**Parent/Carer Focus Group**

**Thursday 8th June 2017**

**5/10 invited parents/carers attended**

**Chaired by L Blair, Depute Head S1-3 and K McConnachie, Depute Head S4-6**

**Q1. The school seeks my views**

* The group recognised the report card response sheet as being the immediate way that views are sought.
* 1 parent spoke about views being sought when the curriculum structure changed for the new National Qualifications. However, she felt that the school had already made up their mind about the curricular model that they would adopt.
* Most of the focus group agreed that paper communication did not always reach home via pupil mail.
* The group were split in terms of receiving text messages and there was inconsistency. K McConnachie explained that the text would only go to the main contact we have on Seemis.
* Concern was raised about the accuracy of the Data Update. 1 parent said that she manually wrote out corrections on the update sheet every year but the sheet seemed to default back each year with the same errors (although she did receive text messages).
* K McConnachie explained our planned move to ParentMail. All except one thought this was a good idea. 1 parent did not want to receive everything that we would sent via ParentMail. K McConnachie explained that it was not possible to filter the selection of what could be received. Discussion also took place about paper copies being available to those who would not want /be able to receive ParentMail.
* K McConnachie outlined other mechanisms we have used for seeking Parent/Carer views via Information Evenings and Surveys.
* The group spoke about the blank section at the back of the newsletter where they could give the school feedback but were not sure if this ever came back to us via pupils.
* Discussion took place about electronic feedback via the Report Card Response Sheet. LBlair discussed that this could be a possibility. Discussion also took place that in addition to what is asked on the response sheet, the school could also add other questions/prompts to elicit feedback.
* The group felt that they needed more opportunities/prompts throughout the year to give general feedback.
* Examples were given of when parents had given feedback; lockers, Duke of Edinburgh. The group felt that they wanted more information on the selection process for Duke of Edinburgh and that communication of this was not good.
* The group felt they would like their views sought at times of policy making in the school.

**Q2. The school takes my views into account**

* One parent disagreed with the introduction of the compulsory blazer for S5/S6 Uniform Blazer and didn’t feel that her views were taken into account. Her feelings were that a jacket for school should have the following criteria – Warmth, Hood and Waterproof.
* Parents mentioned that it can be a fight with pupils to wear the Blazer to school.
* Parents asked as about how fully the uniform policy was enforced.
* L Blair and K McConnachie outlined that spot checks took place but sometimes a pupils’ personal circumstance may be the issue as to why an element of the uniform may be missing.
* Guidance around footwear was discussed and the guidance regarding black footwear. L Blair explained that only in instances where pupils were wearing white/brightly coloured footwear would that be an issue. As long as pupils are in black footwear this would be deemed acceptable.
* The idea of a Blazer Amnesty was discussed to support families who might not be able to afford a blazer.
* One parent felt that their views were not taken into account and as a result, they could not see the school being shaped by parent input.
* One parent did feel that their views were taken into account and that changes were made. This was in regards to pupil option choices - Modern languages.
* Some parents welcomed the introduction of the S3 skills class as this maintained breadth in pupil learning.
* One parent felt that they would like to be consulted on policy changes within the school.
* K McConnachie asked whether the group had used the Parent Council as a means for taking on views and becoming involved in shaping the school.
* The majority of the group had never approached the Parent Council to share the views or for matters to be considered.
* They felt that a reminder before each meeting would maybe prompt parents to use this forum more to take on views and to shape school policy.
* One parent commented that it would be beneficial to place the times of events on the School Calendar.
* Online booking for Parents Evening.
* Some in the group reported that pupils had expressed issue with the provision in the school toilets.
* One parent felt that her son’s needs were not taken into account when being issued with a locker as he was given one at ground level and due to his height, this made accessing the locker difficult.
* One parent recommended that pupil views be taken into account when PEF funding was being considered
* K McConnachie and L Blair explained that SMT are present at Interval, lunchtime and at the end of the school day.