



# SGOIL LIONACLEIT PARENT COUNCIL

## Parent Council meeting Notes: Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2015

*These notes are produced to complement the information given by Mr. Miller MacDonald yesterday. The Parent Council wishes to include the views expressed by all at the meeting and work on resolving the matters in hand. To that a second Council meeting is to be held Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> of June, parents are invited to attend.*

### **Advanced Higher (AH) Graphic Communication (GC)**

Miller explained the difficulties due to the SQA late information and change in regulations regarding the delivering of the new course. He stated that because of this, the school did not have time to adequately prepare. They did not feel it would be right to offer a course that they were not prepared for.

Parents asked how other schools in Stornoway and on the mainland were able to do so. The school stated that there were very few, (only 5 across 4 council areas) who were able to. Because of the nature of the subject it would not be easier or desirable to teach it through distance learning with other schools, although this could be considered for other subjects. (This could be discussed on individual basis).

Parents felt concerned at what seemed like lack of communication on the status of the course and that pupils were being left disadvantaged.

Parent Council proposed some ways forward:

Assist school in Lobbying:

- SQA for information in timely fashion in future
- Lobby CnES for resources for distance learning and links with other schools
- Build links with UHI to utilise resources and facilities
- Provide pupils and parents with updated information on courses and recourses available.
- Work with staff to forecast future needs

### **Preparatory Assignment - Higher Psychology**

Miller explained the status of the essay, that it was part of the course, not a pre-requisite to studying the course. It was clarified that even if a pupil does not do well at it, they will continue the coursework as normal. Those who were still taking exams were given extra time to do it. It was an unfortunate misunderstanding that arose out of the already frustrated nature of the pupil/teacher interface.

No further action required.

### **New S6 Access to the S6 Common Room**

Kenny explained why there was a delay in opening the Common room for the students. It was partly because it was not ready and because some personal property from the previous year was still there. Unfortunately before Assembly the room had been open, so some of the new S6 students had put their bags and belongings for the day etc in there. When they returned from Assembly they found the room locked and were not able to

retrieve their stuff. The situation was discussed. When the students tried to find alternative accommodation, they found themselves being "Moved around" the school. They found this frustrating and disheartening. The meeting discussed the availability of rooms and pupil accommodation. If for example the Library could be made available. The school admitted that this, along with many of the communications issues of last week, has been a common occurrence as part of the S5/S6 year change over. The meeting felt that this did not make it right. The students felt that they were not being catered for and were being unjustly treated. The parents supported them in this and felt that as the common room was not available alternate provision should have been arranged.

Parent Council Proposed way forward:

- Organised /planned hand over between old and new S6s years. Gives ownership and experience in communications.
- Facilitate pupils to carry out a "Lesson's learned" exercise that they can present to staff as to how the transition can be improved for future years. Allow them to be part of the solution.

### **Timetable and Accommodation issues for the new S6 on the 1st June**

Kenny, Guidance teachers and pupils all spoke of their frustrations and obviously deep felt "hurt" at what happened on the day. Pupils thanked Mrs Wright for helping to calm the situation down, but expressed strongly their sense of frustration and feeling of disappointment at the day's events. Parents supported the pupils, expressing that they should not be put in this position when they are so stressed at school.

There was a general discussion regarding the structure of the timetable, the choices available and the benefits and disadvantages of students being obliged to study five subjects, even when the fifth subject is one that the student is not interested in. Parents felt this can add unnecessary pressure and work. The teachers argued that it can broaden horizons and give advantage in university applications.

Pupils felt that the choices available did not give them adequate flexibility to meet their needs. They felt that they were not listened to. The Pupils' Council was cited as an example where, despite participation, it was felt that their views were not acted upon.

The senior teachers were concerned that things escalated very quickly over "solvable issues". Concern was expressed over the potentially negative consequences of Social Media and contact with the Press. The meeting felt that this was a sign of the level of the deep felt frustration.

A question was asked regarding school references for the S6 Pupils. Mrs Campbell and Miller assured the meeting that all pupils will be given an Academic Reference.

While there are some very positive examples of good communications and pupil/teacher relationships, the tension and the obvious hurt shows that it did break down in a completely unexpected manner. It indicated that the events on Monday may well have been more of a "final straw" rather than the cause. We could discuss this with the pupils. Despite the teachers' efforts, the students didn't feel listened to, cared for, or respected. "You didn't try to stop us..." was a statement that gave evidence of their feeling of rejection. It was recognised that this is a case where the feeling of rejection is as important as the intent of the other party.

Parent Council Proposed way forward:

- Facilitate team work between parents, pupils and teachers to rebuild trust and communication.
- The Pupils' Council needs to be listened to and have their achievements publicised. They need to feel and be seen to be more than a talking shop. Could we support projects between Pupil and Parent Councils? The challenge is, how can the contribution that they make be better tracked and recognised. By giving them the

scope to be heard and make changes, they will understand the difficulties better and appreciate the efforts being made by them and on their behalf. It will give them a chance to feel that their contribution is valued.

Libby Patterson

Secretary

Sgoil Lionacleit Parent Council