



The Robert Burns Academy Parent Council Barony Campus

Date: Monday 9th December 2024 (online)

Present: Jillian D'Agostino, Neil watts, Amanda Luff, Catrina Heggie, Christina Palmer, Claire Donnelly, Laura Kelso, Lesley Hill, Adele Young, Stuart Hill, Ian McMeekin, David Todd, Sheena Gemmell, Karen Cairns, Hazel Drummond

In Attendance: Tracy Stewart, Paul McGurn, Jennifer Macara

Apologies: Sadie Wilson, Elspeth Goldie, Cheryl Templeton, Carol Dillon, Kirsty Mitchell

Agenda items

1. Pupil Report

No pupils were in attendance. Pupil report to be carried forward to next meeting (27th Jan)

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes circulated via email, noted at meeting and agreed as accurate. Proposed by Claire Donnelly and seconded by Christina Palmer

3. Correspondence

Connect newsletter was circulated. Jillian reminded the group that all parents, not just those that are members of the parent council, can sign up for their own Connect account which gives access to resources.

4. Update from Chair

Jillian attended the recent Study Skills session and felt it was a great event run by pupils, for pupils and was keen for the Parent Council to be involved in the next one, which will be held in February. What can the PC do to support and encourage attendance?

5. Parent Council Steering Group Meeting

The last scheduled PC Steering group was cancelled and no update as been received as yet

6. Head Teacher's Report

Staffing

It has been a rocky few weeks in terms of staffing with high sickness absence.

All parents with young people in S4 & S5 English classes were contacted to advise of a long term sickness absence and the short term plan that has been put in place to ensure minimal disruption. If the absence continues longer term, it may be necessary to re-timetable to ensure all classes are covered.

Ms Stewart has been given permission to go out early to advert to existing vacancies but has asked for a full staffing review by the local authority. Ms Stewart said she felt supported by the authority and has a



meeting set up with Linda McAuley-Griffiths in the last week of term. She felt it was important to discuss the unique nature of RBA and the need for it to be treated differently from other locations in the authority.

Maths staffing has been much better.

Plans to look at the time BGE English have and how literacy can be spread across other subjects.

Mr Hadiy (Technical) has resigned and is returning to Iraq. Ms Stewart is joining interviews next week to recruit for a new Technical teacher. The timetable may need to be looked at in the meantime.

Mr Dempster (Guidance) has returned and will share a period of handover with Sarah Ramage until the end of January.

Key Stakeholders

Mr McGurn and Ms Stewart had a positive meeting with partners, looking towards next year and how they can buy in to the school's vision and offer solutions and/or opportunities. RBA has a higher number of pupils in the lower SIMD quintiles and a lower attendance rate (80%) than the national average (85%). We also have a high number of care experienced children and those with social and emotional behaviour issues. We need partners to work with school to support our children and stem the flow of those leaving without qualifications. Currently 60% of pupils leave before S6. The next session with partners will take place on 14th February.

Ms Stewart said the school was also involving primary schools to build relationships earlier. It's always a challenge when RBA is so big, primaries being smaller provide a better opportunity for getting to know future pupils.

Ms Stewart wants a shared community plan and school improvement plan and would like the building to be used more. Pupils are also keen to be part of community councils.

6th Years

Ms Stewart met with 6th years last week to discuss their involvement in the school.

They are working together to post updates on the new school Instagram page (@therba_2024)

They are also taking on a mentee role for violence prevention and will be visiting classes to model positive behaviour and provide support.

They have also been positively recognizing teachers, which has been well received.

They are also working with the parent council to provide cakes and refreshments at the S1 parents' night.

7. Update from Paul McGurn

Assessments

Taking a different approach to prelims, changing the language to 'Assessments'. They are no longer required as evidence for SQA. Assessment will take place over 2 ½ weeks with no pupils sitting 2 exams in one day. There will be no master timetable, each pupil will have their own timetable.



Taking a hybrid approach – there will be exam style set up in a hall for English and Maths due to the number of pupils taking these assessments. Other subjects are mostly taking place in classrooms. There will be more emphasis on the class teacher / PT taking more of a role for those who require more time etc. Additional arrangements should start in S1 for all assessments, not just exams.

Stuart Hill asked if, when it came to the final exams, whether pupils would find the exam situation a shock if they have not been exposed to it during prelim assessments? Ms Stewart reassured that 3 out of 7 exams for all pupils will take place under traditional exams conditions for prelims so they would be well versed with the set up.

There was some discussion about the different weighting of subjects and it was agreed that this probably needs more explanation to parents. It was suggested that this could be tied in with the upcoming options/skills information events. Ms Stewart agreed to look in to this and will provide an update at the next meeting.

Building Works

There are ongoing issues with the boys toilets in blocks B&C with 9 out of 20 toilets currently open. Building team from East Ayrshire have visited to survey the damage and have advised that they will pay for the repairs.

The toilets at the Spanish steps are a bit of a blindspot for staff and are closed off for now, with a proposal to change the layout

The girls toilets have a variety of issues including seats not fit for purpose, locks not working and toilet roll holders that have been detached from the wall.

Some repairs will be carried out as a test of change and, if successful, will be rolled out across the campus.

All accessible toilets are open for use.

Claire Donnelly gave a personal experience of one pupil who reported that they were too scared to use the toilets. It was advised that the doors at the dining hall will be open to discourage pupils from hanging around. There is a blind spot but installation of a mirrored wall will enhance visibility. It was also advised that the toilets were supervised by various staff throughout the day and a rota could be implemented if needed.

There was a short discussion about the number of toilets to pupil ratio and whether there were in fact enough Ms Stewart reported that there was.

Stuart Hill asked where EA Facilities fit in to the management approach of the building. Mr McGurn and Ms Stewart have met with EAL facilities and were clear around the school's role however, are waiting for EAL to respond around their role as the school is used for community events outwith school hours.

Ian McMeekin asked if we could have a copy of the repairs action plan / time scales. Mr McGurn advised he was happy to share the action tracker by way of update and had invited Facilities to join the meeting.



8. Update from Jennifer Macara - House Identities

As people may know, moved from 6 to 5 houses at the start of the school year, replacing the Robert Burns connections with colours. Two principal teachers of guidance now in place for each house, with a maximum of 170 pupils.

In a previous pupil survey 47% of pupils stated that they felt they didn't belong. Need to build house identity and community, with interaction between the houses. Need to establish and instill a sense of belonging and pride in houses and school.

Houses have been restructured to keep family groups together, but there are a small number where this hasn't been possible. This will provide a familiar point of contact for parents. 10 house captains have been appointed and will provide structure for peer mentoring.

The pupils will be involved in choosing the new house names and the senior pupils have been researching themes to go out to full consultation. Pupils have been asked to rank the suggested themes:

- Scottish Castles,
- Robert Burns,
- Scottish Poets,
- Rivers,
- Landmarks
- Famous people from the local area
- Flowers / trees / plants

There was a suggestion that perhaps the local history and Burns groups could help.

Ms Stewart said there was a feeling that RBA was missing some values and that these will also be refreshed with all year groups.

9. Curriculum Improvement Plan

Mr McGurn advised there was a 3 year improvement plan for changes to the curriculum. There is an ongoing National review from Early Years to Secondary. Ms Stewart and Mr McGurn speaking to all teachers about revamping the curriculum to offer more options. Nothing is set in stone and any changes will be guided by the National review.

Option choices will change, looking to offer more options. Staff are being asked to consider what else departments could offer. Would like to include Modern Apprenticeships, making it more accessible and can tie in with existing qualifications. Hopefully futureproofing for pupils who are in danger of not achieving. Some may require funding and would need approval from SQA. How can we increase qualifications without increases in workload and staffing? If pupils are doing business and admin, could we look at combining the assessments?

Jillian talked about her experience and how universities view each level of qualification and the points awarded. Lots of different pathways available, including graduate apprenticeships.

Jillian advised there are lots of information events happening now and LinkedIn was discussed a platform for engaging with industries. Could parent council have a LinkedIn account?



10. Report from Fundraising Sub-Committee

Amanda was thanked for attending the recent school events. Have attended 2 events so far and will get dates for future parent evenings.

Amanda advised if anyone wanted to join the fundraising committee just to get in touch. It was also asked if we could get pupils and teachers involved?

We were reminded about easyfundraising and asked to share and encourage people to join. It's an easy way of raising money when shopping online with no additional cost to the buyer. People can register at [easyfundraising.org.uk](https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) and select RBA Parent Council from the list. We currently have 8 supporters and have raised ~£70.

Amanda is meeting with Home Link Worker re grants in the community as possible sources of funding. Also looking at other sources such as Kelloggs, KFC Foundation and Magic Breakfast.

11. Financial Report from Treasurer

Have applied to RBS for account. Still to be processed / approved.

Two events so far - raised £165.70 from bake sale and £157.75 from Winter Concert. Money just sitting waiting to go in to account when set up.

12. AOCB

Sheena asked if the local authority no longer pay for the Microsoft 365 licence? Is it only the web version that can now be used by pupils? Mr McGurn will check.

13. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 27th January 2025, 6pm, RBA campus



Rolling Action Log

Action items	Owner(s)	Notes	Status
SPT Complaints	PC Chair/HT	Chair has form and has contacted SPT to discuss submitting these on behalf of school. Will circulate the form to PC members and will note on social media/school app.	Ongoing, further update to be provided at next meeting.
Parent Council Prize	PC Members	Prize to be considered and agreed	Open
Microsoft 365 licence	P McGurn	Mr McGurn to check if the LA has stopped paying for the licence	Open
ACTIONS COMPLETED AND CLOSED			
Treasurer Role	PC Members	Amanda Luff confirmed interest in Treasurer role and was appointed.	Closed
Fundraising Committee	PC Members	Confirmed Fundraising Committee will be a sub-committee reporting into the Parent Council and will look to involve teachers and pupils	Closed