

## Spean Bridge Primary Parent Group Meeting

Tuesday 7th May 2019

**Apologies;** Rachel Stewart, Ruth Fitzsimmons, Eilidh Maitland, Martia Rowantree, Margaret Sargent, Fiona Davies, Allan Henderson (councillor) Ben Thompson (councillor) Kim Bentley, Ian Jackson (highland council), Mark Strachan, Kelly Strachan, Susan

**Present;** Annabel Loughray, Sandra Chisholm, Caroline Henderson.

1. **Roy Bridge Primary School:** Ian Jackson asked to attend the meeting to discuss the future of Roy Bridge Primary School. In summary - Roy Bridge Primary was 'mothballed' in March 2017 and the remaining pupils transferred to Spean Primary at this time. Scottish Government rules dictate a school can only be mothballed for three years, so a decision needs to be made in the next 10 months as to the future of the school. Either it reopens as a primary school or it is closed indefinitely. There is a procedure that must be followed for this, step one is to find out the initial view of parents whom this affects. There then has to be a statutory consultation, a public meeting, further consultation with Education Scotland, a review exercise and a report published before a committee decision would be made. Ultimately Holyrood make the final decision and there would be lots of opportunity for people within the Roy Bridge school catchment to make any comments on the matter before a decision was reached. Ian was keen to hear comments from within the room and opened it out to the group present.

Mark Strachan stated he was keen for the school to be reopened as it is part of the village community. He also mentioned the capacity of Spean school and the planned new houses for Spean village. What would the impact be on Roy Bridge children in the future if Spean school becomes full? Mark also added that a lot of money was spent on a new classroom for Roy Bridge school prior to it closing and this has not been maintained whilst mothballed - there will now be large costs for repair and maintenance if the school reopens.

Fiona D - discussed/clarified that English nursery provision has always been in Spean where as Roy Bridge only offered Gaelic nursery in the village. Spean nursery fed into Spean school and Fiona asked would Roy Bridge parents have selected Roy primary if there had been an English speaking nursery there.

Margaret S stated that since Spean Nursery opened in 2001 it became harder for Roy Bridge parents to decide which school to send their kids to.

Ben T at this stage asked the Roy Bridge parents was a community hub more important than a school? Was it more about having somewhere at the centre of the village for the community to access or more about having a school for the children? An answer wasn't clear.

Allan H - Allan gave a summary of the history of the closure - Roy Bridge was scheduled for closure in 2007 but this decision was fought and the school stayed open, numbers began to

dwindle. Allan added it had been very difficult to source the £500,000 for the new classroom at Roy Bridge Primary and now it sits abandoned. Allan encouraged parents to speak out if they want Roy Bridge Primary to reopen. The group discussed and some of the parents present stated they have chosen Spean for their children and would NOT remove them from Spean school if Roy Bridge school reopened.

It was agreed that Ian will attend the community council meeting on Tuesday 4th June to discuss this and highlight it to the wider community. If a public consultation is to be held it will be held in Roy Bridge Hall and it would be well advertised to the wider community so all could attend.

The nursery situation was discussed and it was stated that Roy Bridge won't have its own nursery provision even if the school does reopen, the nursery for Roy Bridge children would continue to be in Spean Bridge.

Kelly asked if Roy Bridge primary could be used as a second campus for the current kids enrolled at Spean Bridge, this was discussed among the group but unclear if this could be a viable option. It was asked why Spean Bridge had become an option for Roy Bridge parents in the first place and the following summary was given by Eilidh and Allan. When Roy Bridge primary was for planned closure in 2006/7, the children eligible for school enrollment that year enrolled at Spean school. Roy Bridge school was then saved and didn't close but the children who had already started school in Spean were allowed to continue there as were their siblings. A bus was provided to transport the kids and other parents applied for placing requests alongside this and it snowballed from there. There have in the past been children in Roy Bridge who attended school in Spean and there are currently children in both Roy Bridge and Spean Bridge who attend school in Fort William.

The placing request system was then discussed among the group and Fiona gave an explanation of how they work/don't work in England. Ian clarified that within Highland Council children are automatically enrolled into their catchment school unless parents submit a placing request. Placing requests can only be refused if allowing that child to attend would put the class size over the maximum number.

The cost of running buses from Roy to Spean would be compared to the costs of reopening the school in Roy Bridge as well as the fact it would be adding a third school to Kims cluster and that would have an impact on her workload. Although the 'cluster' in its beginning was always the three schools, Roy Bridge has now been closed for two years and it would divide Kims time further. The proposed new houses in Spean were mentioned and it was asked what impact would be felt by Spean school if Roy school reopened? Would Spean's budget see a cut?

Ben Thompson started a conversation about what the school building in Roy Bridge could be used for if it's not a school. Ian stated if there was an active movement within the Roy Bridge community then it could be considered. If a closure goes ahead the property could be offered round council departments. Ian stated the building would remain a council building unless not wanted at which time it might be offered to the community. There would be a discussion over how this might happen.

Ian left the meeting at this time as did Margaret, Mark, Kelly and Susan.  
The planned agenda for the meeting continued.

**2. Minutes - Accuracy.** Occasional spelling mistakes noted by secretary.

**3. Minutes - matters arising** - Eco Garden. No volunteers but lots of gardening going on this term. 3 of the p1/2's cleaned out the polytunnel with Mrs Fitzsimmons in their lunchtimes and have planted herbs. The whole school now plan to get involved. Kim will put out a dojo post asking for summer holiday cover/help with garden.

The effectiveness of Dojo was discussed - Kim reports only 2 families not registered to use the app and over 40 views per post on average which is approx half the families.

**4. Head Teachers Report** - see attached for full report. The following were discussed:

Changes to nursery provision - as of August 2019 Spean nursery will offer the 30 hours a week free to all 3 and 4 year olds. (Between 8.30 - 3.30pm) No changes need to be made to the nursery to accommodate this change but the school kitchen is due to be reviewed as these nursery children are entitled to a free school meal. Not a big impact on staffing. Hours can be split between two nurseries.

Staffing - PSA allowance for 2019/20 yet to be confirmed, classes have not yet been allocated to teachers within the school. Kim did confirm that Mindy Ogilvie would remain the p2/3 teacher until July this year.

**5. ASN provision:**

Ben T hoped that the PSA allocations for next school year would have been declared by now but they have not. There are meetings in the coming weeks to discuss and decide allocation. Group discussed outcome of Parent group meeting and what the plan was going forward - how do we channel parent views? Ben stated there is an issue with the way the highland council assess for ASN and an issue with people tying money to attainment. Highland council is actually spending the average amount of money on ASN compared to other councils despite the high statistics.

It was agreed that the Spean Bridge Primary Group should write to Donna Masson asking her to attend a meeting inviting every spean parent. The group then discussed the highland councils code of conduct and how this restricted some parents from attending these meetings even though they are also parents. Fiona voiced her concerns over allocation, the highland council have a legal obligation to provide support for pupils with level one and two needs, the training of class teachers has been unclear and the support that will be provided for these teachers has not been made clear.

Ben encouraged us to contact our MSPs as they dictate how the council spend money and could influence the direction any extra income takes. Ben also reminded the group that rurality isn't taken into account when money is allocated to councils, we are compared to other schools/districts such as the borders but our staff cover many more miles.

**6. Fundraising:** Report and spreadsheet read out by Rachel (see attached), Fundraising bank account balance is sitting at approx £6000 (pre fun night). Kim once again thanked the fundraising group for all their hard work and how great their total so far was. A parent had emailed in asking for her email to be read out at the meeting, it was surrounding money allocated to the school at the Jan PG meeting and how this had been spent, what was leftover etc. Kim provided the group with a rough spreadsheet of what she has spent since given the £4250 following the meeting in Jan 2019, Eilidh to compose a table showing what the money was given for, what/how much was spent for each request, and attach to these minutes.

Requests for funding from Parent Group;

- Transport cost for Forest Schools (6 sessions at Nevis range) unsure of cost
- Transport for school trips £1000 approx
- Garden items such as plants £200 approx but will accept anything
- Maths resource (numicon) £2000
- Reading resource £500
- Panto costs in December £1000 requested - £500 approved

It was noted that not every teacher was made aware in Jan - April term that the group had donated £200 per class and so this has not been spent.

The maths resource had been discussed at the Jan meeting and kim/Michelle were to discuss with the staff about this which has not been done. Group discussed if staff let the group know exactly what they sets they want and the price of these through schools procurement and group can price online and see if its cheaper elsewhere.

The reading resource (p3/4 core readers) were again discussed at the Jan meeting and was included in the £4250 that Kim was given. Group agreed to look into costs of books and discuss with class teachers further.

The above requested transport costs are to be discussed with the community council as they hold the pot of money donated by local landowner to be used for school transport costs which could be accessed for the forest school trips and glen nevis trip planned for this term. Class attending forest school sessions yet to be decided, Kim proposing the p4 class, parent group felt p2/3 class should go.

It as agreed that more parents should be encouraged to attend the Parent Group meetings especially when financial decisions are being made so as to ensure the parent group dont feel responsible for justifying decisions made.

Netball group requested new Netballs, cost is £110 for 12 balls, group approved (Eilidh, Fiona and Ruth approved)

School trips were discussed. P5-7s have requested the trampoline park in Inverness which has been costed at approx £420 for the bus hire and £10 per child entry fee. The P1-4 trip has been suggested as Kincaig Wildlife Park which will cost around £840 for two buses and £6 per child entry fee. The group agreed to donate £1000 initially to put towards the costs f the school trips but this was later discussed in more detail and the parent group agreed to

give the school £2500 which would cover the entire cost of both planned trips including bus hire and entry fees. This would allow the trips to be free to all pupils.

The upcoming sponsored walk money will go into the school funds account NOT the fundraising groups account.

The outdoor class committee would like to 'pitch' to the fundraising group for some money for their outdoor day on June 7th.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm - Ben was thanked for his attendance. The group discussed the school trips as documented above at this time and then emailed round the remaining parent group committee members who were absent to ensure all agreed to decision.

Next Parent group meeting to be held on Tuesday 3rd September at 6.30pm