

Chairperson's Report – AGM 2019-2020

I welcome you to Robert Owen Primary School Parent Council AGM and I am delighted to present my first Chairperson's report for the school session 2019-2020, albeit a bit later than usual.

The 2019-2020 school session was a year like no other. This year has brought unprecedented challenges for us as individuals, for the school and for everyone in its community. The past school session will be one we will never forget and one which will bring about significant changes for ROMPS Parent Council going forward to ensure we can continue to support the school and its families as safely and best as we possibly can.

6 meetings were held over the course of the year 2019-2020 with the planned AGM in May being postponed until now. In addition to these meetings, we held our first Zoom call Q&A meeting to discuss the re-opening of schools. Last year we changed the structure of the agenda a little to include a Parent Council business section, a school business section, and an active agenda section. Parent Council and school business alternate as first on the agenda to ensure equal time spent across the year. Members are given the opportunity to put items forward for the active agenda prior to the meeting or if time allows at the end of the meeting. The structure of the meetings seems to work well and we will continue this structure going forward if everyone is happy with this.

We have a core group of people who are active in their support and contribution towards helping ROMPS move forward, and it was positive to see a few new parents join us throughout last year as well as some additional volunteers at events. We usually had between 9 and 13 parents attending meetings with regular apologies for up to a further 9. ROMPS senior leadership team were always well represented at meetings. Above this, we had several members on the email list who are unable to attend meetings but who are active in helping with events. At the end of session 2019-2020 there were 33 parents on our email list. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who is involved with the Parent Council in any way for their support and for the contribution they make. Parental engagement, however, continues to be a focus for ROMPS Parent Council. This is something we actively tried to ensure we promoted and developed last year. In session 2019-2020 parental engagement was a discussion point on every agenda. We updated our section of the school website and actively encouraged more parents to engage with the work of the Parent Council through spreading the meetings across the week, asking for parent volunteers at all our events (rather than only parents who are on the email list), providing more regular newsletters and through seeking parental feedback through a survey. We also re-introduced a Parent Council email address for parents to contact freely. Increasing parental engagement is something we will continue to focus on and strive for.

We spend a significant part of our meetings working with Mrs Thomson and the senior leadership team on self-evaluation and ways to help drive the school forward. We spent time last year looking at the anti-bullying policies and work surrounding this, we looked at the Curriculum Rationale in draft and final format, we heard about the Cost of the School Day and the work the school are doing

to address this, we heard from Mrs Gardiner and pupils of the School Improvement Team as well as looking at HGIOS, the School Improvement Plan and Standards and Quality Report. I am confident anyone who took part in the discussions and exercises around this work will agree that this part of the meeting, alongside Mrs Thomson's monthly updates provides valuable insight into the work that is happening within the school to provide the best education for our children possible.

Events last year

Although our year was cut short, we had a busy year in 2019-2020.

In the first few days of term we welcomed several new parents to the school by hosting an afternoon tea. It was lovely to meet some new ROMPS parents and share the work of the Parent Council.

Having forward planned our first event at the end of the previous year meant we started our fundraising events early with a Family Quiz and Disco in September. This event was very successful and enjoyed by all attending. Attendance was a little disappointing, however a strong school staff presence made for comfortable numbers on the night and a positive start towards our fundraising target.

Also in September, Susan led the Parent Council in a Cash for Kids fundraising initiative which earned the school a certificate. I wasn't able to attend the bag packing event for this initiative but it seemed to be successful in terms of fundraising and as bag packing is something we have previously discussed this is something we could perhaps look into again when it is safe to do so.

In October, we held our first movie night of the session where approx. 150 children joined together to enjoy watching "Wonderpark" with their friends. The organisation of this event brought about a number of changes which impact on all future Parent Council events and will be discussed later in this report. It was lovely to see around 6 parents who were not members of the Parent Council volunteer at this event and then at subsequent events.

The lead up to Christmas saw us involved in selling Borders Biscuits in association with Lanark Rotary Club for the second year. Sales of biscuits were excellent and made a nice profit for the Parent Council. We sold the biscuits both at the Christmas Extravaganza and also through order forms with both means being successful.

2019 ended with a very successful Christmas gift sale. Although the number of children buying gifts this year appeared to be fewer than previous years, the children were pleased with the gifts purchased and we made a sound profit from this event. We had a substantial number of gifts left last year which gives us a head start for a future event, again when it is safe to do so.

Following the success of the movie night in October, we decided to hold a second movie night in February; this time 150 children watched the movie "Angry Birds 2" and proved to be our second smooth movie night of the year.

We had planned a Family Spring Fayre to end our year but this was not to be and so was postponed for the foreseeable future.

Can I please take this opportunity to thank anyone who helped with the events last year and to Mrs Thomson for allowing us to use the school printing and photocopying facilities and to the office staff for helping with the distribution and collection of letters and forms for these events.

Contributions last year

As a result of the fundraising events mentioned, ROMPS Parent Council were delighted to support the school in the following ways during 2019-2020 session:

Providing a range of books to be used as regular ROMPS readers prizes.

Contributing towards the cost of every child's Pantomime ticket.

Providing a cash donation to each class to be used on classroom supplies.

Contributing towards the cost of Yearbooks for the P7 pupils.

Purchasing ties for our P7 leavers.

Purchasing gym bags for our P1 entrants.

In addition to this we made a donation to Greyfriars Church to thank them for the continued use of their popcorn machine at our Movie Nights.

We had also planned to contribute towards the cost of the P7 leavers treat but due to school closures this event didn't take place.

At the beginning of the school year we discussed our financial commitments and what might benefit the school with any additional funding we could secure. We agreed to aim to provide a supply of waterproof clothing to be used to allow all pupils access to appropriate clothing for outdoor learning, forest schools, Lockerbie residential trip and outdoor PE without placing pressure on families to provide these. The approximate cost of this supply was £1800 which we agreed to try to source from external funding. Our application to Borders biscuits was declined as they felt that these resources were a "matter for the council." We will need, in time, to discuss whether this supply of clothing is still something that would be suitable and desired by the school or if we change our focus for the new year ahead.

Challenges this year

All challenges bring opportunities to learn and develop and as a Parent Council, we continued to move forward last year.

We became more aware of the policies surrounding the work we do which had significant impact on the way we planned and organised our year.

We took guidance from South Lanarkshire Council and Disclosure Services that all parent volunteers must be PVG checked through South Lanarkshire Council Education Services. Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the paperwork necessary for this. I know it can seem like a paper exercise but I am sure you will agree that the safety of our children is utmost priority and this scheme undoubtedly helps us ensure our children are safe. For anyone who is not yet PVG checked through SLC education services or for any parents in the wider parent forum who would like to volunteer, forms are available from the school office and SLC pays for the cost of the check. Going forward we will continue to require that all volunteers obtain this check and Mrs Thomson will ensure that a member of Senior Management Team is present at all events.

We also took guidance from South Lanarkshire Council regarding supervision at Parent Council events and were advised a ratio of 1 adult to 12 children. This can be a challenge at events such as movie night where we have large numbers of children attending and has meant that we unfortunately had to cap numbers for such events this year. However, once again following this guidance ensures we have adequate supervision and I am sure all those who attended movie nights agree that having a higher adult volunteer attendance contributed to the safety of the children and the smooth running of the events. Planning events in advance to ensure there is plenty of time to recruit volunteers will continue to be necessary for future events at time these can take place again.

Risk assessments also had to be completed for Parent Council events which was another new procedure for us and will continue to be required for future events. These risk assessments ensure that the health and safety is fully considered for the smooth running of events. A short briefing prior to events this year was held to ensure all volunteers were made aware of key points on the risk assessment as well as the document being emailed to volunteers in advance to read in full.

We were also advised about some exceptions to the lets for school promoting events or free lets. These included that no alcohol can be consumed at either events and again, is something to bear in mind when planning future events.

I am sure you will agree that although each of the points discussed may add a little to our workload they also help ensure the efficient and safe running of Parent Council events and as such have been very valuable lessons to learn this year.

It would be remiss of me when talking about challenges, not to mention the period when the school was closed. At a time that was very difficult across the globe, ROMPS staff went above and beyond

to provide support, communication and continuity of learning for our children, something which I am sure we are all very grateful for. The pupils of ROMPS were offered opportunities to take part in wider school events including Sports day, House Day and ROMPS Got Talent to help bring a sense of normality in very uncertain times. I am looking forward to finding out how the Parent Council will work with the school and find a new way of working in order to support the school and minimise the impact of COVID 19 on our children and school community.

Looking Forward

Looking forward to session 2020-2021 we will need to operate significantly differently to the way we have become accustomed to. ZOOM call meetings are likely to be our default for the time being with all events on hold for the foreseeable future. We will also need to consider our commitments and how we source funding to provide these. This will be discussed further in our next meeting.

Parental engagement is something we will continue to focus on. We can make further use of the results of the survey to ensure that we are involving as many parents as possible and taking action based on the views received in all areas of the work of the Parent Council.

We will continue to work with the school in considering The Cost of the School Day and how we can support this in the work we do as a Parent Council.

We will continue to find ways to provide “extras” for the pupils of ROMPS although we will need to find new ways to do this.

Finally, we will continue to support the school in any way possibly in its recovery and journey forward.

Final Thoughts

Once again, I would like to pass on my sincere thanks to my fellow Parent Council members who have given their time, enthusiasm and commitment to support the school and Parent Council during the last year. I must pass on particular thanks to Laura Black who produced the final newsletter last session; to Susan for helping organise the Quiz night; to Bronwen for providing such detailed minutes of our meetings and producing our first newsletter last year; to Laura McCann for securing the lets amongst the other numerous organising tasks she does so efficiently and to Gareth for all his work on the finances, his record keeping and speed of counting coins are second to none!

A special thanks must also be passed on to Mrs Thomson and her senior leadership team for the many additional hours devoted to guiding the school so well this year and for the support they give to the Parent Council. A further thanks to Miss McAllister for continuing to post our meetings, events and all the associated details and documents across all the school communication platforms. Finally, thanks to the teaching and support staff who guided and supported our children last year.

As a Parent Council, we look forward to working with and supporting ROMPS in the year ahead to achieve more great things.