

FORFAR ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MINUTE

**Held on Wednesday 2 September 2015 at 7.00 pm
in the Library**

Present

Mel Lynch	Head Teacher
Gail McGuinness	Depute Head Teacher
Julie Brown	New Chairperson
Mel Richards	New Vice Chairperson
Gloria Garland	Treasurer
Robert Scott	Chairperson (stepping down)
Annette Baty	Vice Chairperson (stepping down)
Angie Barr	Secretary
Debbie Dallas	
Karen Smith	
Edith Hampton	
Caroline Crosby	
Louise Nicoll	
Francis Coutts	
Pam Davie	
Morven Moschovakis	

Apologies

Jane Maguire
Lesley Cromar
Alison Kydd

Welcome and Apologies

Robert welcomed everyone to the AGM and apologies were noted as above.

Approval of Last Minute

The minutes were approved by Edith and Gloria.

Matters Arising

Not covered this evening.

Items for discussion

1. New Chairperson for 2015/16

Robert noted that this was his last meeting with the Parent Council as his son has now left Forfar Academy.

Julie Brown was nominated by Gloria. This was opened up to the floor and no objections were made. Julie chaired the remainder of the meeting.

2. Election of Office Bearers

Annette reported that she would be stepping down as Vice Chairperson. Mel Richards was nominated by Annette. This was put to the floor with no objections.

Gloria advised she was happy to stay on as Treasurer. Again this was put to the floor with no objections.

3. Confirmation of forthcoming meetings

Dates for future meetings are as follows:

18 November at 7pm in the Training Suite
03 February at 7pm in the Training Suite
16 March at 7pm in the Training Suite
01 June at 7pm in the Training Suite

It was decided to hold the next meeting in November rather than October as the S1 Parents Evening will be held later this year on Wednesday 11 November.

4. Treasurer Report

Gloria gave a brief overview of the Treasurer Report. Most of the profit made by the Parent Council comes from the Ebern Ceilidh and from Easy Fundraising. Usually this money is donated to the music department however they haven't made a request for any money as yet.

The current total held in the Parent Council fund is £840.73.

Mrs McGuinness will make staff aware that there are funds available and to contact the Parent Council to make a request if they require any funding.

5. Attainment

Mr Lynch gave an update on this and advised that exam results were very good this year and Margo Williamson, Strategic Director for the People Directorate wrote out to the schools to advise that she was pleased with the results.

All principal teachers have been met with to discuss the results. A meeting with Margo Williamson and Pauline Stephen will be held this coming Friday to examine the schools response to attainment and look at strengths and identify where improvements need to be made.

The number of pupils who received lower grades will be looked at and the Scottish Government is looking to introduce standardized testing for numeracy and literacy.

Mr Lynch noted that the school is happy to answer any questions from parents and will provide statistics from this years results. The school will look into each individual pupils attainment and the Scottish Government is keen to close the attainment gap. Principal teachers will be looking at the results class by class and will examine any discrepancies.

6. The School Improvement Plan

Mrs McGuinness passed an overview round the committee. The overview gives headlines, followed by a breakdown which goes into more specific detail in the final column.

Recently the main focus has been on development for the new courses, however this has been completed now and the school can now focus on S1 to S3 courses as improvements are required. S4 to S6 will also be looked at to make sure the new courses are right and making sure pupils are prepared for life after school.

Mrs McGuinness reported that the reward system introduced last year is working well and the school is currently looking into it's behavior policy. Systems and procedures will also need to be in place ready for moving over to the new campus.

A copy of the School Improvement Plan will be put on the school website.

7. Consultation on the October Break

A letter should have gone out to parents about this. Information on this is also available on Facebook. The proposal is to move the holiday back one week so it ties in with Dundee City Council.

Mr Lynch asked the committee for their opinions on this.

Having the October break at the beginning of the month can be beneficial from a financial point of view. Also some parents who live in Dundee may prefer having the holidays at the beginning of the month as it may be easier to take time off work.

8. Consultation on the School Week

Angus Council will be holding a consultation with staff and representatives from the Parent Council on the school week. This consultation will also go out to all parents. Mr Lynch advised that some authorities already have different school hours and this appears to work effectively, e.g. Edinburgh schools finish around mid day on Friday and they have done so for a number of years now.

Mr Lynch gave a presentation to the parent council with the potential models proposed by Angus Council.

Pauline Stephen visited the school last week to meet with staff and feedback was given, and a parental consultation is still to be held. Bus companies will also have to be consulted with and timetables, lunches, etc will have to be examined prior to any changes made. Each period will be 50 minutes except for form time. It is important for parents to think about this seriously due to the potential impact on childcare, transport, etc.

Queries were raised about transport. Mr Lynch noted that additional transport would be arranged for any pupils participating in extra curricular activities. When the move to the new campus is complete, the school will try to ensure that transport doesn't inhibit any pupils chances of being involved in extra curricular activities.

Form time would need to be examined. Form time is valuable to pupils and would continue, however this would need to be looked at to see how best it would fit in with the new school hours.

The changes to the school week will only affect secondary schools. There will be no change to primary school hours.

The options presented to the parent council might not be used by Angus Council, they were just examples of possible different structures. The new hours will be adjusted to suit local needs and the impact on families will be considered. Decisions should be made by December as the council are looking to implement this by August 2016.

Concerns were raised regarding the suggestion for all classes to be 50 minutes. It can take some time to walk between classes so the full time may not always be utilized.

Mr Lynch acknowledged these concerns but noted that some senior classes are timetabled as double classes, and there are ways to adjust the internal school day to work around these issues.

9. Update on the New Campus

Mr Lynch gave an update on the new campus, reporting that work is proceeding at a good pace and there have been no issues since the initial problems. The new campus is on schedule for February 2017.

10.50th Anniversary

A ceilidh has been planned for Saturday 26 September for the upcoming anniversary. An open evening has been planned and there will be an opportunity for parents and former pupils to have guided tours around the school.

Mr Lynch spoke to the committee about Angus Alive, advising that this will have a charitable status which will benefit projects such as the new community campus. Further information on Angus Alive can be found on the Angus Council website.

AOCB

Mrs McGuinness reported that the sponsored walk will be held on Wednesday 23 September instead of the last day of term. This is because many pupils don't take part on the last day of term. This year the pupils will only walk round the loch once, however during the course they will encounter mental and physical challenges to get past check points. Pupils who choose to run will still be allowed to run round the loch twice. One parent suggested having a tuck shop at one of the stations to help raise a bit more money.

Mr Lynch distributed leaflets for Dragon Quest which will be held at Monikie. This is a similar event to the Enchanted Forest.

Mr Lynch reported on research conducted by Dartington Research who were employed by Angus Council to conduct an extensive survey of pupils from P5 to P7 and S1 to S3. The results of this survey will be used to help schools identify issues affecting pupils and how to make improvements. The local authority is taking the results of this research very seriously and will be taking measures to tackle some of the more alarming findings. Queries were raised about how some of the questions were phrased and felt that pupils weren't given a chance to be positive during the survey.

A query was raised regarding the lack of language teachers in the school. Mr Lynch acknowledged this and noted that there is a general shortage of teachers for the entire school. The posts have been advertised but unfortunately there were no suitable applicants to fill vacant positions. Mr Lynch advised that all local authorities are struggling to fill teaching posts. Classes are being covered by other teachers, which isn't ideal but language teachers are being rotated around classes and there are language assistants in the school.

Mr Lynch thanked Robert for his time with the Parent Council and wished him all the best for the future.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 18 November at 7pm in the Training Suite.

Closure

The meeting closed at 9:15pm.