

FORFAR ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

MINUTE

Ordinary Meeting held on Wednesday 18 November 2015 at 7.00pm in the Training Suite

Present	Mel Lynch	Head Teacher
	Rhona Goss	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	
	Frances Coutts	
	Pam Davie	
	Caroline Crosby	
	Rodger Hill	Service Manager Schools & Learning
Lisa Hutchison	Pupil Council Chairperson	
Apologies	Karen Smith	
	Gail McGuinness	Depute Head Teacher

Welcome & Apologies

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

Approval of Last Minute

The minute was approved by Frances Coutts and Annette Baty.

Matters Arising

None covered at this evenings meeting.

Items for discussion

1. Consultation of the Secondary School Week

Rodger introduced himself and thanked the committee for their time. The proposed 33 period week was discussed, with Rodger emphasising that this is just a proposal at the moment and will have to be passed by elected members.

The proposal is to move from a 35 period week to a 33 period week, estimated to start from August 2017.

Angus Council started looking at this last year and there have been many other local authorities in Scotland who have adopted the 33 period week for their schools.

Form time may be reduced. Feedback regarding form time suggested that while there was some very good practice, however it was also felt that it's not always used in the best way. Reducing form time would free up more time for teaching. This is aimed at improving attainment.

Initial consultations have been held with school staff and discussions are ongoing with parent councils. Staff have reported positively on the proposed changes.

Rodger gave a brief presentation on the proposed models. The first model proposed consists of 3 days of 7 periods and 2 days of 6 periods. The second model consists of 4 days of 7 periods and 1 day of 5 periods, which would essentially be a half day.

This will go to full committee for discussion on 10 December 2015. If the committee agrees to the changes a lot of work will have to be done before it comes into effect in August 2017.

Rodger then opened the floor to questions.

A query was raised asking why form time might be getting reduced.

Feedback regarding form time indicates that it isn't working as effectively as it could. The initial thought was for form time to be there for tutoring and mentoring, however thoughts are now to make more time towards teaching. Form time will still remain as it's still very useful, particularly for senior pupils.

Another query was raised regarding transport.

The council is currently looking into this. Rural areas will be more difficult, which is why this is being looked at now as time is needed to examine this properly. Unfortunately this can't proceed further at the moment until the structure of the new school week is confirmed.

Lisa advised that she likes the idea of having a half day. She also reported that form time isn't an issue for her, and perhaps the first model of 3 and 2 days might be a bit confusing for pupils.

Concerns were raised regarding pupils with additional support needs. ASN pupils might find changes to the school week difficult. Rodger acknowledged these concerns.

Rodger thanked the committee for their time.

2. Volunteers for Ceilidh on 27 November

Gloria wanted to check that those who volunteered to help out were still happy and available to do so. All those who volunteered agreed that they were still available to help out on the night. Gloria noted that the ceilidh starts at 7pm and they have the licence from 6pm. There may be an issue about leaving alcohol out in the foyer while setting up. It was agreed that someone would stay and monitor while the ceilidh gets set up. A suggestion was made to set up the alcohol bar behind the reception area. Mr Lynch advised that staff will be around that day and will help out where needed.

3. Letter on National Improvement Framework

A copy of this was sent out with the agenda and minute.

Julie highlighted a few points from the letter. The letter thanked parent councils for their time and commitment and also talked about the attainment gap for the most disadvantaged. New standardised assessments are going to be introduced in 2017.

Mr Lynch noted that there will be an online consultation with schools and a review is being undertaken. Angus Council is looking into what it can do to make improvements for young people. Mr Lynch gave a brief presentation on this to the committee. The National Improvement Framework is looking to close the gap and disadvantage in communities.

My Lynch also reported that there will be consultation with parents over standardised testing. There has been no correspondence with the school about this yet; however the pilot will be run in 2016 with a view to start in 2017.

Concerns were raised regarding the named person legislation and Mr Lynch acknowledged these concerns.

4. Feedback on Parent Council Representative Meeting

Julie attended the meeting on 21 October 2015 at Angus House. Representatives were advised that teacher numbers were to stay the same and that there were slight increases in attainment. The proposal for the 33 period week and the October holiday consultation had also been discussed. The decision on the October holidays was for them to remain as they are.

Representatives from both primary and secondary schools were there. It was voiced at the meeting that it would be useful to have separate meetings for primary and secondary representatives. It was agreed to hold three meetings over all, one joint meeting and one each for primary and secondary schools.

5. Forfar Academy Parent Council Social Media

Julie advised that Webster's High School Parent Council have a Facebook page, and wanted to know what the rest of the committee thought about the possibility of Forfar Academy Parent Council having one too. It might be a useful tool to get information out to parents, but concerns were raised about it being abused and it would have to be monitored by an administrator.

Mr Lynch stated that the school Twitter account can have separate branch accounts and would be more than happy to add the Parent Council.

The committee agreed that they don't like the idea of Facebook as it can cause animosity. Everyone agreed that a Twitter account would be beneficial.

Mr Lynch will speak to the Twitter account administrator tomorrow and will get in touch with Julie about adding the Parent Council on.

6. Christmas Lessons and Carols

Gloria advised that this year Lessons and Carols will be held at the Lawson church on 16 December. Gloria wasn't sure on the start time but will find out and let everyone know.

Gloria asked for volunteers to help out. Gloria also noted that Mrs Christie will be buying the supplies this year. Annette, Julie, Louise and Lesley all volunteered to help out. Angie will also send out an email asking if anyone else wants to volunteer.

7. Self evaluation and Improvement

Rhona gave an update on the improvement plan. One of the main areas is self evaluation, which includes long term reflection on individual practice. All staff spend time looking over results and think about what needs to be done to make improvements for the following year.

A group of pupils have also been involved, asking them about particular aspects of the school and getting their perception of what's going on in the school and what works for them in classes.

The school has been using the same evaluation framework that HMIE uses when they visit schools. Quality indicators cover every aspect of the school. This will be looked at more over time and views from parents/carers will also be sought after.

8. Attendance and Late-Coming Policy

This is currently being updated. There are still quite a large number of late arrivals which the school is trying to deal with. A leaflet will be sent out to all parents/carers in the next few weeks about this. Texts will be sent out when a pupil is late (only for late arrivals in the morning, the current system won't be able to send out texts for late arrivals after lunch). Parents/carers often don't know their child is late until there are a number of lateness issues. A standard letter is also being drafted for lateness and punctuality.

A question was raised about how late will be considered late. Rhona noted that there is a first and second bell. If pupils are not in class before the second bell they will be classed as late and a text would go out.

Another query was raised regarding pupils being late due to transport. Rhona advised that there is a different code on the system for this and a text would not go out.

AOCB

Lisa reported that the Pupil Council have been involved in creating an information pack on the new build. They have also been working on award schemes and how to make them more appealing to pupils.

A note went out to all 4th year pupils about a study skills evening, which is aimed at helping senior pupils when they're under pressure during exams. A text will also be sent out to remind parents/carers.

It was asked whether it would be possible to include the pupils year group on text messages as it's not always clear which pupil the text refers to. Rhona assumed that this was already on text messages. This will be looked at.

Gloria advised that £85.60 was added to Easy Fundraising.

Money raised at the ceilidh will go towards purchasing equipment for Mr Dowie.

Mr Lynch reported that the new build is on schedule and due for completion February 2017. Brechin High School has been completed so Forfar Academy can take advice from them about the upcoming move.

There have been a number of incidents following the recent tragedy in Paris. The school is very conscious of this and is keen to hold assemblies with pupils about tolerance and understanding.

Mr Lynch also noted that some staff have left and posts need to be filled. School staff numbers are being maintained to Scottish Government standards, however the school is trying to keep staff numbers up. The Parent Council will be kept up to date with this issue.

Mr Lynch also gave details about an upcoming information evening on 24 November about internet safety, and advised that the xmas fayre will be held in the school tomorrow evening.

There were two big school trips last year, with one going to Borneo and the other Nepal. The school is keen to continue its connection with Nepal and will be looking to donate items from the school when the move to the new campus is completed.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 3 February at 7pm in the Training Suite.

Closure

The meeting closed at 8:50