

Auchinleck Academy Parent Council

Meeting Wednesday 1st November 2017

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Martin Robertson	Jennifer Macara	Gillian Steele	Judith Govans
Adele Young	Helen Morton	Maureen Guthrie	Agnes Nicol
Chris Johnstone	Margaret Hill	Susan Robertson	Carol Leitch
Hilary Sharpe	Robert Brown	Trudi Morrison	

1. Welcome and introductions

Martin welcomed all to the meeting, especially new members, and introduced himself to those parents who didn't know him. He also mentioned that the current Chair (Martin Goudie) had been in touch and due to work commitments, was unable to attend the meeting and also unable to continue with his role as Parent Council Chair.

The constitution states that should the Chair become vacant throughout the year; the position of Chair should rotate among the members of the Parent Council until such times as the post is filled. As such, Martin Robertson chaired the meeting.

Martin gave a quick update of the recent changes at the school: Peter Gilchrist has been appointed as Acting Executive Head of Cumnock and Auchinleck Academies and will be based at Cumnock in the role of Head. Martin has been appointed as Acting Head at Auchinleck Academy.

Both schools are currently working on their curriculum, with a view to ensuring that at time of opening of new school, the existing pupils do not need to alter subjects when moving to new school. One example of the issues to be considered are the number of National 5 subjects pupils study in 4th year. Currently Auchinleck Academy pupils can opt for a maximum of 6 whilst Cumnock Academy can choose up to a maximum of 7.

Martin's plan for Auchinleck going forward is to continue to work hard to move the school forward. There will be no real change in direction but will continue to build on current success. He has an open door policy and is happy to discuss any issue or subject with all parents.

All members present then introduced themselves to the group.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Fiona Shankland; Paula Dumigan; Shona Watson; Stacey New; Elaine Taylor; Martin Goudie

3. Role of Parent Council

Martin distributed a copy of the constitution to all present. This can be found at any time on the Parent Council pages of the school website.

"The objectives of the Parent Council are:

- ◆ *To work in partnership with the school to create a welcoming school which is inclusive for all parents*
- ◆ *To promote partnership between the school, its pupils and all its parents*
- ◆ *To develop and engage in activities which support the education and welfare of the pupils*

To identify and represent the views of parents on the education provided by the school and other matters affecting the education and welfare of the pupils."

Martin wants to build on this and interact and engage with the Parent Council and the wider Parent Forum. He invited thoughts, ideas and questions on this idea.

Maureen suggested engaging more with the feeder Primary schools, to capitalise on the enthusiasm of the new parents when their children first start at the academy.

Adele also suggested that, following the success of recruiting new members at recent S1 parents evening, it would be beneficial to have Parent Council representatives/stall at every parents evening.

The group agreed with both suggestions. The next parents evening is the S5/S6, which takes place on 21st November. Martin will talk to the Art Dept. with a view to them creating a banner of Parent Council use. Gillian will be attending the parents evening anyway and will man PC table out with her appointments with teachers. Any other members are welcome to attend as well.

4. Head Teacher Update

STAFFING

As a result of Martin being appointed Acting Head Teacher, there is now a vacancy for a Deputy Head Teacher (DHT). Three candidates had originally expressed an interest however, only one going forward for interview. It is hoped interview will take place shortly.

It is intended the Mrs Grove will take on the duties previously under Martin's remit with the new DHT taking on the duties currently under Martin's remit.

Adele queried if the low number of applicants was a result of the uncertainty over the staffing of the new school, Martin agreed this was a definite possibility.

Helen asked if it would be feasible for EAC to decide on staffing for the new school now to alleviate the uncertainty staff face. Maureen and Judith both expressed concerns over the negative effect on existing school staff who don't secure a post at the new school and the resulting issues this may cause the school or pupils.

Martin and Jennifer mentioned the current situation where the unions are in discussions with EAC due to 2005 agreement of no teacher redundancies and that if EAC would publish their Recruitment Strategy, staff would feel more informed about what is planned moving forward.

EAC HR will be advertising the following vacancies in the near future

- Language Teacher
- Business Studies Teacher (to replace Martin)

The school is also look to appoint a Principal Teacher of Literacy, Numeracy and Nature, which would be funded by the Pupil Equity Fund.

Also looking at the possibility of employing a Community Worker, to increase engagement with primary schools, parents and pupils.

There is a national teacher shortage, especially in the STEM subjects. The Scottish Government has announced a new incentive to encourage people to train in these subject areas. If someone currently working in the subject area gives up work to retrain as a teacher, they would be entitled a £20,000 bursary.

It is intended to have all posts filled by Christmas.

ATTENDANCE

There has been a lot of term time absence due to term time holidays. Martin showed the group three letters he intends to send to the parents and invited comments on these.

The first letter will be sent to parents of S4, S5 and S6 pupils who have missed 5 or more days of term time due to holidays. The letter details the prelim and final exam dates and asks parents to not take their child out of school in the weeks before or during exam time and gives details on steps to take to ensure they do not fall behind if they do take term time holidays.

The second letter will be sent to all parents asking them all to carefully consider the consequences of taking their child out of school during term time.

The third letter will be sent to S1, S2 and S3 parents giving details of the support the school can offer to ensure they do not fall behind and again consider the consequences of taking their child out of school during term time.

INCLUSION HUB

Funded by the Scottish Attainment Fund, the Inclusion Hub is now fully set up and running with two primary trained teachers and eight pupils involved. Seven out of these eight children have improved engagement and attendance. Some are attending mainstream classes part time, with their remaining time at the hub whilst the others are still full time at the hub.

The next intake is likely to include children from feeder primary schools who have attendance issue, with a view to tackling these issues sooner.

RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOL

The recent fundraising day at the school raised £3,700 to fund meals for Jebbeh Kiazolu School. Events included a sponsored silence and a sponsored walk to Dumfries House.

Judith mentioned that there had been some confusion over consent for the sponsored walk. She had given consent both on Parent Pay when paying sponsor money and also with a consent slip handed in on the morning of the walk, however her son wasn't allowed to participate as he was told he didn't have consent. Martin took note to investigate.

The Art Dept. are currently organising a mural on the stairs leading to the art department. The multi-coloured rainbow mural is being created with a view to creating a LGBT Charter for the school. A few young people within the school have questions about their sexuality and gender identity and staff members have been trained to provide advice on how to gain support for these young people. Every pupil and staff member has been invited to visit the Art Dept. and paint their own brick in their choice of colour from the rainbow, as a pledge to respect the rights of others.

RECENT AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Achievements Awards Night (September) – celebrating wider achievements such as Duke of Edinburgh etc.

Work experience for the last two weeks

Duke of Edinburgh Silver final expedition

S4 Employability Day was a great success with 20 employers attending

S1 Leadership challenges

Auschwitz trip

P7 Parents Evening tomorrow night

Belgium trip to visit World War One Trenches

Ski trip in February to Pila

Rugby trip to Barcelona

S1 Arran Activity Weekend

London trip at Easter

Regular Basketball; Handball; Netball; Rugby and Football fixtures

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

7th November – S3 reports

10th November – Rugby fundraiser, tickers available from school

10th November – Armistice Day assemblies

21st November – S5/S6 Parents evening

7th December – S2 reports

19th December – Christmas Concert

21st December – Carols by Candlelight

15th- 20th Jan 2018 – S4, S5, S6 Prelims

PRELIMS

The date for prelims has been changed from December to January. The reasoning behind this change is due to the changes to the National 5 exams. The Nat 5 final exams are now more encompassing with many internal (in class/school) assessments (units) being removed and the exams increased to include these topics. As a result the prelims will be full mock exams and it was felt by the senior management team that the pupils wouldn't have covered enough coursework to meet these standards if prelims took place in December. Letters will be sent to parents soon. It is hoped that the full prelim timetable will be finalised by the start of December.

5. Parental Involvement/Family Learning

Jennifer discussed the issues the school is currently facing with parental involvement. A recent text to all S4, S5, and S6 parents asking them to complete a survey monkey survey received 6 responses. A large number of emails bounce back or fail to deliver, letters given to pupils do not reach all parents and although there are regular articles in the Cumnock Chronicle, not everyone reads this.

A company has approached the school with a view to providing a bespoke app for Apple and Android phones. The cost is £500 per year and will have many features including

- ◆ Calendar, with reminder push notifications
- ◆ Events tab
- ◆ Send messages – to all; select groups; individuals
- ◆ News
- ◆ Can be pin protected to ensure no one out with the school can access
- ◆ Can link to any school social media

Discussed by all and agreed that the possibility should be explored further.

Jennifer distributed a handout on Family Learning which summarises the government 43 page document and asked for comments on her suggestions on what we can do to improve family learning as a school.

The school has previously held Literacy and Numeracy workshops however attendance has fell away over recent years and it was decided to stop them. Rather than an event at school, Jennifer suggested utilising the app (if pursued), to link to video clips that can be viewed by pupils and parents.

It was also suggested to have Taster Sessions for families in the school or even a community centre such as a 4 week Spanish course, learning an instrument or cooking.

These suggestions were discussed at length and all comments were positive. Jennifer asked if anyone had any further suggestions to email them to her.

6. AOB

Maureen raised the issue of the capacity of the new school. When Maureen and Hilary visited the Grange in Kilmarnock for a tour, they observed two primary classes were seconded to the academy section due to over subscription for the school following recent new house builds. There are 120 houses being built in Cumnock and it would be good to ensure that EAC has taken this into account. Martin will speak to Peter Gilchrist and ask him to raise this issue at the next meeting regarding the new school.

Response from Peter “[Aileen Hollywood \(EAC New Schools Team\) informs me that the team worked closely with planning colleagues using the EAC Local Development Plan which outlines all proposed new developments in the entire education group.](#)”

7. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed to set dates for all future meetings of the Parent Council and to publish these on the school website. The agreed dates are:

Tuesday 6th February 2018

Thursday 3rd May 2018