



Boroughmuir High School Parent Council

Minutes of Parent Council Meeting 31st March 2021

Attended by:

Kate Morris (KM) (PC Chair), Parent Council Subgroup leaders, Ellen Langdon (EL) (PC Minutes), David Dempster (DD) (Head Teacher), Clive Hembury (CH) Boroughmuir Senior Leadership team and 111 family households

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Action</i>
<p>1. <u>Welcome, apologies, minutes approval</u> <i>Kate Morris, Chair, presented</i></p> <p>Minutes approved. No matters arising. Apologies received from Dawn McNeil.</p> <p>2. <u>Introduction and Priorities for Discussion</u></p> <p>The key issue for parents is assessment. The Parent Council represents the views of parents to the school and local authorities. Teachers are limited in what they can say to Edinburgh City Council and the SQA but the Parent Council is not. The SQA and councils have left it so late to inform schools and pupils. Not giving the schools time to adjust. It has been very hard on teachers and pupils. The school is doing its best in a really bad situation.</p> <p>3. <u>HT Report, Assessment Presentation and Q&A</u></p> <p>DD thanked the PC for the recognition that the school is in a position that they would rather not be in. Despite this, DD is very pleased at how this week has gone. The pupils have been in for a limited time but when they've been in, it has been a good experience for them at Boroughmuir, which has not been the case across all the schools in Scotland. Whilst there are still pupils at home and pupils at school, all pupils have been taken care of, not just those in school. The school has really emphasised the reconnection side and encouraging increased communication between teachers and pupils.</p> <p>What we are facing over the next month or two is not what we would have chosen but what we have here at Boroughmuir is the best option.</p> <p>We have decided on two assessment blocks. Meeting with our curriculum leaders, we're all convinced this is the best assessment model approach for pupils in the current circumstances.</p> <p><u>The National Qualification Assessments 2021.</u> <i>Clive Hembury presented</i></p> <p>A lot of work has gone into this. We will spend time building the pupil's confidence. We have two weeks of normal study and preparation before each assessment block. We looked at many models but we felt that this approach was the fairest. There will be two hour blocks to complete assessments. We are being mindful of pupils' well being and having a calm school and pupils. Two weeks then assessments for both blocks 1 & 2. Class teachers are sending out information to pupils via Teams. Revision and consolidation for two weeks before each assessment. Kate Morris (Chair) has CH's slides anyone wants. The most up to date version of these slides are on the Boroughmuir website. Pupils will have time to get as organised as they can be. What parents may consider doing is sitting down</p>	

with them and highlighting key dates where they've got subjects listed so that they don't miss out on assessments coming up. Write in the yellow boxes what subjects are coming up. We have chosen columns as a format so that they don't have one assessment after another but have breaks as much as possible in between.

Questions

Will pupils have time to prepare? No SQA assessments will take place during revision and consolidation periods.

At assessment blocks pupils will be given time to prepare. Edinburgh council confirmed exam leave would not be awarded because of the time pupils have already had away from the classroom. They will be offered a choice to do revision in groups or on their own.

All course assessments are mandatory and must be completed.

Pupils mustn't share information about assessments and this will be closely monitored.

Reassessments are not permitted under SQA protocols.

SQA are looking for demonstrated assessment evidence using combined assessments completed within the assessment blocks, not teacher's professional judgement of arbitrary pieces of work. With the exception of exceptional circumstances.

Kate Morris (Chair) commented

Parents are viewing outdated information that still remains on the SQA website and hasn't yet been updated. KM thought the assessment process would benefit from being communicated more simply. A simple step by step approach would be appreciated especially so close to the school holidays.

CH responded that he would work with pupils to explain the process. DD confirmed that there could be a crib sheet prepared to guide parents and pupils through the process that will be circulated tomorrow. [1 April 2021]. DD has had confirmation from Edinburgh City Council that what Boroughmuir is doing is exactly what the SQA and Edinburgh City Council would hope for under the circumstances.

Concern over maths and English assessments happening at different times. Maths and English exams are happening at the same time so answers cannot be shared. Other subjects are happening at different times but we'll get a very strong message out to pupils that they would only be cheating themselves if they cheat. We will make it work.

Is it possible to align the assessment block with the class work? They will get very focussed revision that will prepare them.

How can parents help with managing the revision for such a tight schedule? DD thinks they will have a high degree of efficiency in the school. Teachers will provide advice and help in school. CH advises to use the SQA website. There's past papers and marking schemes there.

What alternatives for those who finish before assessments block 2 CH said that all pupils will be taking both assessments.

Is English Nat 5 in block 2? DD says it is at the very end of assessment block 1 on the Friday.

What is combined assessment? DD says it is the average of the two. They are added together.

See the 'Safe Return to School' part of the website where you can find further details.

Where is Art? Art is in column F and column H

Is the structure of the assessments the same as a traditional higher? DD said we're using the standard approach. Ailsa responded. Papers weighted according to the amount of time given and assessment schedule. They get the same number of choices covered. The school will find out more and get back to them.

What will you do to support people to get back into the rhythm of school? *Claire Paterson Head of the guidance team responded.* Pupils have made good connections with their teachers on how they can support them when they come back to school and how they can mentor young people and they will match those needing extra support with a mentor. The pupils seem desperate to get back to school but a lot are hoping that when everyone is back and it's a normal environment, they'll feel better about that.

Will prelims be taken into consideration? Prelims don't have the course coverage. Many pupils didn't do that well in prelims. DD thinks its better to use the two assessment blocks to generate a grade. A prelim at a proper standard is necessary. These assessments are robust and giving credible results. We'll start with this assessment; this has been properly standardised and is robust.

KM commented. Most other schools in Edinburgh are taking this approach and that this is a hot issues for schools. So much so that the council is hosting a meeting tonight which with two days notice KM wasn't able to attend.

Art Higher? – Pages 10-11 you'll find the login for Art.

Revising at home? DD said they need to be in school. Young people relish being in school. Supported study should be in school. S6 pupils can leave after their last assessment but all others must be in school.

If a child is ill is that fair for in-school assessment? DD said that we will keep these materials at school, if pupils miss the assessment and come back after a short absence, they can still sit it.

When did SQA give notice of this form of assessment? It has been over some months and gaining volume. Demonstrated attainment evidence is what they require. DD thinks the solution they have will serve most pupils well. Pupils will do well.

After the second block will the children go up to the next year straight away? DD replied that the school have to get a timetable made for that and all effort has been focussed on securing an assessments timetable but it will be done.

Mental health impact on pupils to do exams after so long at home? DD said there hasn't been a great deal of assessments to date. We are being asked to use the SQA materials to get some consistency across all schools from Aberdeen to Edinburgh which is a big ask. What we're offering is fairer for them and we have a job to help them understand that.

Claire Paterson said that the guidance teachers are very aware of what the pupils are facing. The teachers are too. We are just trying to work together to get the best outcome. We only found out about these changes just before Christmas, we'll support pupils to give them the best possible chance.

Pupils needing extra time for assessment? DD said that no assessments will take more than 1 hour 30 mins to allow those needing more time to perform the assessment.

Edinburgh city council's approach is Scotland wide? DD thinks so but doesn't know for sure. He can't see how any school would want to do anything differently.

Why did children not know until last week that they would have exams? CH we have to assess pupils in the shortest possible time to give the assessments the highest predictive value.

Will you accommodate those with confinement issues. DD said that small spaces will be available. Our lack of space across the school makes it difficult but we have scheduled space.

Many parents present communicated how much they appreciated all the tremendous effort teachers have put in, especially the leadership team. DD said that what teachers have been asked to do has been above and beyond and they are a great staff.

DD wanted to share on a couple of things.

- 1) Bring your own device. Post Easter wifi will be accessible s4-6. They will have to sign a responsible users guide. We cannot do what we need to do without wifi access so we made the case and the digital team got it passed with the council.
- 2) On the 12 April, construction will start on the new extension to the school. It starts just before all this with the assessments. Ailsa will coordinate communications between the council and the school over this.

KM – We will delay the online learning until the next meeting. We hope we will never have to go back to that. Massive thank you to DD and staff for coming along and for their very clear answers. KM commented that teachers have been asked to do too many impossible things in one year and that parents appreciate how hard they have worked. Many parents commented about this in the chat.

AOB - We are looking for a new Treasurer! This is essential to keep the Parent Council running. To find out more about the Treasurer position please email Dawn at treasurer@boroughmuir-pc.co.uk. Thanks to Dawn for all her support and commitment to the parent council.

KM thanked everyone for attending and particularly the school's senior leadership team.

The next meeting will be held on 21 April 2021. KM closed the meeting.

Parent Council Contact Details

Chair Kate Morris chair@boroughmuir-pc.co.uk, Vice Chair Gareth Clegg; Treasurer Dawn McNeil treasurer@boroughmuir-pc.co.uk, Secretary Ellen Langdon secretary@boroughmuir-pc.co.uk, New School Subgroup Leader Keith Robson

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