

St Ninian's High School

Parent Council Meeting

12th May 2022

Present: J. Stewart (Joint Chair) ("JS")
S. Reid (Joint Chair)
G. McLaughlin (Church Representative)
J. McLaughlin
M. Pagliocca
K. Adams
J. Mackie
D. Wilson
C. Wallis

Apologies: A. Wilmott (Vice-Chair)
S. MacConnell
P. Hessett
G. O'Neil (Head Teacher) ("Mr O'Neil")

School: J. Cumming ("JC")
T. Creighton
M. Gallagher
C. McCrea

1. **Welcome & Opening Prayer**

The Office-Bearers ("OB") welcomed all the Parent Council ("PC") members in attendance, and members of the Parent Forum who had taken time to come along. JS led the meeting in an opening prayer.

2. **Apologies**

A note was taken of the PC members in attendance and of intimated apologies.

Mr O'Neil was unable to attend this evening's meeting due to work commitments; Mr Cumming kindly agreed to report on his behalf.

3. **Adjustment/Approval of Previous Minutes**

Draft Minutes of the PC meeting on 14th March 2022, were tabled for adjustment/approval. No adjustments were intimated. The Minutes were approved.

The OB undertook to publish the approved Minutes on the PC website.

4. **Parental Communication - Update**

The OB reported that some work remains outstanding in re-designing, updating and re-populating the PC webpage (within the School's website).

Certain IT glitches had hindered the timeous posting of Minutes, PC communications with the Parent Forum, and other documents to the PC webpage on the School's website, but it was hoped that these difficulties would be resolved shortly.

The OB were liaising with Mr O'Neil on this issue.

AGREED ACTION

The OB shall complete the re-design, update and re-population of the PC webpage (on the School website), with IT support from the School; and devise an efficient mechanism regularly to update and refresh the content.

The HT shall publicise details of the PC's FB, Twitter and Gmail accounts in the School's next parent-wide Newsletter communication.

5. **The Cost of the School Day – How can we help?**

The OB invited suggestions as to how the PC could assist parents/carers with the miscellaneous expenditure (recurring or ad hoc) associated with pupils' attendance at school, following the recent "Cost of the School Day" survey.

5.1 **SNHS Uniform Recycling Programme**

Mr Gallagher reported on the School's exciting new Uniform Recycling Programme.

This is intended to assist parents and carers in mitigating the cost of acquiring a school uniform. He explained the proposed mechanics, whereby, a uniform drop-off point will be identified, a sale stall will be set up at School events, an on-line Order Form will be added to the School website, and parents wishing to acquire a uniform will complete and submit the on-line Form in exchange for a £10 nominal fee (which will be applied to School funds). (Mr Gallagher explained that the fee-charging structure is based on research carried out by the Child Poverty Action Group.) Parents or pupils can collect purchased items from the School Office. The focus of the programme is on "sustainability".

The PC warmly welcomed the School's initiative.

The OB offered the PC's support for the School's Programme – and asked the School staff to communicate to the OB any particular respects in which the PC could assist.

PC members suggested that the School's Programme might usefully be advertised to the wider Parent Forum (and older generations) in local Church bulletins.

Questions were asked as to the fate of donated uniforms that were not purchased – were they to be stored somewhere; or might they be donated to similar local initiatives; or might they be donated to national uniform recycling schemes?

Mr Gallagher agreed to consider and report.

5.2 The Uniform & Kit Exchange

The OB also reported that the School's Programme is being launched at the same time as another excellent initiative from neighbouring secondary and primary schools.

Carolside Primary School has notified the OB that it has established a project to be known as "The Uniform & Kit Exchange".

This is to take the form of a "pop-up shop", set up once a month, for the recycling of school uniforms – but also for the recycling of other pieces of extra-curricular activity clothing and kit (such for other associations like the Scouts, Beavers, Rainbows, Guides, and Sports Clubs, and other clubs).

The items in the "pop-up shop" will be free. There is to be no charge for anything.

All stock is to be donated by parents to the schools/clubs involved in the initiative.

The first "pop-up" shop is scheduled for Saturday 28 May 2022. Venue to be confirmed.

The idea originated as a uniform shop for Carolside Primary School, but it has grown substantially to cover a much wider community (including Clarkston, Busby Netherlee, Stamperland, Eaglesham), encompassing all feeder and cluster schools in those areas, as well as extra-curricular children's clubs/associations operating in those areas.

Clothing contributions are to be weighed before and after the events to try to provide empirical data on the impact of carbon reduction, as well as the success of the initiative overall.

The OB reported that Carolside Primary School PC has kindly invited SNHS PC to participate in and support the "Uniform & Kit Exchange".

Carolside PC has requested volunteers from SNHS to join in the Carolside PC "working group", specifically to take responsibility for the collection of donated SNHS uniforms, and to deliver those uniforms to the "pop-up" venues. (Donations of clothes rails and hangers would also be welcomed.)

The SNHS PC members warmly welcomed the "**The Uniform & Kit Exchange**" initiative.

There was broad consensus that the initiative was well worth supporting, but it was felt that there simply was not sufficient time or manpower within the PC ranks to offer "hands-on" volunteers at this present moment.

It was observed that the Carolside initiative happened to coincide with the announcement of the School's own Uniform Recycling Programme.

While the School's own dedicated scheme was in its infancy (in contrast to the Carolside initiative, which appeared to be at a more advanced stage of preparation), the broad consensus within the PC was that it should primarily focus its limited resources on supporting the School's own initiative in the first instance.

That said, the OBs emphasised that there was no actual conflict between the two initiatives.

Both were excellent ideas; both were designed to help hard-pressed parents and carers; both were worthy of enthusiastic support.

There was simply not enough time or PC manpower at present to generate donations and physical support for the Carolside "pop-up" shop this side of the summer.

Nevertheless, it was agreed that the SNHS PC would do the following:

- (i) Continue to liaise closely with Carolside Primary School PC regarding the "Uniform & Kit Exchange" initiative;
- (ii) Publicise the Carolside initiative to parents & carers within the SNHS Parent Forum, so that parents/carers can decide for themselves whether they wish to participate (whether as volunteers, donors or customers).

AGREED ACTION

The PC shall primarily focus its limited resources on supporting the School's own initiative in the first instance by offering advertisement, promotion and manpower as may be requested by the School.

In parallel, the OB shall liaise closely with Carolside Primary School PC regarding the "Uniform & Kit Exchange" initiative; and publicise the Carolside initiative to parents & carers within the SNHS Parent Forum, so that parents/carers can decide for themselves whether they wish to participate (whether as volunteers, donors or customers).

6. The Friends of St Ninian's

At our last Meeting (14 March 2022), a consensus emerged that fresh life should be breathed into the organisation known as "The Friends of St Ninian's" (hereinafter "FOSN"), which had traditionally organised formal fund-raising and social activities for the School.

JC had kindly agreed to identify and approach persons who had previously been involved in the group, and to encourage the convening of a meeting to reinstate formal fund-raising and social activities.

It was recognised that such activities are an essential part of parental engagement in the life of the School, not least by creating a sense of community and shared values.

JC reported to this evening's Meeting that his efforts in that regard were ongoing; he had approached a number of parents and staff members; and it was proposed to have a first meeting towards the end of September 2022 to try to progress ideas for, among other things, an Annual Ceilidh, a Burns Supper, a Sports/Family Day, family quizzes and BBQs.

The PC warmly welcomed these initiatives, but wondered whether FOSN might benefit from greater parental involvement and transparency.

FOSN had done truly exceptional work in the past, often in difficult circumstances. It was hoped that it would be able and willing to continue to do such a sterling job.

The OB observed that there were likely to be parents within the Parent Forum who had skills in, and enthusiasm for, School fund-raising and social event organisation – and who might, perhaps, be willing to help, if approached. If FOSN was “opened up” to this wider pool of talent, it might, perhaps, relieve the burden on teaching staff, increase efficiencies, and encourage greater parental participation in organised events generally. Of course, it remained to be seen whether any volunteers from the Parent Forum would actually step forward to lend a hand.

The OB observed that FOSN had perhaps been perceived as being a little opaque, at times, in its composition and operation. The OB wondered whether there might be some benefit to FOSN (and the School) in having a little more clarity as to who was involved and how decisions were taken, as well as having some liaison with the PC for promotional purposes.

The PC (as representative of the Parent Forum) had a legitimate interest in knowing what, if any, fund-raising and social events were being planned; but more importantly, the PC was keen to offer assistance to hard-pressed School staff, not least by rallying ideas and support from the wider Parent Forum (to help organise, promote, execute and participate in such events).

Various suggestions and observations were made by PC members and parents in attendance.

For example, it was suggested that:

- (i) events organised by FOSN may benefit from greater promotion/advertising, perhaps through the PC, Church bulletins, and informal parent networks;
- (ii) fund-raising may be boosted by organising annual Alumni evenings, thereby fostering (and reaping the benefit of) the goodwill of former pupils; and
- (iii) a more sophisticated pre-booking/payment system may assist with budgeting and the estimation of numbers (rather than relying on payments “at the door” on the night).

JC kindly agreed to act as a liaison member of FOSN to report to the PC on ongoing FOSN activities and plans.

AGREED ACTION

JC agreed to act as the liaison member of FOSN to report to the PC on ongoing FOSN activities and plans.

7. Review of the PC Constitution

The OB referred the PC members to the 1st draft of a proposed Amended PC Constitution (as at March 2022) (first tabled at the PC meeting on 14 March 2022 and tabled again this evening).

It was observed that certain aspects of the existing Constitution could benefit from review and amendment (for example, the maximum number of PC members; membership; functions).

The OB agreed to circulate to PC members a Word copy of the draft Amended Constitution, in order that PC members can consider it in detail and offer their own comments/revisals within the next few weeks, and certainly before the next PC meeting (in June 2022). The OB will then collate the various comments/revisals in time for the June meeting.

The OB requested that PC members try to be in a position to decide, at the next PC meeting (in June 2022), whether or not they wish to initiate the amendment procedure.

If the PC decides to initiate the amendment procedure, the proposed amendment would then require to be circulated to the Parent Forum in advance of the AGM; and any amendment would only take effect if it obtained the "requisite consent" of the Parent Forum.

AGREED ACTION

The OB shall circulate to PC members a Word copy of the draft Amended Constitution, in order that PC members can consider it in detail and offer their own comments/revisals within the next few weeks, and certainly before the next PC meeting (in June 2022).

PC members shall decide, at the next PC meeting (in June 2022), whether or not they wish to initiate the amendment procedure.

8. Proposed Development in Eastwood Park

DW reported to the PC that ERC had recently appointed a lead contractor ("BAM") to execute the development works at Eastwood Park (the demolition of the existing theatre & leisure centre, and the construction of a new leisure complex).

The OB still hope to have a meeting with representatives of the Operating Trust (and ERC) to discuss and identify, in detail, how the School and its pupils might benefit from the development, such as:

- (i) by specific vocational opportunities for pupils; and/or
- (ii) by affording SNHS pupils curricular access to facilities within the new development (such as to drama, sports or library facilities, or to business/management experience (in retail, leisure management, catering) or the like).

Further, the OB hope to be informed by the lead contractor/ERC as to the precautions that BAM/ERC intend to put in place (presumably conform to a Construction

Management Plan) to ensure the safety of children and staff during the construction process.

Lastly, the OB await a final report from Mr O'Neil of his assessment of the needs and deficiencies of the School (in terms of both physical estate and intangible resources) in the short, medium and long term – with a view to seeking to ascertain the extent, if any, to which those needs and deficiencies might be capable of being addressed (in whole or in part) by means of negotiated access to the completed leisure complex development.

AGREED ACTION

The OB shall seek to arrange a meeting with representatives of the Operating Trust (and/or ERC) to discuss and identify how the School and its pupils might benefit from the Eastwood Park development, such as, for example (i) by specific vocational opportunities for pupils; and/or (ii) by affording SNHS pupils curricular access to facilities within the new development (such as to the development's theatrical/drama, sports or library facilities).

The OB shall seek to be informed by the lead contractor/ERC as to the precautions that BAM/ERC intend to put in place (presumably conform to a Construction Management Plan) to ensure the safety of children and staff during the construction process.

More generally, the OB shall (i) reiterate to ERC the PC's interest in the development, (ii) request an update (including estimated timescale) on the drafting of the Construction Management Plan, (iii) request the opportunity to be consulted on the drafting of that Plan, and (iv) seek clarification of ERC's "master plan" (if any) for Eastwood Park (including, but not limited to, ERC's plans, if any, as to the future development of the School, the accommodation footprint, car parking facilities, and upgrades to the façade).

9. The Scottish Government's Health & Wellbeing Census

As previously reported, ERC's Education Department has decided to proceed with the Census, albeit in a significantly amended format. Details of the changes were reported to the PC at its last meeting (on 14 March 2022).

While these significant improvements are welcomed - and due gratitude has been expressed to ERC's Education Department for its willingness to listen and to make the changes – it was recorded that the PC still does NOT support the Census.

The PC's position is set out in the letters to ERC dated 13 & 18 March 2022 (copies of which are attached in Annex 1) - and in the PC's "Notice to the Parent Forum" (a copy of which can be accessed on the PC's Twitter & FB).

JC explained that children in S1, S2 & S3, whose parents had consented, would complete the Survey in the next seven days.

Children in S4, S5 & S6, who had consented, would complete the survey after 6 June 2022.

The OB observed that the PC had still not been formally provided with a copy of the final Census (for any of the year groups).

The OB requested that the School provide the PC with copies of the final Census (for each year group).

AGREED ACTION

The School shall provide to the OB paper copies of the Census as distributed to each year group (S1 to S6).

10. Diocesan Parent Forum

The OB reported on their attendance at the second Diocesan Parent Forum Meeting (on 9 May 2022) on behalf of the SNHS PC.

The Diocesan Parent Forum is a new initiative, established by Bishop John Keenan and the Diocese of Paisley, which is intended to bring Parent Council representatives (for each of the Catholic primary and secondary schools in the Diocese of Paisley) in closer communication with the Diocesan Education Department.

The OB reported that the Forum has terrific potential to support and promote the importance of Catholic education, as well as the primary role of parents as the first educators of our children. The personnel enlisted by the Bishop on his Diocesan Education Department (including Neil Roarty, Stephen Parsons, and Anne Marie Mullan) are of the highest ability and experience; the materials produced so far by the Team are of exceptional quality; and the initiative, though currently in its infancy, has real potential to assist parents in the promotion and delivery of Catholic education.

It is likely that the Forum will request input from PCs for issues to consider and discuss at forthcoming meetings. The OB recommended that the initiative be fully supported.

AGREED ACTION

The OB shall continue to attend meetings of the Diocesan Parent Forum on behalf of the SNHS PC. The PC members shall consider and propose issues for discussion (concerning Catholic education) at the forthcoming Forum meetings.

11. Head Teacher's Report

In Mr O'Neil's absence, JC kindly delivered the Head Teacher's Report.

- (i) With the outstanding assistance of Michela Pagliocca, the S6 Leavers Celebration Day was an unqualified triumph.

Indeed, the event (at the Shed in Shawlands) was such a success that it has attracted local and national attention, with head teachers from all over the country asking Mr O'Neil to explain how to replicate it.

This year, in particular, the S6 Leavers Celebration has enhanced the reputation of the School.

The School staff and the whole PC expressed their sincere gratitude to Michela for her assistance.

Similar events are hoped to be organised in the future.

- (ii) Easter School had been well attended. There had been great commitment from pupils and parents alike.
- (iii) Ms McCrea reported that the School had been awarded the Excellence in Professional Learning Award by the GTCS (conferred retrospectively for 2020). It's a prestigious award. The School is now looking at marketing opportunities.
- (iv) Exams are well underway. Staff and pupils are immersed in them. They appear to be going well.
- (v) Sporting achievements are going from strength to strength – with the girls' and boys' football teams performing very well in the St Mirin Cup Competitions; and the All Star Girls Netball Team winning their competition.
- (vi) Pupils are participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Award this week.
- (vii) The Salesian Sisters are currently involved in a Retreat for pupils.
- (viii) A date has now been identified for the Advanced Higher Music Concert (which parents will be able to attend); and a date has been fixed for the School Prom.
- (ix) Parents Evenings are scheduled for next week. Parents should be encouraged to book a slot on-line.
- (x) Preparations are underway for the P7 Induction Day.

12. AOCB

Three issues were noted:

- (i) Communication with parents regarding Parents Evenings
- (ii) Homework Platforms
- (iii) Prof Ken Muir's Report on Education Reform

As regards issue (i), some PC members felt that communication from the School concerning Parents Evenings could be improved, in that some parents were complaining that they had not been given much notice and were unaware of the booking system. The difficulty was thought to lie in the fact that communication relied upon children relaying notes/messages to parents timeously – which, of course, often did not happen as planned.

As regards issue (ii), Mr O'Neil had reported to the OB that the School was presently reviewing its on-line homework platforms.

As regards issue (iii), the OB simply requested that this issue be noted, and that the PC should return to it at the next meeting.

The business of the Parent Council Meeting was then concluded.

The next Parent Council Meeting is on [TBC] June 2022 in St Ninian's High School.

**[SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS
ATTACHED]**

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**SUMMARY
OF
AGREED ACTION POINTS**

<i>Improving Parental Communication</i>	<i>Who is to action this?</i>	<i>Timescale?</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The HT shall publicise details of the PC's new FB, Twitter and Gmail accounts in the School's next parent-wide Newsletter communication. 2. The OB shall complete the re-design, update and re-population of the PC webpage (on the School website), with IT support from the School; and devise an efficient mechanism regularly to update and refresh the content. 	<p style="text-align: center;">HT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OB</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Ongoing</p> <p style="text-align: center;">June 22</p>
<i>The Eastwood Park Development</i>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The OB shall seek to arrange a meeting with representatives of the Operating Trust (and/or ERC) to discuss and identify how the School and its pupils might benefit from the Eastwood Park development, such as, for example (i) by specific vocational opportunities for pupils; and/or (ii) by affording SNHS pupils curricular access to facilities within the new development (such as to the development's theatrical/drama, sports or library facilities). 2. The OB shall seek information from the lead contractor/ERC as to the precautions that BAM/ERC intend to put in place (presumably conform to a Construction Management Plan) to ensure the safety of children and staff during the construction process. 3. Generally, the OB shall (i) reiterate to ERC the PC's interest in the development, (ii) request an update (including estimated timescale) on the drafting of the Construction Management Plan, (iii) request the opportunity to be consulted on the drafting of that Plan, and (iv) seek clarification of ERC's "master plan" (if any) for Eastwood Park (including, but not limited to, ERC's plans, if any, as to the future development of the School, the accommodation footprint, car parking facilities, and upgrades to the façade). 	<p style="text-align: center;">OB</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OB</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OB</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Ongoing</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ongoing</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ongoing</p>

<i>The Scottish Government's Health & Well-being Census</i>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Office-Bearers shall continue to monitor the position. 2. The HT shall provide to the OB paper copies of the Census as distributed to each year group (S1 to S6). 	OB HT	Ongoing June 22

<i>The Cost of the School Day</i>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The PC shall support the School's Uniform Exchange initiative by offering advertisement, promotion and manpower as may be requested by the School. 2. In parallel, the OB shall liaise closely with Carolside Primary School PC regarding its similar "Uniform & Kit Exchange" initiative; and publicise the Carolside initiative to parents & carers within the SNHS Parent Forum, so that parents/carers can decide for themselves whether they wish to participate (whether as volunteers, donors or customers). 	OB OB	Ongoing

<i>Diocesan Parent Forum</i>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The PC members shall consider and submit questions or items for discussion at the next Diocesan Parent Forum in advance of that meeting. 2. The OB will attend the next Diocesan Forum Meeting on behalf of the PC. 	All OB	TBA TBA

<i>The Friends of St Ninian's</i>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. JC shall (i) identify the remaining members (or willing potential members) of the organisation known as "The Friends of St Ninian's", and the constitution (if any) of that entity; and (ii) seek to convene a meeting with a view to resuscitating its activities. 2. JC agreed to act as the liaison member of FOSN to report to the PC on ongoing FOSN activities and plans. 	JC JC	June 22 Ongoing

<i>Review & Amendment of PC Constitution</i>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The OB shall circulate to PC members a Word copy of the draft Amended Constitution, in order that PC members can consider it in detail and offer their own comments/revisals within the next few weeks, and certainly before the next PC meeting (in June 2022). 2. PC members shall decide, at the next PC meeting (in June 2022), whether or not they wish to initiate the amendment procedure 	<p>OB</p> <p>All</p>	<p>20 May</p> <p>June 22</p>

DRAFT

ANNEX 1

1. Copy Joint Letter dated 13 March 2022 from SNHS PC, Williamwood High School PC and St Luke's High School PC to ERC
2. Copy letter dated 18 March 2022 from SNHS PC to ERC

Mark Ratter
Director of Education
East Renfrewshire Council
Eastwood Park
Rouken Glen Road
Glasgow G46 6UG

13 March 2022

Dear Mr Ratter,

The Scottish Government's Health & Wellbeing Census

The Scottish Government wishes to conduct a "Health and Wellbeing Census" (including a Sex Survey) of children in attendance at Scottish schools in the present academic year.

We understand that East Renfrewshire Council intends to facilitate the on-line completion of that Census (subject to certain amendments), by school children, during school hours, within East Renfrewshire school buildings.

Numerous legitimate concerns have been expressed about the Census by interested stakeholders. PC Chairs have already expressed vocal opposition.

The concerns range over a wide variety of issues, including data protection infringements, breach of privacy rights, State intrusion into family life, breach of ECHR Convention Rights, incrimination of children, as well as deeply-held objections based on religious and philosophical beliefs.

Given the broad sweep of opposition, from numerous sources, on numerous grounds, and the lack of meaningful consultation to date with ERC Parent Councils and parents, we call upon ERC to withdraw the Census (including the Sex Survey elements thereof) pending fuller consideration of, among other things, (i) the true purpose(s) for which the data is sought, and to which it will be put; (ii) the identity of the persons who will have access to it; (iii) the true value of any alleged research/statistical data collected; (iv) the robustness of the supposed anonymisation of data to be collected; and, more generally, (v) the competing rights, liberties and interests that are at risk in seeking to collect and share this data.

Yours sincerely,

<i>J Stewart</i>	<i>S. Reid</i>	<i>S. Cunningham</i>	<i>M. Owens</i>	<i>C. Goodenough</i>
Joint Chair	Joint Chair	Chair	Vice-Chair	Chair

On behalf of

The Parent Council of St Ninian's High School

The Parent Council of Williamwood High School

The Parent Council of St Luke's High School

THE PARENT COUNCIL
OF
ST. NINIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL

Joint Chair:
Jacqueline Stewart
Stuart Reid

Vice Chair
Aundrie Wilmott

c/o St Ninian's High School
Eastwood Park
Rouken Glen Road
Giffnock
Glasgow

Email: pcstniniangiffnock@gmail.com

Siobhan McColgan
Head of Education Services (Equality & Equity)
East Renfrewshire Council
Eastwood Park
Rouken Glen Road
Glasgow G46 6UG

18th March 2022

Dear Ms McColgan,

The Scottish Government's Health & Wellbeing Census

Thank you for your letter dated 9 March 2022. We also acknowledge receipt of Aileen Vance's subsequent letter dated 11 March 2022.

Firstly, please accept our sincere gratitude for taking time to respond, point by point, to the questions in our letter dated 24 February 2022. We appreciate the effort and time involved in doing so. We would be grateful if you would communicate that gratitude to your colleagues (including the Director Education), all of whom, we know, are doing their very best to promote the interests of our children within East Renfrewshire.

Secondly, we also wish to record our thanks for the steps that have been taken to date by the Education Department to modify the Census in an effort to address at least some of the expressed parental concerns.

In that context, it is fair and proper to acknowledge that the Education Department's decisions (i) to remove the Scottish Candidate Number from the Census, (ii) to adopt an express "opt-in" strategy for both pupil and parental consent (as opposed to the original proposed "opt-out" approach), and (iii) to delete, and amend the wording of, several of the questions in the original version of the Census, represent significant improvements.

We acknowledge this, with thanks.

Thirdly, however, notwithstanding the foregoing, we are duty-bound to advise you that the proposed Census, in its amended form, does not attract the support of this Parent Council.

We are not alone in this view.

To our knowledge, the Parent Councils of other High Schools within the local authority area take a similar stance.

We are acutely aware, of course, that the Census provokes a range of differing responses, including perfectly reasonable and rational opposing views. That much is reflected in the division that emerged on this very issue between our elected Councillors at the full Council meeting on 3 March 2022.

On the one hand, some parents are perfectly content to entrust such private and personal matters to Council employees.

But many more are not.

Interestingly, the reasons for that opposition vary quite considerably: some parents express concerns based on legal grounds; others take a broader philosophical approach that government should not be intruding into the private lives of families, children or young people, unless that intrusion is shown to be genuinely necessary; others take a moral or religious objection; some oppose it on political grounds; many express uncertainty, if not outright scepticism, as to the true purpose(s) to which the data will be put.

A recurring theme of the parental concern expressed to us is that, in truth, there really is no clear or convincing purpose for the more intrusive questioning in the Census, however anodyne, diluted or well-intentioned that questioning may now appear; and that there is no real statistical or research value in the data sought to be collected. Bland assertions that the data will, in some unspecified way, allow local resources to be “better directed” at “local need” (whatever that means) have proved to be unpersuasive to many.

But we shall not repeat the arguments here. You have already kindly considered them.

Meantime, we look forward to receiving from you a copy of the finalised wording of the Census questions, once available – and to receiving clarification of the mechanism by which informed pupil and parental consent is to be sought.

One final question, if we may. For school children aged 16 years and over, if parental consent is not to be sought, will ERC at least notify the parents of those children, in advance, of (i) the Census questions and (ii) the terms and timing of any approach that may be made to those children by Council staff to participate in the Census?

In our respectful view, to fail do so would impede the ability of those parents to fulfil their legal duty to provide guidance to their children (Children (Scotland) Act 1995, s.1). It would also tend to weaken the natural bond that should be preserved between parent and child.

With best wishes,

J. Stewart

Joint Chair

S. Reid

Joint Chair