

THE PARENT COUNCIL OF ST NINIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL

ANNUAL REPORT

2022 – 2023

It is our privilege to provide this Annual Report to the Parent Forum summarising the activities of the Parent Council of St Ninian's High School ("SNHS PC") during the School year from August 2022 to July 2023.

Budget Cuts

In the first half of the year, much of our time was spent addressing the catastrophic budget cuts that were being proposed by the local education authority to education services within East Renfrewshire.

ERC had disclosed that it faced a £30 million funding gap over the next three years – forced upon it largely by the global energy crisis and inflationary pressures following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Significant cuts were contemplated to the education budget.

ERC had identified the following "options", among others:

- Reducing the pupil week in primary schools to 22.5 hours (from 25 hours)
- Reducing funding aimed at increasing pupil attainment
- Reducing funding that allows smaller secondary classes for Maths and English
- Reducing funding for Pupil Support Teachers
- Reducing funding for classroom supplies and quality improvement budgets
- Reducing funding for cleaning, catering and janitorial services

On behalf of the Parent Forum, SNHS PC took the following action:

- We attended Budget Panel Meetings hosted by ERC, and reported back to the PC Members via the WhatsApp Group.
- We published an "Alert" Notice to the Parent Forum, on the PC's social media, seeking to warn parents of the proposals, and to encourage political engagement.
- We coordinated a joint strategy with 11 other Parent Councils within ERC, resulting in Joint Letters being sent to (i) the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, (ii) ERC Constituency and Regional MSPs, and (iii) all 18 ERC Councillors, opposing the proposed budget cuts.

While the intricacies of local authority financing remain opaque, for the time being at least, ERC appears to have staved off the worst of the predicted cuts to education services by extending the PFI "mortgage" over its school building portfolio, and increasing Council Tax. (In other words, it has borrowed money - approximately £14.8 million - from its existing secured creditors.)

We continue to monitor the situation.

Strikes

Schooling was also interrupted in the early part of the year with a series of unprecedented national strikes coordinated by Teaching Unions.

It was a very anxious time for children, parents and teachers.

Throughout that period, the PC sought (i) to keep the Parent Forum updated on the industrial action, and (ii) to articulate parents' concerns.

Exciting School Initiatives

Once the disruption of the first half of the year had subsided, it was wonderful to restore focus on the many positive initiatives and achievements within the School.

For example, SNHS PC was delighted to offer whole-hearted support to Mr O'Neil's initiative for a specialised "Learning Centre" within the School.

An increasing number of children are recording poor attendance, with others having chronic non-attendance. The Learning Centre is intended to facilitate a phased return of these children back into full-time education by providing a flexible and nurturing learning environment, supported by appropriate staff.

The space will be flexible enough to accommodate other children with additional special needs, again on a phased basis only, as a transition into mainstream.

The PC also enthusiastically supported the School's highly-successful Uniform Exchange, whereby school blazers are recycled each year at minimum cost to parents.

Monitoring Government Policies

Much time has been spent keeping a watchful eye on Scottish Government policies, and discussing them at PC meetings in order to inform and engage the wider Parent Forum. For example:

✓ The Hayward Review

We monitored the progress of the Hayward Review, which is aimed at "re-modelling" the qualification and assessment system within Scottish secondary school education. Its proposals include the abolition of external examinations at the end of S4; the increased use of internal assessment; and the broadening of evidence of "achievement" (to include non-academic skills and competencies).

✓ School Uniform National Guidance

We submitted a written response to the Scottish Government's Consultation on School Uniform Guidance. Details appear on the PC webpage.

Spiritual Recovery

SNHS PC has attended all meetings of the Diocesan Parent Forum.

Launched by the Bishop John, of the Diocese of Paisley, it seeks to promote the spiritual recovery of children and young people as a central missions of our Catholic Schools.

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.

Parental Communication

We've worked hard to improve engagement with parents by the continuing use of our Facebook, Twitter and Gmail Accounts, and the issuing of regular Newsletters.

The PC webpage (on the School website) is also updated regularly. Minutes of all our PC Meetings are accessible there.

Anyone can email the PC on: pcstniniangiffnock@gmail.com

We have also encouraged the School to advertise and regularly update its "School Calendar" in order that parents can participate fully in the School's events (faith-based or otherwise).

ERC Parent Chairs Forum

We have represented the SNHS Parent Forum at all such meetings. It has been our privilege to do so.

Thank you

We extend our sincere thanks to our wonderful head teacher, Mr G. O'Neil, his magnificent team of Deputes, and their gifted teaching and support colleagues, who guide and educate our children with such faith and dedication.

We also wish to thank the Parent Council Members. Come rain or shine, they selflessly give up their time to attend PC Meetings, and contribute their knowledge and experience behind the scenes. Their contributions are greatly appreciated.

J. Stewart
Joint Chair

S. Reid
Joint Chair

A. Wilmott
Vice-Chair