

FORFAR ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

MINUTE

**Ordinary Meeting held on Wednesday 03 February 2016 at 7.15pm in the
Training Suite**

Present	Gail McGuinness	Depute Head Teacher
	Graeme Wallace	Depute Head Teacher
	Julie Brown	Chairperson
	Mel Richards	Vice Chairperson
	Gloria Garland	Treasurer
	Angie Barr	Secretary
	Alison Kydd	
	Lesley Cromar	
	Louise Nicoll	
	Jane Maguire	
	Annette Baty	
	Pam Davie	
	Caroline Crosby	
	Karen Smith	
	Debbie Dallas	
Edith Hampton		

Apologies	Frances Coutts	
	Mel Lynch	Head Teacher

Welcome & Apologies

Julie welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted as above.

Approval of Last Minute

Amendments were noted and amended minute will be sent out once completed.

The minute was approved by Lesley and Mel.

Matters Arising

Not discussed.

Items for discussion

1. Digital Learning

Mr Wallace thanked the committee for their time and gave a brief presentation. The presentation included an artist's impression of the new campus, references to reports regarding preparing young people for work, digital literacy and the impact e-readers have had on improving reading. The importance of basics such as handwriting and living without technology was emphasised. Teachers also need to be trained on using new equipment and how to use it when teaching. Every possible effort is being made to make sure that the new build has appropriate wifi to cope with the number of users.

An update was given on the Digital Working Group. There didn't seem to be a preference as to which piece of technology should be used, however iPads seem to be best for schools. The school is keen to work around the issue of inequality, and by giving every pupil access to an iPad is a good start. Some teachers are being sent to visit a new build in Tynecastle to see how they work as iPads are currently issued to pupils there. Contracts are signed by parents/carers when a device is issued to a pupil. Forfar Academy is looking to provide each member of staff with a device, and one year group will be identified where each pupil will have one too. Teachers are being asked to think about how this will work.

The floor was opened up for questions.

Concerns were raised about each pupil having an iPad, is this feasible in terms of looking after the devices? Protective cases will also be provided to prevent damage. Primary schools currently have access to iPads and there have been very few issues regarding damage.

A query was raised about what would happen if after signing a contract the iPad was then stolen by someone else. Some pupils might be targeted by others who might not look after their device. Mr Wallace acknowledged that this is a potential issue, however he advised that every pupil in the year group would be allocated a device so everyone will be the same.

Queries were raised about limits and access on the devices. Mr Wallace noted that there are systems in place for restrictions and they are quite strict. Apps can't be downloaded onto them and security settings are already quite high on current devices. Everything is traceable.

Mr Wallace asked for views on having a target year group. No issues were raised about this, however parents and carers were keen that important skills such as writing and numeracy aren't forgotten. Everyone was assured that the school still consider these skills to be very important and want to continue to encourage pupils in this regard.

Inequality issues were raised, such as some parents/carers might not sign up for this. Also there might not be access to the internet at home. In cases

such as this pupils would still have access to iPads at school, they just wouldn't take them home.

Suggestions such as pupils using their own devices were raised. The school has considered this, however there is the issue of there being several types of devices and how a system would cope with this. It was acknowledged that this is a possibility for the future, however it wouldn't be possible at the moment. There would also be issues around antivirus protection. All Angus Council devices have up to date protection and the school can't guarantee that pupil's individual devices would have this.

2. Forfar Community Campus Update

This is still on schedule for completion and work has started on the internal walls. Arrangements are being made for the move to happen during the February holiday weekend next year, with the school being handed over to staff the Monday before the in-service day. Pupils would start on the Wednesday and the leisure services would open to the public a few days after.

There have been opportunities for pupils with work experience placements. Some senior pupils are interested in engineering and there are 20 placements on the construction site.

An ethos group was set up and two members from the Parent Council are attending meetings. A public engagement event will be held in September in the Reid Hall. Discussions are being held about what to do with memorabilia items such as dux boards, the community war memorial, etc.

The pool layout will be similar to the one in Montrose, and half the gym hall will be for school use and the other half will be available to the public.

There was a brief presentation with images from the new Brechin campus.

A query was raised about the toilets and whether they would be unisex open bathrooms as previously discussed. The cubicles will be floor to ceiling with complete privacy. From a teachers point of view having an open wash area will be better for safety. Mrs McGuinness reported on a visit to a school in Dunfermline which had an open wash area. She reported that it was actually ok and the only time you're on view is when you're washing your hands. This will help minimise issues in the toilets such as vandalism, bullying and truancy.

It was also asked whether the classrooms would have doors. The answer was yes and they would have a glass panel in them. Some classrooms will also have moving partitions between them and the science department will have a double lab.

The swimming pool will also be incorporated to all years for PE.

3. Parent Council Twitter

Julie gave an update on this. It was decided to use the Parent Council Cup email account and Julie gave this information to Mr Lynch but she advised she hasn't heard anything back from him yet. Mrs McGuinness reported that an account didn't have to go through the school and the Parent Council can set up their own one. Mrs McGuinness will speak to the member of staff that set up the school one and advise Julie. Each department in the school (PE, science, etc) have their own accounts. It was suggested that an @name was considered carefully as there is a limit to the amount of characters in a tweet. Views were sought and asked if anyone would be willing to be the admin. It was decided that the current office bearers and Angie would act as admin on this.

4. Parent/Guardian Consultation for 33 Period Week

There was some confusion about the dates for this as there was a careers night that conflicted with the original date. The survey will go live and will be for pupils, parents and staff. As soon as the school knows that it's available they will let parents know. Julie noted that information given in a leaflet advised that the survey will be available from 11 February and will go to elected members for discussion in May. Responses will be collated from pupils, parents and teachers and presented to elected members. Arbroath appear to be quite positive about the change, however this might be due to better transport in that area.

If the result is no, each school will look at how to progress with that. Form time will still exist in some form regardless of the decision.

There doesn't appear to be much information about what will happen if the vote is a no, however there is plenty on what happens if the vote is yes. Child care and transport needs to be considered carefully.

One parent queried whether later starts were ever considered. Mrs McGuinness advised that this wasn't given much consideration due to teachers working contracts, and it would mean teachers staying even later after work.

Queries were also raised about how local businesses might be affected due to having a half day on a Friday. Mrs McGuinness noted that she couldn't comment on this.

It was noted that the half day model works quite well in Lanarkshire and Edinburgh. A lot of authorities currently have this in place and it does work.

5. Ebern Ceilidh

This year the ceilidh will be held on Tuesday 15 March. It has to be a Tuesday to fit in with the visit as the pupils will be leaving early Thursday morning. The chairperson acquires the licence from Angus House.

Lesley volunteered to get the drinks and other volunteers for the evening included Annette, Julie, Gloria and Louise. Some pupils can also be drafted in to help with the soft drinks bar.

Last years ceilidh was on a weeknight, and there weren't as many adults in attendance because of this. There was a raffle last year that did quite well, so would be looking to hold another one.

The ceilidh usually starts at 7pm until approx 11pm. Mr Wallace will speak to the janitors to ask that the alcohol bar is set up near the servery with the soft drink bar at the opposite corner.

Mr Gow will arrange the stovies, the Parent Council just have to do the bar and the raffle.

Angie will email out nearer the time to ask if anyone else would like to volunteer.

AOCB

Mr Wallace advised that over the next two days the school is having a BGE review, with the local authority visiting classes and talking with pupils and teachers.

Gloria noted that £568.64 was raised at the ceilidh for Mr Dowie.

A query was raised about the ski trip. Mr Wallace reported that there would be one next year and thinks there will be around 45 places. It was suggested creating a calendar for annual trips and events. Mr Wallace acknowledged while this would be useful, there are so many changes it would be difficult to keep on top of this. Inequality also needs to be address for trips as there are a high number of pupils who can't attend.

It was asked whether dates were available for pupils going to Ebern. Mr Gow will be contacted about this.

The issue of lates during the recent bad weather was discussed. Mrs McGuinness assured parents and carers that there is no consequence for a one off late. The school is trying to improve on lateness and wants to make parents aware of this. Many parents won't know if their child is frequently late. Mrs McGuinness acknowledged that it can be frustrating for some parents/carers of pupils who aren't usually late, however the office just have to send out what's on the system and it's the same code for one minute late as it is for 25 minutes late. The school would like to differentiate between

those pupils who are very late and only a couple of minutes late, however the system doesn't work that way at the moment. If the school is made aware that there has been a transport issue a notice wouldn't go out, however the school isn't always made aware of this.

One parent raised a concern about receiving a transport letter with the wrong child's name on it. Mrs McGuinness advised that the school doesn't organise transport or send out transport forms and couldn't provide an answer to this.

Concerns were raised about pupils requiring additional support during prelims. One pupil felt unsupported and felt like an inconvenience. Mrs McGuinness thought things had improved as she was aware there were issues in the past. Mrs McGuinness will speak with Mrs Goss about this. She also suggested that the pupil speaks to Mrs Goss about any issues with prelims and exams.

There were concerns raised about Parent Council numbers going down when pupils leave. Parents are encouraged to join the Parent Council, however there appears to be a misconception about what Parent Councils in secondary do. Mrs McGuinness suggested going out to primary Parent Councils.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 16 March at 7pm in the Training Suite. The Rock Challenge is also being held that night so it was suggested to change the date of the meeting to 23 March. Angie to submit a let and amend date for next meeting to 23 March.

Closure

The meeting closed at 9pm.