



## MEARNS CASTLE HIGH SCHOOL MINUTES OF PARENT COUNCIL MEETING

**Meeting:** Monday 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020

**Present:** S Clark (Head Teacher), K Vallance (Chair/Secretary), A Blair (PTA Chair), L Donaldson (PTA Vice-Chair), Cllr Bamforth, M McGarry, S Hale, S Hussain, S Sadiq, M Carter, E Morrison, J Scott, J Wong, L Jones, G Gass, J Murphy, N Siddiqui, L Lynch, B Fowdar, C Dodd, J Brindley, J McLuckie, L Branter, C Adams, L Fraser, A McCourt, S Sheikh, N Wallace

**Apologies:** J Thompson, S Fraser, Z Robertson

### 1. Welcome and Apologies

K Vallance welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed apologies had been received from J Thompson, S Fraser and Z Robertson. K Vallance extended a welcome to 9 new attendees at the Parent Council meeting.

K Vallance also extended a welcome to the new Head Teacher, Stuart Clark, to his first official Parent Council meeting.

### 2. Minutes of Last Meeting (AGM 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020)

Accepted on the proposal of A Blair and seconded by G Gass.

### 3. Matters Arising

*MCHS Sports Facility* – K Vallance asked Cllr Bamforth for an update on progress. Cllr Bamforth confirmed that little progress had been made since sign off of the required budget within the General Fund Capital Programme but completion remained scheduled for August 2022. Progress has apparently been hindered by Covid-19 matters, which have impacted the feasibility study. From the attached Cabinet Meeting Agenda Item 7, it can be noted from page 92 that a total of £1.726 million has been allocated to the project and that it remains part of the anticipated capital spend. £87,000 had been allocated in this financial year for a feasibility study that could be outsourced. K Vallance noted with some surprise that a definitive capital expenditure sum has been agreed before a detailed feasibility study had been completed. K Vallance noted the lack of progress was concerning when other projects were being deferred and offered to write to the Chief Executive on behalf of the Parent Council to reiterate the importance of the sports facility to MCHS.

Cllr Bamforth noted that she had already spoken to the Chief Financial Officer, the Capital Asset Management Group (Education) and the Education Department to re-emphasise the importance of the facility to MCHS. Cllr Bamforth also intimated that the Education Department confirmed this was an “essential project”.

K Vallance concluded the discussion by emphasising the need for a planning application to be submitted in the very near future to ensure the August 2022 date is met.

*Big Raffle Arrangements* – Aileen Blair tabled the idea of using the school’s online sales system as an outlet for one final ticket sale offering. S Clark will review and confirm the mechanics of this should it be possible. The PTA is to set a date for the Raffle draw. *Post Meeting Note: The schools online system will be used and a closing date of 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020 has been set for ticket sales. An email will be issued to the Parent Forum imminently. The Raffle draw will then take place w/c 5<sup>th</sup> October 2020 prior to the October holiday.*

*School Rules on Lets* – S Clark confirmed that in line with updated ERC policy the consumption of alcohol on school premises during organised lets is no longer allowed. Specific risk assessments and method statements would be required for individual lets going forward. K Vallance noted that the likelihood of any PTA organised events this academic year was minimal given the current restrictions therefore the venue of the Quiz night next year would need to be reviewed at the appropriate time.

### 4. Head Teacher’s Report

K Vallance noted the attached queries that had been issued to S Clark in advance of the meeting having canvassed the Parent Council for feedback and queries relating specifically to Covid-19 measures.

S Clark provided a detailed response to each of the points raised. On face masks S Clark noted that guidance had changed in the intervening period and that on 31<sup>st</sup> August only 15 pupils required to be given masks from a school role of 1,300. S Clark noted that the pupil response had been excellent to all of the measures in place.



#### 4. Head Teacher's Report (Cont'd)

S Clark highlighted that the school environment was a safe place but where pupils necessarily had to stay away then support was being made available for these families. A Support for Learning Teacher is being appointed specifically for this purpose.

S Clark emphasised the space standards that all schools in the ERC area were working to based on current WHO and Scottish Government guidance. The entire school is maximising the use of available space to ensure that as much social distancing as possible is achieved.

S Clark noted that the speed of action is key to ensuring that there is no stigma attached to pupils having to isolate then return to school. The procedures currently in place appear to be working well and there have been no instances of inappropriate behaviour.

S Clark confirmed that on colder days additional clothing can be worn within class at the request of the pupil. The open doors and windows policy currently in place will be reviewed as we enter the colder months.

Lastly S Clark intimated that additional consultation was ongoing concerning the best possible use of non-core subject periods to assist with time for chosen subjects should the available time for teaching be disrupted throughout the year.

K Vallance thanked Mr Clark for his update reiterating the extremely unpredictable times we were living in and also thanked Mr Clark for the weekly newsletters keeping the wider Parent Forum informed about what was happening within the school.

S Clark introduced Steven Hale, Deputy Head Teacher to provide a brief synopsis of the S4 to S6 exam performance for the 2019/2020 year and to discuss the potential implications of restrictions on the 2020/2021 academic year.

#### S4 National 5 Exam Results

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Proportion of S4 presentations at N5</b>	87	89	90.5	91.3	92.1	89.5	<b>92.3</b>
<b>Proportion of S4 Pupils passing N5</b>	94	90	93.1	92.2	93.1	91.6	<b>93.9</b>
<b>5+ N5 Passes - %</b>	79.4	74.1	85.4	85.1	83.3	82.5	<b>85.9</b>
<b>8 N5 Level Passes - %</b>	60	53.7	57.1	58.8	58.8	51.6	<b>59.8</b>
<b>8 N5 A Passes - %</b>	26	Raise your hand	3	16.2	23.5	21.2	<b>27</b>

#### S5 Higher Exam Results

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Proportion of S5 presentations at Higher</b>	88	90	89	93.1	91.2	91.6	<b>90.1</b>
<b>Proportion of S5 Pupils passing Higher</b>	88	89	88	88.4	88.9	89.9	<b>92</b>
<b>3+ Higher Passes - %</b>	70.7	72.7	70.3	76.5	75.8	76.5	<b>77.9</b>
<b>5+ Higher Passes - %</b>	46.4	50.2	47.2	56.3	54.9	54.3	<b>55.3</b>
<b>5 Higher A Passes - %</b>	15	17.7	15.1	16.8	17.1	19.4	<b>23.0</b>

#### S6 Advanced Higher Exam Results

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>1+ Advanced Higher Pass - %</b>	41	44	38	41	43	44	<b>50.7</b>



#### 4. Head Teacher's Report (Cont'd)

The overall results show a very positive picture for the school in spite of the extenuating circumstances and they have built on the year on year betterment shown over the past six years.

S Hale intimated that having submitted over 9,000 teacher assessment estimates to the SQA only around 200 of these were amended either up or down. A mere 2% of the overall total.

S Hale noted that updated SQA guidelines were awaited on the intended exam diet for the 2020/2021 year as well as the likely coursework amendments. The Prelims diet will continue as normal for this year with heavy emphasis placed on continual assessments throughout the year in order to capture ongoing pupil performance. Senior pupils will also be given more revision time to assist with exam preparation.

S Clark introduced Michael McGarry, Deputy Head Teacher, to discuss the Developing Young Workforce agenda and also the implications of the current restrictions on the upcoming Parent's Evenings.

M McGarry confirmed that there would be a further careers evening in November with the format under review at present to meet key requirements. M McGarry noted that the school was active in promoting further parent partnerships that brought business and the school closer together to offer opportunities to the pupils. K Vallance to canvass the Parent Council on potential tie-in opportunities for specific vocational benefits.

L Fraser noted that JP Morgan was very active in this and noted the recent Uptree online work experience modules being offered to S5 & S6 and queried if this was also open to S4. M McGarry noted that further more tailored S4 experience connections would be coming out shortly and he was working with Mrs Oram on this at present.

C Dodd queried how involved the ERC Community Planning Partners were in the DYW programme and noted that she would very much like to become further involved where possible. M McGarry noted this and details would be passed along. Cllr Bamforth noted that both Police and Fire & Rescue were now based in the Council Offices which presented significant opportunities for collaboration.

G Gass asked whether the online learning process during lockdown had been successful. S Clark commented that it was still too early to say for sure and pupil assessment continues through subject tests and coursework. He further noted that the teaching staff had been collectively impressed by how pupils have coped over the lockdown months.

J Brindley noted that having consistency between teaching staff using the same platforms and procedures would assist. S Clark noted that having both Teams and Google Classrooms was essential to ensure delivery continuity if one platform developed an issue. However the teaching staff were continually reviewing and standardising learning procedures.

M McGarry confirmed that the original dates set for all years' Parent's Evenings would remain as published, but accepted that the current restrictions have put up some significant barriers to the process. An on-line forum is the preferred solution however there are some barriers to getting the system fully operational. Cloud Systems who currently operate the booking system for Parents Evenings do have an online function. It has been trialled but has its limitations. The first Parent's Evening on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020 for S4 will not be held online due to time constraints getting interactive systems fully tested and verified.

Summary Reports will still be issued for each pupil in advance of the Parent Evenings with a likely solution in the short term to be a combination of written reports and one to one remote discussion for particular subjects. L Fraser and G Gass noted that a very specific report on key issues then follow ups as required with individual teachers should be possible.

#### 5. Finance Report

A Blair intimated that given there had been no activity in the account over the summer months the opening and closing balance on the account remained static at £3,294.11.

As requested, K Vallance to issue a breakdown of the receipts and payments in relation to the Big Raffle. *Refer to the breakdown attached to the minutes.*

#### 6. Parent Teacher Association Report

A Blair confirmed that all of the raffle prizes would be in place by 4<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and that she would review the online ticket sales process with Anne Beattie at MCHS and report back on any requirements.



## 6. Parent Teacher Association Report (Cont'd)

A Blair highlighted a legacy accounting item from October 2015 relating to a loan provided by the Parent Council to the school to fund the Enterprise Project. The Project was set up by pupils to produce school scarves for sale to pupils with all proceeds being directed back to the school. The project required an initial cash injection from the Parent Council to set up by way of a loan with the intention of this loan being repaid to the Parent Council from the initial sales. The loan was never repaid and the school subsequently took over the project to continue provide school scarves to pupils. After further review the proposal to the Parent Council is to treat the loan as a grant thereby removing the requirement for it to be reimbursed to the Parent Council given that the money raised by the Parent Council would be directed back to the school in any event. A vote on ratification of this proposal will be tabled at the next Parent Council meeting.

## 7. Further Nomination of Parent Council Officer Bearers

K Vallance confirmed that Lis Jones had agreed to take on the role of Treasurer and Joanne Murphy was willing to act as auditor for the coming year. K Vallance therefore proposed both parties for the respective positions, which was seconded by both Aileen Blair and Shabana Hussain.

As no one had come forward for the vacant Vice-Chair position, K Vallance confirmed that there would be no such position for this year and that the office bearers for the 2020-2021 year were therefore as follows:

*Keith Vallance - Chair and Secretary*

*Aileen Blair - Chair (PTA)*

*Laura Donaldson - Vice Chair (PTA)*

*Elisabeth Jones - Treasurer*

*Joanne Murphy - Auditor*

## 8. Correspondence

K Vallance intimated the upcoming ERC Parent Council Chairs meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020 and noted that ERC have requested feedback on their performance during the lockdown period concentrating on the following key areas: one thing the department has done well, one thing they can improve on and one thing to be considered moving forward. K Vallance requested some points for discussion from the Parent Council to take to the meeting.

K Vallance noted that further online sessions were planned by Jen Graham, the Training & Development officer on the following topics and if anyone was interested to email for joining instructions:

*17<sup>th</sup> September - Building School & Community Partnerships*

*24<sup>th</sup> September - Connect & Parenting Across Scotland*

Further Recruitment & Selection Training dates had been announced for 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020 (18.30 to 19.45) and 10<sup>th</sup> September 2020 (13.30 to 14.45). We currently have 4 trained members of the Parent Council but if anyone would like to take part K Vallance requested they intimate this by 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020.

## 9. Any Other Business:

S Sadiq asked S Clark to comment on pupils visiting the shops at lunchtime. S Clark confirmed that this was allowed for senior pupils subject to specific social distancing measures and compliance with face mask protocols. S Clark confirmed he had been out at lunchtime to view the situation and was confident that all pupils were following the rules and behaving in an appropriate manner. This process would be continually reviewed given the changes in restrictions.

Cllr Bamforth highlighted that the Education Committee would be meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020. Papers would be issued for the meeting in advance therefore if anyone had any specific issues to bring up can they please email Cllr Bamforth prior to the meeting.

## 10. Date for Next Meetings

The next Parent Council meeting will take place on **Monday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2020**. Arrangements regarding the nature of the meeting will be advised nearer the time.

Further meetings for the academic year are as follows:

*7<sup>th</sup> December 2020*

*1<sup>st</sup> February 2021*

*8<sup>th</sup> March 2021*

*24<sup>th</sup> May 2021 (AGM)*