore, the wider PC are meeting and potentially forming a new Communications Subgroup who will deal with communications from the school and the Parent Council.

- e) **New Initiatives in Inter-Disciplinary Learning (IDL):** Kay informed the group about these new initiatives in Science, IT and Geography. Mr Clive Hembury (Chemistry Teacher) is organising them and it was felt that once they are established, it would be worthwhile inviting him to a Parent Council Meeting to talk about it and how it fits in with the Curriculum for Excellence and the New Qualifications.

ACTION – HC to contact DD to enquire about this.

DD response: Yes, he would be delighted to. HC to follow up after the initiative has been established.

ACTION: KD has agreed to brief the CSG on some aspects of the schools IDL initiatives at the next CSG meeting.

Kay kindly briefed the group on the background to IDL and its place within the Curriculum for Excellence. This year's IDL projects at Boroughmuir included a trip to the Hermitage of Braid for all S1s who learnt about water flow, orientation, making smoothies, history and looking at objects in the Hermitage Visitor Centre. The S2 project when on a trip to Our

Dynamic Earth, which took in a history trip down the Royal Mile and Mapping at Arthur's Seat.

ACTION: Kay to liaise with Mr Clive Hembury to arrange an invitation to inform the wider PC of developments.

ACTION: Kay has spoken with Mr Hembury and he has provisionally booked 5th June to speak to wider PC. Helen to inform Chair and Secretary of PC.

Agreed and in Diary

f) MANAGING NATIONAL 5 AND HIGHER/AH ASSIGNMENTS:

A National 5 Assessment Calendar is now available on the school website, under Curriculum. Members agreed that this was a really useful calendar with respect to alerting all concerned about deadlines for assignments. However, the Group would like to see this extended to include Higher/AH Assignments. It was also suggested that copies should be made available to Parents at Parent Evening Events (especially just after Prelims) so that all pupils, teachers and parents are aware of upcoming commitments. Indeed, the current calendar highlighted that a number of assignments were due in on the same day (particularly around the middle of March). It was therefore suggested that pupils would benefit from some time management, especially where assignments are expected to be completed outwith school. This could take the form of a workshop or use of a software package that helped with planning and carried out during PSE classes.

ACTION: HC to discuss with DD.

DD will ensure that the H and AH calendars are available by the new academic year. Teachers and PSE staff do regularly prompt and remind pupils not to wait until the deadline is looming and will continue to highlight this. However, due to the nature of assessment it is often necessary to wait until most of the course is complete before the assessment can be carried out, hence there will always, to some extent, be a number of deadlines falling around the same time.

The calendar for all subjects is now available on the school website.

- g) Book Return Day and S5/6 Induction Days:** Some pupils were left confused about when to return books, particularly when they had an examination beyond the book due date. Some were told off for not returning books on subjects where they had already sat an exam, but were still on study leave and did not want to take up valuable study time making the trip into school. It was also felt that as the Induction Days overlapped with examinations, a number of people missed out on these.

ACTION: HC to discuss with DD.

Book return for S5s will be set once the new Timetable has begun. For S6, books will be returned to the Librarian at a time suitable to them. This Induction Day this year will be one day, 5th June.

This has worked out well and a big improvement on the previous year.

- h) **LACK OF COMPULSORY PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN S5/6:** The CSG felt that there should be some form of compulsory physical education in these years, particularly at a time when pupils could benefit from exercise as a means of stress release and also amid the growing concerns in Scotland about obesity. Research also points to the number of teenage girls who drop out of sports during this period. Although many pupils at BHS pursue sports outwith school, by not offering physical education as a regular part of the timetable, could be seen to reinforce the message that it is acceptable to drop out of sports in this age group. While it was accepted that there may be timetabling issues, it was suggested that perhaps some PE facilities (possibly gym equipment) or Zumba classes could be made available to S5 and 6 at lunchtimes.

ACTION: HC to discuss with DD

DD Response: This is due to the lack of practicalities and expense as opposed to desire and it is planned to offer core PE in S5 when the school move to the new building.

ACTION: HC to be keep under review.

DD Response: Timetabling core PE will take place for S5/6 but the school do not think it is viable to make it compulsory. However, the expectation is that senior pupils will take it up.

ACTION: HC to follow up.

Core PE in S5 is now timetabled for ALL S5 classes (we expected to be in new school, so some difficulties!) Extending as an option to S6 in session 18/19. Too 'expensive' to make compulsory (and not desirable) for all of S6.

- i) **S4 Prelims:** It was noted that some pupils were sitting as many as 7 prelims in one week, many sitting 4 on the first Monday and Tuesday of the Prelim timetable. It is not clear to the Group whether this is due to restrictions on study leave, timetabling or other issues.

ACTION: HC to discuss with DD

DD response: School aware that the schedule is tight but this has been carried out in order to prevent using up study leave days that are reserved for the May exams. However, the school will look at spreading the future prelims over 2 weekends and perhaps extending one day.

This has now been carried out and working well.

j) **Changes in Assessment to National Qualifications:**

The Group discussed the forthcoming changes to National Qualifications with respect to Assessment. It was felt that more clarification is needed as to what the changes are going to be and whether Boroughmuir is ready for the changes.

ACTION: HC to discuss with DD. DD replied and said that the school is as ready as any school and is confident the changes will run smoothly.

Changes made and all departments have implemented them successfully – although perceived benefits of reduced assessment and workload not always forthcoming!

k) **One Page Summary review of National 5, Higher and Advance Highers Courses available in the Senior Phase:** The Group would like to see short summaries of the courses available in the senior phase on the school website, perhaps incorporated within the section on Faculties on the website. It was felt that some pupils and parents were not always sure, from the information provided in the Course Booklets, what the course involved. This was particularly so with subjects which have a new name (Graphic Communication) or are completely new (Engineering Science).

ACTION: HC to discuss with DD.

DD will look into it. However, it was felt by the CSG that the existing Course Booklet could be used in combination with any individual subject flyers and also the National Parent of Scotland Forum's Nationals in a Nutshell flyers.

ACTION: HC to ask if DD would alert parents to also look at Nationals in a Nutshell when helping their children make course choices.

Agreed. Course choice booklets which are on website should fulfil this role. Nationals in Nutshell along with other National Parent Forum Scotland (NPFS) information links are there also. WE also have a Supported study programme that has been sent home and is in the ' Letters to Parents ' section of the web site. We will group call all this information to parents after the Feb break.

4. **S3 Homework:** It was felt that some children are getting less homework than they got in S1 and S2.

ACTION: HC to discuss with DD to establish that changes in the assessment of National Qualifications has had an impact on Homework in S3.

Homework is issued as and when appropriate by subject departments. There is not and has never been a policy on how much homework a dept should give. As quickly as it is deemed too little it can change to be perceived as too much!!

5. **AOB:**

- a) **S3-6 Exams** – The CSG wanted to establish whether S3-6 pupils would sit exams together in the new school.

ACTION: HC to discuss with DD

S3 pupils will as always do a full diet of S3 assessments (exams) during the month of May , in the new school.

- b) **Tracking and Monitoring:** The CSG felt that some consistency should be adhered to when teachers are providing a 'working grade' in tracking reports. For example, some departments provide a 'working grade' of 2 when only a third of the way through a course. However, their assessment appears to be based on the assumption that if the pupil were to sit a third of the course, then this is reflected in the 'working grade' provided. Other departments however, provide a 'working grade' of 6, which appears to be based on the fact that if a pupil were to sit the exam at that time they would only pass a third of it. It was agreed that further clarification on this would be helpful.

ACTION: HC to discuss with DD.

The working grade is a snapshot of where the pupil is at that time. It is not a prediction of ultimate performance. This is something that we will remind all staff of.

Date of Next Meeting - May 2018