

THE PARENT COUNCIL OF ST NINIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL

PARENT COUNCIL MEETING

12th DECEMBER 2022

Present: J. Stewart (Joint Chair) ("JS")
S. Reid (Joint Chair) ("SR")
A. Wilmott (Vice-Chair) ("AW")
Jennifer Clare Abalo
Katrina Adams
Joanne Logan
Christopher McLaughlin
Michele Pagliocca
Dougie Wilson
Mo Wright

Apologies: Chimeze Umeh
Pauline Hessett
G. McLaughlin (Church Representative)
Samantha MacConnell
Julie Flaherty
Lynsey O'Dwyer
Mairead Brophy

School: G. O'Neil (Head Teacher) ("Mr O'Neil")
J. Cumming ("JC")
T. Creighton
M. Gallagher

1. Welcome

The Office-Bearers ("OB") welcomed the Parent Council ("PC") Members in attendance. JS led the meeting in an opening prayer.

2. Apologies

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

3. Adjustment/Approval of Previous Minutes

Draft Minutes of the PC meeting held on 10th October 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. **The Hayward Review (Proposed Reforms to Qualifications & Assessments)**

The OB reported to the Meeting that a Review (known as the Hayward Review) is currently underway aimed at identifying reforms to the system of qualifications and assessments within the Scottish education system. CONNECT and the National Parent Forum of Scotland are among the “stakeholders” who are participating in the Review.

Mr Gallagher kindly explained the current status of the Review.

Phase 1 has been completed; Phase 2 (involving stakeholder consultation) is due to end on 13 January 2023; an interim report is anticipated thereafter; with a final report expected to follow by around April/May 2023.

The essential thrust of the Review appears to be to seek to ascertain whether the Scottish Qualifications & Assessments (“Q&A”) system should be reformed to “recognise every [child’s] achievements” and to provide some form of evidence to inform the next stage in the child’s education.

Put another way, there appears to be a body of opinion that considers that the current Q&A system only measures “successful learners” (that is, academic achievement within the curriculum), but fails to recognise non-academic “attributes” (such as, for example, “confidence”) and achievements (including, but not limited to, extra-curricular activities). If that is correct, concerns have been expressed as to how such (non-academic) attributes or achievements would be measured, both locally and nationally, to ensure uniformity and quality-assurance.

Mr O’Neil suggested that, while there may be scope for improvement, the current Scottish exam system, which is similar to the English system, though not to the OECD model, provides a good suite of qualifications. The key perceived discrepancy between the OECD model and the Scottish Q&A system is that the Scottish system remains attached to external examination between S4 & S6. Mr O’Neil anticipated that the S4 examinations were ultimately likely to be abolished at some point in the future, and that this would free up a significant period of teaching time.

Some PC Members suggested that the key issue is to ascertain how Universities and potential employers view the current (and any proposed) Q&A systems – in particular whether those entities regard the current (and any proposed) systems as providing a robust and reliable mechanism to assess the quality, abilities and potential, of prospective candidates/employees/apprentices.

AGREED ACTION

The agreed action points were as follows:

- 1. To monitor the Review, specifically the Interim Report expected in the early New Year.**

5. **Proposed Cuts to Education Budget**

The OB updated the PC members on East Renfrewshire Council’s proposal cuts to education services. ERC has announced that it faces a £30 million funding gap over

the next three years. All Departments have been asked to propose “savings”. The Education Department proposes cuts totalling £19.9 million.

These “options” for proposed cuts include the following:

- Reduce the pupil week in primary schools to 22.5 hours (from 25 hours)
- Reduce funding for the lowest-achieving 20% pupils
- Reduce funding that allows smaller secondary classes for Maths and English
- Reduce funding for Pupil Support Teachers
- Reduce funding for classroom supplies and quality improvement budgets
- Reduce funding for cleaning, catering and janitorial services

Fuller details of the proposed cuts appear in Annex 1.

There is no dispute that these options will significantly reduce and worsen the educational provision for all children of all abilities at ERC’s schools.

The OB reported that that they have taken the following action:

- (i) The OB attended two excellent Budget Panel Meetings hosted by ERC, and reported back to the PC Members via the WhatsApp Group. The OB commended the Director of Education and the Education Department staff for the considerable personal time and energy invested in arranging and attending these meetings.
- (ii) The OB attended a meeting of parents at Greenbank Church Hall on 6 December 2022 (convened by Williamwood High School Parent Council) to discuss the proposed cuts and possible action.
- (iii) The OB published, on the PC’s social media, an “Alert” Notice to the Parent Forum, seeking to warn parents of the proposals (Annex 2)
- (iv) The OB circulated to all ERC PC Chairs a draft Joint Letter (to all 18 ERC Councillors) seeking to record collective PC opposition to the proposed cuts. The strategy, and the wording of the draft Joint Letter, were discussed and approved by the PC Members.

(NOTE: The final version of the letter, as subsequently issued, is attached: Annex 3.)

AGREED ACTION

The agreed action points were as follows:

- 1. To engage with other PCs to seek to agree a collective response (per the draft Joint Letter)**
- 2. To continue to monitor and oppose the proposed Education Budget Cuts.**

6. ERC PC Chairs Forum

The OB reported on their attendance at the recent ERC PC Chairs Forum. There had been enthusiastic participation by the PC Chairs at that meeting. The principal matters discussed were (i) a presentation on School budgets; (ii) the approach of ERC to numeracy and mathematics; and (iii) family-centred approaches to self-evaluation.

7. **Diocesan Parent Forum**

The OB tabled the Minute of the Diocesan Parent Forum Meeting on 10 May 2022, the Agenda for the recent Forum Meeting on 23 November 2022, and extracts from the Forum's most recent "Centred on Christ" publication.

The OB commended the work of the Diocesan Parent Forum to the PC Members.

The Forum is seeking to promote the **spiritual recovery** of children and young people as a central part of our Catholic schools' plans.

Its aims include the strengthening of home-school-parish links in order to deepen the spiritual lives of children and their parents/carers, not least by encouraging teenagers to participate in the life of the parish and the celebration of Holy Mass.

The Forum wishes to raise pupils' awareness of **Carlo Acutis**, whose life and death provide a humbling example to children and parents of abiding Catholic faith and spirituality in a chaotic modern world.

Recently beatified, calls for Carlo's canonisation continue.

Mr Cumming kindly reminded the PC Meeting that the Oratory in St Ninian's High School is the only place in the United Kingdom that contains a relic of Carlo.

The OB commended the publication "Centred on Christ" to the Parent Forum.

The latest edition also contains an excellent article setting out the "fundamental principles" of Christian education on schools, as promulgated by the Second Vatican Council.

It is well worth reading.

Mr O'Neil confirmed that the latest edition of "Centred on Christ" has been made available to all parents on the School's website.

8. **Head Teacher's Report**

Mr O'Neill reported the following to the PC Meeting:

- (i) Mass was celebrated in the School for All Saints Day and the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, both being well attended.
- (ii) The School was represented at the Diocesan Mass in Paisley
- (iii) A busy month of activities is underway, including Advent Ceilidhs, a Santa Dash, Movie Night, the S6 Masquerade Ball and the Christmas Carol Service (on 22 December 2022)
- (iv) S5 pupils are scheduled to begin Prelim Exams in January 2023 – but the 1st day of exams has been shifted to avoid an announced Teachers' Strike. Mr O'Neil said a solution had been devised to deal with the next announced strike.
- (v) S1 pupils thoroughly enjoyed attending the Christmas Pantomime at Eastwood Theatre. ("Oh no they didn't.")
- (vi) Formal School photographs have been taken of the S1 and S6 pupil cohort.
- (vii) Efforts continue to be made to sort the ongoing problems with pupil lockers. Some sort of "slope" has had to be constructed to allow the new lockers to be assembled; and the original locks proved to be deficient, and had to be replaced. Remedial action continues.

- (viii) School Trips – plans are far advanced for the S2 ski trip (to France); a trip to Rome has been advertised (to current S5); and a trip to Salamanca is to be advertised (also to S5 pupils).

9. Parent Questions

The OB tabled the following questions/comments, as received from parents, and invited discussion from the Meeting:

- (i) *“Are children supposed to isolate if they test positive for COVID?”*

The understanding from the School staff was that, according to current guidance, if a child was unwell, the child should stay off school, but there was not thought to be any hard and fast rule requiring self-isolation.

- (ii) *“The Westacres bus is often arriving late. This is unacceptable for all, but especially pupils who need to arrive on time for exams. Can efforts be made to ensure that the Westacres bus is ordered to collect children a little earlier?”*

Mr O’Neil undertook to respond separately to this question, once he has full details.

10. AOCB

Three issues were noted:

- (i) PC Members expressed concern that the current “Gateway” system (to apply for work experience placements) is not working efficiently.

The problem seems to be that children can apply for one place only at a time, whereupon the child is “locked out” of the system. Other placement opportunities are then lost, while the child waits for a reply (which takes an undue length of time).

While children are encouraged to “self-find” a placement, the problem is not obviated, because even such “self-found” placements must be submitted through the Gateway system for “quality-assurance” purposes. Mr O’Neil intends to give further thought to the issue.

- (ii) A PC Member suggested that the Agenda for PC meetings might usefully be made available to the wider Parent Forum (on social media and the School website) in advance of the PC Meeting. No objections were raised to the proposal, and the OB agreed to try to do so as far as possible.
- (iii) The OB congratulated Mr O’Neil and the whole teaching and support staff at SNHS for achieving the accolade of being nominated as one of the highest performing State schools in Scotland (second only to Jordanhill High School), according to recently published examination data.

AGREED ACTION

The agreed action points were as follows:

1. Mr O'Neil will give further thought to the current operation of the Gateway system.
2. The OB shall seek to publicise the Agenda for PC Meetings in advance of the Meeting (subject, among other things, to issues of sensitivity more suitable to initial consideration by the PC Members)

The business of the Parent Council Meeting was then concluded.

The next PC Meeting is on **Monday 30 January 2023 at 7pm** in St Ninian's High School.

**SUMMARY
OF
AGREED ACTION POINTS**

<i>The Hayward Review</i>	<i>Who?</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
1. To monitor the Review, specifically the Interim Report expected in the early New Year	OB	Ongoing
<i>ERC's Proposed Cuts to Education Budget</i>		
1. To engage with other PCs to seek to agree a collective response	OB	Jan 23
2. To continue to monitor and oppose the proposed Education Budget Cuts.	OB	Ongoing
<i>Gateway Work Placement System</i>		
1. Mr O'Neil will give further thought to the current operation of the Gateway system.	HT	Jan 23
Parental Engagement		
1. The OB shall seek to publicise the Agenda for PC Meetings in advance of the Meeting (subject, among other things, to issues of sensitivity more suitable to initial consideration by the PC Members)	OB	Ongoing

ANNEX 1

DETAILS OF ERC'S PROPOSED CUTS
TO
THE EDUCATION BUDGET

EDUCATION – TOTAL EXPENDITURE £157.6m

Option: Reduction in Devolved School Management Budgets involving teachers

This option involves our 24 primary schools (13 of which have nursery classes), seven secondary schools, 10 family centres and our specialist provision for children with additional support needs. Every year the Council devolves much of its £157m education funding to Head Teachers and Heads of Centres so they can decide at a local level what to spend it on. Most of their spending goes on staffing, particularly teachers in primary and secondary schools. We use a range of formulas to determine what funding each school will receive. Some of these formulas are set by legislation but others are at the discretion of the Council. We use these formulas and consequential funding to target areas that we think are important to helping all our children and young people achieve.

For this saving, we could reduce funding for staff to work with the lowest-performing 20% of pupils, remove funding for reduced maths and English class sizes in secondary schools, reduce pupil support teachers, reduce funding to help schools address equity and support pupil needs, reduce absence cover funding, remove the additional teachers provided to assist recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and review management structures in all schools. Staffing and management structures in early learning and childcare centres could also be reviewed and we could consider reducing the length of the pupil week in primary schools to 22.5 hours (current provision is 25 hours).

Estimated saving: £13.6m

Option: Reduction in Devolved School Management Budgets involving other staff groups and budgets

These options relate to a reduction in the funding provided to early learning and childcare, primary, secondary and special schools through the Devolved School Management Scheme for other staff groups and other budgets. It could remove funding for Easter schools and outdoor education, school-based librarian staff, multi-media school technicians and bi-lingual support workers. Pupil support assistants, school-based business and budget support staff as well as some trips, activities and clubs in the special sector could also be impacted. Classroom supplies budgets could be reduced along with a reduction in the funding devolved to schools and early learning and childcare establishments to support improvement.

Estimated saving: £1.4m

The proposed savings from the two options above relating to these devolved budgets will have a very serious negative impact on the quality of learning and teaching, attainment, achievement, wellbeing, pupil support, equity and would increase the pupil to teacher ratio. It will also severely impact career opportunities for teachers, particularly newly-qualified teachers. The reduction in early learning and childcare and school-based support staff would impact on both the workload of school management and other departmental and council services.

Option: Reduction in centrally-based education staff and budgets

These options involve a reduction in the staff that support our early learning and childcare centres and schools to deliver national and local education priorities, ensure we meet our statutory duty to secure improvement in the quality of education and raise standards. They provide specialist leadership, curriculum and performance support, building the capacity of school staff, leading to improved experiences and outcomes for all learners.

We could reduce our staffing in Quality Improvement, Educational Psychology, Adult Learning, the Education Leadership Team, business and budget support teams and our early years team. In addition, we could also reduce our janitorial, catering and cleaning service.

This option will have a very serious negative impact on the quality of learning and teaching, attainment, achievement and wellbeing. It will also lead to a reduction in the range of school meals and a reduction in cleaning standards and janitorial support across the estate.

The reduction in support staff would impact on both the workload of school management and other services across the council.

A reduction in the centrally based funding/budgets which are used to support schools and services to deliver the national agenda and realise the department's vision is another option.

We could reduce funding for hospital tuition, speech and language therapy and remove funding for campus police officers. We could remove the funding we give to support talented children attending the junior conservatoire.

We could end the enhanced early access to funded early learning and childcare to align with the national legislation. This would mean some children could have to wait a few extra months before starting nursery and parents would have to pay for any early learning and childcare accessed before this legislative start date.

Estimated saving: £3.3m

Option: Further savings

Identifying further savings would be extremely challenging, however, we could continue to seek even more efficiencies, such as through property costs by reducing energy use. However, in addition, further cuts would need to be found from central education budgets and Devolved School Management budgets.

Estimated saving: £1.5m

Option: Increase Income

To generate additional income we could increase the price of school meals by 20p.

Estimated income: £0.1m

ANNEX 2

ALERT NOTICE ISSUED BY SNHS PC
TO
THE PARENT FORUM

ALERT!

East Renfrewshire Council (ERC) has a £30million funding gap over the next three years. All Departments have been asked to propose "savings". The Education Department proposes cuts totalling £19.9m.

These proposed cuts include the following:

- Reduce the pupil week in primary schools to 22.5 hours (from 25 hours)
- Reduce funding for the lowest-achieving 20% pupils
- Reduce funding that allows smaller secondary classes for Maths and English
- Reduce funding for Pupil Support Teachers
- Reduce funding for classroom supplies and quality improvement budgets
- Reduce funding for cleaning, catering and janitorial services

There is no dispute that these cuts will significantly reduce and worsen the educational provision for all children of all abilities at ERC's schools.

Parent Council representatives have attended ERC's Budget Panel Meetings to learn more about these proposed cuts. Fuller details can be seen on the next page.

Why are we telling you this?

It's important to share this with you, so you understand what these proposed cuts would mean for your children. We are concerned about the detrimental impact it will have on your child's learning and attainment.

ERC is inviting views on the proposals. It will use those views to inform its decision-making. ERC Councillors then have to decide which cuts to make across all sectors.

What can you do about it?

It is really important that your voice is heard now. So, please:

- Complete ERC's on-line Budget Survey, before it closes on Friday 9th December:
<https://orlo.uk/74AWz>
- Write to your elected representatives:
 - Councillors: [Find my councillor - East Renfrewshire Council](#)
 - MP/MSP: [Members of Parliament - East Renfrewshire Council](#)
- Tell us your views Email: pcstniniansgiffnock@gmail.com

What will we do?

We will engage with the other Parent Councils in ERC and put forward a collective voice to RING-FENCE and PROTECT the Education Budget in East Renfrewshire.

Education is the jewel in the crown of East Renfrewshire.

Invest in education, Invest in children – our most valuable capital asset.

The Parent Council of St Ninian's High School

ANNEX 3

JOINT LETTER DATED 9 JANUARY 2023

AS ISSUED TO

ALL ERC COUNCILLORS

THE PARENT COUNCIL FORUM
OF
EAST RENFREWSHIRE

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

Email: pestniniangiffnock7@gmail.com

c/o Williamwood High School
Eaglesham Road
Clarkston
Glasgow

Email: williamwoodpe@gmail.com

Provost Mary Montague
East Renfrewshire Council
Eastwood Park
Rouken Glen Road
Giffnock
G46 6UG

9th January 2023

Dear Provost Montague,

Education! Education! Education!

We represent the Parent Councils of the undernoted Secondary and Primary schools within East Renfrewshire.

We understand that East Renfrewshire Council ("ERC") has proposed cuts to education services totalling £19.9 million, in an effort to fill a £30 million funding gap over the next three years.

There is no dispute that these proposed cuts will significantly reduce and worsen the educational provision for all children of all abilities within ERC's schools.

Please note our vigorous opposition to all and any cuts to ERC's Education Budget.

If savings or further income require to be found, they should be found elsewhere, from other sources (including by amalgamation of non-education support services; rationalisation of surplus Council real estate; postponement of non-priority, non-education capital expenditure; the diversion of reserves; the lobbying of central government for the emergency relaxation of capital budget rules to release targeted funding for education).

Education is the jewel in the crown of East Renfrewshire.

The exemplary education of our children is our most valuable asset.

We urge ERC's Councillors to be courageous in taking a stand to RING-FENCE and PROTECT the Education Budget, in order that the enviable standards of education in East Renfrewshire are sustained. This is particularly essential after the ravages inflicted upon the education of our children during the coronavirus pandemic lockdowns.

Cuts to education expenditure are entirely short-sighted and misconceived. They will inflict damage on educational standards for a generation – and will blight the opportunities of our children for a lifetime.

In 2015, the First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon MSP) asked that she be “judged” on her record on education.

There is little doubt our local Councillors will likewise be judged by that vocal and influential constituency that comprises the parents of school children in East Renfrewshire.

If you take the brave decision now to ring-fence the Education Budget, you will be investing in our most valuable capital asset and protecting the reputation of East Renfrewshire Council for years to come.

Yours sincerely,

S. Cunningham (Chair), J. Stewart (Joint Chair), A. Steele (Chair), N. Wimming (Chair), A. Thomson (Chair), D. Henderson (Chair), S. MacConnell (Acting Chair), A. Shaarani (Chair), L. Moffat (Chair), H. Ferry (Joint Chair), A. Capek (Chair)

On behalf of

The Parent Council of Williamwood High School

The Parent Council of St Ninian's High School

The Parent Council of Woodfarm High School

The Parent Council of Barrhead High School

The Parent Council of Eastwood High School

The Parent Council of Crookfur Primary School

The Parent Council of St Joseph's Primary School

The Parent Council of Thornliebank Primary School

The Parent Council of St Cadoc's Primary School

The Parent Council of St Clare's Primary School

The Parent Council of Netherlee Primary School