

**THE PARENT COUNCIL OF ST NINIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL**

**PARENT COUNCIL MEETING**

**29 JANUARY 2024**

**Present:** J. Stewart (Joint Chair) ("JS")  
S. Reid (Joint Chair)  
Dougie Wilson  
Helen Alagbe  
Anne-Marie O'Brien  
Lorna McIntosh  
Mairead Brophy  
Elizabeth McHaffie  
Katrina Adams  
Joanne Logan  
Christopher McLaughlin  
Michela Pagliocca

**Apologies:** A. Wilmott (Vice-Chair)  
Mo Wright  
Samantha MacConnell  
Lynsey O'Dwyer  
Meenal Poddar  
Multesh Poddar  
Julie Flaherty  
Itaf Dean  
Adeolu Alagbe  
Jennifer Clare Abalo  
Chimezie Umeh

**School:** G. O'Neil (Head Teacher) ("Mr O'Neil")  
J. Cumming  
T. Creighton  
C. Boyle  
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 & School staff in attendance, and of intimated apologies.

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

The draft Minutes of the Parent Council Meeting on 9 December 2023 were proposed and approved, with a minor adjustment to item 10.

### 4. **Brief Updates on Action Points from last Meeting**

The following updates were noted:

- (1) New Learning Base – Mr O’Neil confirmed that he would arrange for Mrs McCallum to address the PC at our next meeting (In March 2024) on the operation and objectives of the new Learning Base. The Base is currently in operation and being well used.
- (2) Enforcing Attendance – The OB thanked Mr O’Neil for issuing letters to parents in advance of the Christmas holiday reiterating that teaching will continue right up to the final day of the School term – and that pupil attendance is mandatory up to the end of term.

Mr O’Neil reported that attendance had increased “significantly” as a result, to the benefit of pupils and staff.

- (3) School Photographs – This remains outstanding. Mr O’Neil will aim to contact the external school photographers to discuss concerns previously raised by parents (regarding pricing structure, withdrawal of offered discounts, and quality).
- (4) Traffic congestion in car park – Mr O’Neil reported that he had alerted the local traffic department to concerns regarding inconsiderate parking (including in disabled bays) within the Park.

Mr O’Neil had also asked ERC to consider re-calibrating the phasing of the traffic lights on Rouken Glen Road (at morning, lunch and school finishing times) in order to relieve some pressure on traffic at the Eastwood Toll roundabout and at the entrance to the Park,

- (5) Fair Access to University – The OB reported that there was an ongoing review at national level of the appropriate criteria to measure fair access to University education. A Report was due to be issued by the new Fair Access Commissioner before the end of December 2023, but it had not yet been published. The OB will continue to monitor.
- (6) Additional Learning Support – The OB reported, with dismay, that a Scottish Government Consultation had been launched in August 2023, with very little publicity, on the issue of Additional Learning Support, but that the period of the consultation had now closed. The existence of the Consultation had only recently come to the attention of the OB. As a result, there had been insufficient time available to gather views from the Parent Forum and respond.

The OB were disappointed that the Consultation had not been given more publicity by the Scottish Government and ERC.

A number of PC members asked whether a late response might be feasible. The OB agreed to consider whether this was feasible, on the limited information available.

Mr O'Neil advised the Meeting that around 25% of SNHSD pupils are registered with an Additional Support Need.

AW agreed to circulate to the PC Members and Mr O'Neil details of a forthcoming Dyslexia Awareness event which may be of interest to the Parent Forum.

- (7) RSHP Education - The OB reported to the Meeting that no response had yet been received from the Scottish Government to the PC's Submission on the new draft Statutory Guidance on RSHP.
- (8) PE Sports Kit - This remains outstanding. Mr O'Neil agreed to make enquiries to ascertain whether a "Dry Fit" option is/can be made available for PE/sports.
- (9) School Choir - A parent had previously asked whether the School might wish to start a Choir. Mr O'Neil reported that he had made inquiries of the Music Department. The feedback is there is felt to be insufficient available resource to take on the project standing the Department's existing significant commitments.

The OB suggested that there may be particular merit in having a Male Voice Choir, to encourage boys into singing.

The School staff felt that there was no resource to develop the idea, and that there were challenges in encouraging boys to participate in this activity. Mr O'Neil wondered whether the parent who had advanced the suggestion might be willing to volunteer for the role. The OB agreed to make enquiries.

## **AGREED ACTION**

**The agreed action points were:**

- 1. Mr O'Neil will arrange for a staff member to give a brief presentation to the PC on the operation (and criteria for use) of the new Learning Base.**
- 2. Mr O' Neil will contact the external school photographers to discuss concerns previously raised by parents (regarding pricing structure, withdrawal of offered discounts, and quality).**
- 3. The OB will look out for the publication of the Fair Access Commissioner's next Report.**
- 4. The OB await a response from the Scottish Government to its Submission on the new draft Statutory Guidance on RSHP.**
- 5. The OB will consider whether it is feasible to submit a late response on the Scottish Government's ASL Consultation.**
- 6. Mr O'Neil will make further enquiries regarding the sports kit options.**
- 7. The OB will enquire whether there is capacity within the Parent Forum to take on the role of organising a School Choir (and/or a Male Voice School Choir).**

## 5. Vaping

In advance of this evening's meeting, the OB had circulated Background Information to PC Members on the issue of vaping (see Annex 1).

There is a growing national problem involving vaping by children, both within and outwith the school environment.

The malign health effects of vaping on children are significant.

Even within school environments (thankfully, not SNHS), there are understood to be reported instances of replaceable vapes being used to inhale cannabis and other pollutants.

The OB explained that, over the last few years, both the UK and Scottish Governments have been undertaking reviews and public consultations on the issue. Restrictions were being considered.

However, in a significant and welcome development within the preceding few days, the United Kingdom and Scottish Governments have announced a joint intention to introduce legislation to ban single-use disposable vapes.

The PC Members welcomed this proposed legislative development.

Some members expressed scepticism as to the ability of the local Trading Standards Officers to enforce the new proposed ban. In addition, increased regulation, though welcome, was thought likely to fuel a "black market". Mr O'Neil also warned of the emergence of new trends, such as the increasing prevalence of "nicotine pouches", promoted in part by football celebrities.

The OB agreed to monitor the progress (and speed) of the proposed legislative intervention.

Meantime, on behalf of the PC, the OB thanked Mr O'Neil and the School staff for their diligent work to date in educating SNHS pupils on the dangers of vaping, and in creating a negative and hostile culture around the practice.

## 6. Review of Constitution

The OB raised again the issue of the PC Constitution.

The OB explained that the current Constitution is broadly adequate, but that certain particular amendments are required, notably to lift the cap on the existing maximum number of members.

Since amendment in some form is necessary, two options are available to the PC, namely, either:

- (i) To replace the existing Constitution
- (ii) To make targeted, specific amendments only.

The amendment procedure is the same either way. Both options would require that the requisite consent be sought from the Parent Forum. Since the requisite consent of the

Parent Forum will have to be obtained either way, the OB had suggested that the opportunity might usefully be taken to carry out a more general over-haul and replacement of the Constitution (per the amended draft now in circulation). However, the OB emphasised that they have no strong preference either way, and are content to proceed as the majority of the PC Members may decide.

PC members were encouraged to take time to consider the draft amended Constitution that had previously been circulated, and to compare it with the existing version.

At the request of PC Members, the OB agreed to circulate to PC Members (by email, not WhatsApp) a Word version of the draft amended version, to facilitate revisals/comments by way of tracked changes.

### **AGREED ACTION**

**The agreed action point was:**

- 1. The OB will circulate (by email) to the PC members a copy of the existing Constitution and a Word copy of the proposed amended Constitution.**

## **7. Head Teacher's Report**

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

- (i) School staff are heavily engaged in multiple school trips
- (ii) The Advent Concert (in December 2023) was very well attended. Poor acoustics were experienced in the first half, but were improved after the interval. The overwhelming attendance raises accommodation issues – and consideration may need to be given to whether the event needs to be hosted elsewhere, or the existing venue reconfigured, or whether ticketing should be introduced.

The OB commended Mr O'Neil and the School staff (notably the Music Department) for their hard work in organising the Advent Concert – which, by unanimous consent, was an unqualified triumph.

The OB observed that the exceptional parental attendance was testament to the importance of the event as a focal point of the School, Church and parent community during Advent.

In preparing to accommodate next year's event, it was suggested that steps should also be taken to encourage attendance by alumni (and parents of former pupils), many of whom have expressed enthusiasm to participate.

- (iii) The Masquerade Ball proceeded smoothly
- (iv) Holocaust Memorial Day was a highlight of the preceding month's activities. It was very well attended and supported by pupils and parents alike.
- (v) The ski trip returned safely from Italy. The change of location worked well (and reduced cost).
- (vi) The "Generation Hope" Trip, promoted by Bishop Keenan, is approaching. The CEO of Mary's Meals will attend. It has been opened to S3 pupils, but may be publicised more widely.

## 8. Parent Questions

The following question was raised by email by a parent:

- (1) *“Could the School introduce a system of text (SMS) “alerts” on parent phones so that a text is automatically sent to a parent whenever his/her child is absent, or late, or has failed to attend a club, or homework is not completed late? Such a system is believed to be in place in Mearns Castle High School. It may alleviate work for teachers.”*

In response, Mr O’Neil confirmed that an alert system already operates to track morning attendance. Parents can also check their children’s attendance on the Parent Portal (though only on a general “morning” and “afternoon” basis, not on a “period by period” basis). The School does occasionally send texts to parents about individual anomalies. Mr O’Neil was aware that Mearns Castle High School may have a different system in place, but it is not as wide as the parent question suggested. Besides, far from alleviating work, any such wider system was likely to increase the burden on School office staff to a significant and unmanageable extent. Mr O’Neil considered that that the current system was working well.

The PC Members observed that if data on child attendance was being collected by School office staff anyway, on a period by period basis, it could theoretically be made available on the Parent Portal in “real time” without imposing any significant additional burden on the School staff.

Further, Members observed that the Parent Portal facility was not user-friendly. It was generally difficult to navigate.

The business of the Parent Council Meeting was then concluded.

The next PC Meeting is on Monday 11 March 2024.

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**SUMMARY  
OF  
ACTION POINTS**

<i>Ensuring fair access to University</i>	<i>Who?</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
<b>1. The OB will look out for the publication of the Fair Access Commissioner's next Report (due imminently); and report thereafter.</b>	<b>OB</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>

<i>New Learning Base</i>		
<b>1. Mr O'Neil will arrange for a staff member to give a brief presentation to the PC on the operation (and criteria for use) of the new Learning Base.</b>	<b>HT</b>	<b>Mar 24</b>

<i>Additional Support for Learning</i>		
<b>1. Mr O'Neil will consider the feasibility of a Parent Workshop to disseminate information on available supports for pupils with ASL needs.</b>	<b>HT</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
<b>2. The OB will consider whether a late response might be collated to the (now closed) SG Consultation on ASL.</b>	<b>OB</b>	<b>Mar 24</b>

<i>School Photographs</i>		
<b>1. Mr O'Neil will communicate with the external photographers regarding parental concerns surrounding pricing structure (including the withdrawal of discount offers) and product quality.</b>	<b>HT</b>	<b>Mar 24</b>

<i>RSHP Education: Scottish Government Consultation</i>		
<b>1. The OB will report on any response from the Scottish Government to its submission on the RSHP Consultation.</b>	<b>OB</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
<i>Vaping</i>		
<b>1. The OB will monitor progress on the proposed UK and Scottish legislative interventions to restrict the sale of single-use disposable vapes (as part of a wider strategy to restrict vaping by children)</b>	<b>OB</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
<i>Review of the PC Constitution</i>		
<b>1. The OB will circulate (by email) a Word copy of the proposed amended Constitution to the PC Members</b>	<b>OB</b>	<b>Feb 24</b>
<b>2. PC Members shall consider the draft amended Constitution and feedback their views</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Mar 24</b>
<i>PE/Sports Kit</i>		
<b>1. Mr O'Neil will make enquiries to ascertain whether a "Dry Fit" option is/can be made available for PE/sports.</b>	<b>HT</b>	<b>Mar 24</b>
<i>School Choir</i>		
<b>1. The OB will make enquiries of parents to ascertain whether there is scope to enlist parental assistance/support in the creation and running of a School Choir (including a Male Voice Choir).</b>	<b>OB</b>	<b>Mar 24</b>



## ANNEX 1

### VAPING

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 3 February 2022, the Scottish Government published a consultation seeking views on the tightening of advertising and promotion of vapes.

The themes from the consultation responses can be categorised broadly into the following areas:

- The need to raise awareness of the benefits of vaping as one option around smoking cessation;
- The need to provide accurate, person-focused information around cessation;
- The impact of packaging, flavouring and content on the appeal of vaping;
- Views on the alignment with current tobacco legislation;
- The role of specialist retailers; and
- The need to adequately support current enforcement routes such as Trading Standards.

The Scottish Government has not finalised its proposals following that 2022 consultation.

There is also an ongoing UK-wide consultation on creating a “smoke-free generation”, which includes raising the age limit on the sale of tobacco. In addition, the UK-wide consultation contains proposals on the prohibition of disposable vape sales and other measures, aimed at tackling the environmental impact of single-use vapes. The current UK wide consultation also seeks views on a range of restrictions on vapes, which include:

- restricting flavours;
- regulating point of sale displays;
- regulating packaging and presentation;
- considering restricting the supply and sale of single use vapes;
- whether regulations should extend to non-nicotine vapes; and
- taking action on the affordability of vapes.

The Scottish Government has stated that it would consider introducing an increase in the age of sale of vapes (as well as increasing the age limit on tobacco sales). However, any such change (to the age of sale of vapes) would require consultation before introduction.

The Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) (Scotland) Act 2016 (“the 2016 Act”) created restrictions on purchase and sale of vapes in Scotland e.g. restrictions on sales to under 18s, as well as powers to further restrict the advertising and promotion of NVPs, such as restrictions on advertising, brand-sharing and sponsorship, free distribution or nominal pricing of NVPs.

#### *Price*

Price can be a critical factor in people starting to smoke and also starting to vape. There is currently a significant difference in price between vapes and tobacco products, in part because vapes are only subject to VAT, whereas tobacco has VAT and duty (at least a

£7.87 duty on a packet of 20 cigarettes). Smoking is three times more expensive than vaping. This price differential is important, as it can encourage smokers to switch from cigarettes to vapes.

However, the current price of vapes, combined with the look and feel of these devices, means that they can and do appeal to children, young people and non-smokers.

In 2023, the majority of respondents to UK Government's youth vaping call for evidence said price increases would reduce the demand for vapes. Thirty-six per cent of respondents said vapes are affordable and within the average child's buying power and that price has a significant impact on the appeal of vapes. A further 22% stated that single-use vapes specifically are affordable.

A quarter of respondents thought there was a risk that price increases may have a negative impact on smoking cessation progress, given the use of vapes as an aid to quit smoking. Eleven per cent of respondents stated that the price differential between vapes and cigarettes increased the appeal of vaping.

The Scottish Government intends to review how price could be used as a lever. But it states that it is sensitive to so-called "inequalities", specifically a perception that price rises can disproportionately affect those in areas of higher deprivation.

It would not be within devolved competence to introduce a new duty (tax) on vapes.

#### *Enforcement*

The Scottish Government claims to be involved in an "ongoing partnership" with Trading Standards to enforce current restrictions.

The Scottish Government claims that Trading Standards "test purchases" (from sellers of tobacco and vapes) have found that 1 in 8 premises visited sold cigarettes, and 1 in 5 sold vapes to an under-18 volunteer. The Scottish Government has acknowledged that these levels are "simply too high" and show that "more needs to be done" to ensure compliance especially given the increasing rates of children and young people vaping.

Those found to be selling to under-18s can be issued with fixed penalty notices or even be banned from selling these products.

#### *No-vaping zones?*

On 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022 it became illegal to smoke within 15m of a hospital building. This built on restrictions on wider smoke-free bans that were focused on internal spaces. Smoke-free hospital grounds and playparks are also being considered by the Government (following a Welsh approach). Query whether further "vape-free" zones should be created.

#### *The Tobacco and NVP Register for Scotland*

Scotland is the only country in the UK with a tobacco and NVP register. All sellers of tobacco and vapes need to be registered to legally sell their products. It is an offence to sell and not be registered on the system. The tobacco register is maintained by the Scottish Government and is currently free to register. It is used by Trading Standards Officers in Scotland when undertaking enforcement and anyone can search the database. The current register has been in place for 10 years.