

HT Report – Parent Partnership AGM

As always I am immensely proud of the work that has taken place in our School session 2017-18. It was a year where we focused on taking a close look at learning and teaching as well as ensuring we moved forward with our inclusion agenda. Our school was the subject of national attention through the start of our Celebrating Diversity in our Sch Community work. This focus on LGBT was celebrated locally and nationally and is something as a school we are proud of, but for us it is a small part of the inclusion work we have planned. We have already focused on the inclusion of other aspects of our school community, families who live in poverty, Down Syndrome, Autism, Dyslexia - with more on these to come. Inclusion was highlighted through the work on reviewing our VVA as being important to our pupils, parents and staff and is encapsulated in ‘The Downfield Promise’ created by everyone this year. It has been suggested that perhaps the next piece of focused diversity work should explore **race** to reflect the diverse cultural background within our school. Our school is proud to serve a diverse community and welcome views from our community on where we take this next.

A school’s core business is learning. The Downfield team worked well to develop a number of approaches that are benefiting the children in their learning during session 2017/18:

* Focus on ‘High Impact Teaching Strategies’: research based approaches that are shown to have high impact for pupil outcomes. We focused on how we give feedback to the children on their learning – whole school approaches and live marking policy and ‘in-learning’ feedback were a result
* Focus on target setting and goals – we developed whole school approaches to SMART, LI, SC
* Whole school approach to Writing skills development – BIG Write – embed this year
* Introduction of new Numeracy resources- embed this year
* Introduction of play based methodology in P1
* Nurture – upper school group and whole school approach focus. Creative curr delivery – DIY etc
* Pupil Voice – through planning, formative assessment, citizenship groups
* This year looking to Creating a climate for learning – Paul Dix, universal nurture
* Nursery planning and documentation of learning, learning environment - ’heuristic’/small parts, creativity, embed this year
* As a school community we reviewed our VVA and created ‘The Downfield Promise’.

We received visits from council officers and Care Inspectorate during 2017/18 where this work was validated as transforming the culture and work of the school, skilling staff and empowering the children in their learning. Our PP membership increased beyond expectation with more parents than the constitution would allow wishing to be part of the PP. Everyone involved in our school’s journey thus far should be commended for their commitment, both to the school and also for the quality of the work undertaken.

Our school year had begun with many new staff joining our team. We have a FULLY STAFFED SCHOOL – this has been the first time for a while that the school had a full quota of staffing, with the school being very understaffed when I arrived way back in Dec 2015. Our new team members have already made a really positive contribution to the school. Our more established staff members have rallied to support the new team members settle in. We were delighted to retain Miss Gordon and Mrs McInally on a permanent basis this year, and we also welcomed Miss Hannah Bremner P5 and Miss Carla Esposito P2/3 to the team, both ladies on a permanent basis. Both teachers have brought experience from other schools to our team and we are delighted to have them as part of the Downfield PS teaching team. We have also welcomed Miss Amber Clark P2, Miss Helen Slater P7, as well as some high quality key appointments to the Nursery team – Mrs Claire Clark as nursery teacher replacing Miss Mowatt who retired and Kirsty Mitchell – new post to our nursery. She is a Snr EYE and Katie Dodds our new EY support asst. We have just bid Miss Gillespie and Mrs Laura Clark (PT) a temporary farewell as they leave us for a while to have her babies (Mrs Hampson acting up during Mrs Clark’s absence). We are due to welcome back Miss Birchenall sometime soon from her maternity leave. We bid farewell to Mr Donaldson and Mrs Brand who both took up new posts at the end of June. I’d like to take this opportunity to personally thank all the staff members who brought something new to the team last year, joined our team this session and have wholeheartedly shared in our vision and are strongly committed to supporting our school in the next phase of our transformation. I have a 5 year plan to make Downfield one of the best, if not the best, school in Dundee. We are only half way there!

As mentioned earlier, we were visited last session by a team from DCC who reviewed our school and provided external feedback on how we could improve. This process was reaffirming – it praised the good work that had taken place in our school. They praised the work undertaken on moving forward learning and teaching and have asked to return to see us mid-September to see how that is progressing. Staff are excited to show the great strides we have made in many areas and will see a calm, focused learning environment where staff are open to sharing good practice and work collaboratively to get the learning right for the children. Our School Improvement Plan this year again has a very clear focus – continued development of HITS – focus on effective Q/HOTS and differentiated teaching approaches, Continued work on Literacy / Numeracy (P4-7 reading, SALT N-P2 and embed whole school writing, embed numeracy) as well as a development work on emotional HWB and mindfulness. This will be further enhanced by our Pupil Equity Funding which has augmented out staffing, bought resources to support this work, has helped us create a nurture base, activities and nurturing areas used by all throughout the school, as well as paying for specialist SALT support this year, whole school Mindfulness training and resources and EY play materials.

We continued to invite parents into school regularly for ‘sharing the learning’ and parent contact, offering parents a wide variety of opportunities to come in and see what and how the pupils are learning. These were very well-attended – a great indicator, we hope, of a growing confidence in the school and the improving level of parental partnership we enjoy here at Downfield. We are planning a parent event this year as it has been suggested to me that parents would like to know more about how nurture and restorative approaches works in our school and to have discussions around the work we are doing this year on behaviour and relationship development (Paul Dix). I would be interested to hear from parents to see what they would like more information about and consultation will go out to parents soon so that we can tailor things to parental interest. Our school is a VERY busy place and things are changing positively, and quickly. My aim this year is to keep parents informed of what is new and include them in the dialogue and gain their views. I will be guided by our PP members as to how best to go about this and what they think parents would like to know about and discuss, and the best ways to gain views. Parent event? Coffee mornings? Evening Chat Consultation events? We are happy to consider whatever will work best.

In other news, exciting things happening this year….. Outdoor dev Grant 11K – joint parent/pupil project, Cit grps extended (universal nurture/pupil personalisation and choice), House groups/events, parent helpers.

The varied nature of our school catchment area is fairly unique in Dundee. It provides us with challenges but parental support is always key to us achieving the ambitious aspirations we have for our school. We have all the necessary things in place to make it happen, with the Downfield Promise helping us collectively focus on what is important to our school and the community it serves. Exciting times ahead for us again this year. Downfield is a school that is going places and I am very proud and honoured to lead it’s improvement journey with you.