

THE PARENT COUNCIL OF ST NINIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL

ANNUAL REPORT

2023 – 2024

We are pleased to provide this Annual Report to the Parent Forum. It summarises the activities of the Parent Council of St Ninian's High School ("SNHS PC") during the School year from August 2023 to July 2024.

1. Defending Catholic Education

During the year, with little publicity, the Scottish Government issued a Consultation on its proposed amendments to statutory Guidance on Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood ("RSHP") education within Scottish schools.

The Consultation raised grave issues for Catholic education generally, not least the attempted removal of the right of the Church to determine the content of the RSHP syllabus within Catholic schools.

At short notice, the SNHS PC prepared a robust Response to the Consultation, circulated it to the wider Parent Forum, and invested significant time and energy liaising with other ERC Parent Councils (primary and secondary) to encourage full engagement. Our Response was issued to East Renfrewshire Council (on 14 November 2023) and to the Scottish Government (on 17 November 2023).

The outcome of the Consultation is awaited.

2. Supporting School Initiatives

The SNHS PC supported a number of important initiatives within the School aimed at improving our children's education:

- ✓ Improving Attendance – We supported the School's initiative to improve pupil attendance. We encouraged the notification (to parents and pupils) of the School's policy that teaching will continue right up to the beginning of School holidays – and that pupil attendance is mandatory up to the end of term. Mr O'Neil has reported that attendance has increased "significantly" as a result, to the benefit of pupils and staff.
- ✓ The Learning Base – We have supported the development of the School's new Learning Base for one-to-one and group-work activities. The Base is intended to support a phased return to full-time education for vulnerable children who find that prospect daunting. The Base is also flexible enough to accommodate other children with additional special needs, again on a phased basis only, as a transition into mainstream. To date, it has been a triumph.

- ✓ Vaping – We supported the School’s robust, hostile, zero-tolerance approach to vaping within and around the School grounds. In a welcome development during the year, the United Kingdom and Scottish Governments announced a joint intention to introduce legislation to ban single-use disposable vapes. We continue to monitor the issue to ensure that the malign health effects of vaping on children are adequately addressed.

3. Keeping the Parent Forum informed on Current Issues in Education

Throughout the year, we have sought to identify, discuss and actively inform the Parent Forum about current issues arising in education, locally and nationally, and to engage with relevant authorities. For example:

- ✓ The PISA Report - We reported upon the most recent PISA Report prepared by the OECD. It discloses that average pupil performance in Scotland’s schools in maths, science and reading has been on a downward trend, consistently and significantly, for 15 years. It is suggested by some academics that a link can be drawn between the introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence (with its controversial emphasis on “skills” and “well-being”, rather than “knowledge”) and evidenced decreasing standards in Scottish education.
- ✓ Fair Access to University – We have monitored and reported upon the ongoing national review of appropriate criteria to measure fair access to University education. We engaged with the new Fair Access Commissioner on the issue.
- ✓ Mobile Phone Policy in Schools – We have reported upon fast-paced, ongoing developments in the attitudes of national governments, and international educational organisations, to the use of smartphones in schools. Increasingly, many have started to question the educational benefits in the use of mobile telephony by children in schools. Enquiries are continuing.
- ✓ Anti-Bullying Policy - We reported upon, and issued a response to, ERC’s draft guidance to head teachers on bullying and racially-aggravated conduct.
- ✓ Cass Review - We issued correspondence to ERC seeking information on the implications of the Cass Review for policy within East Renfrewshire’s schools.
- ✓ The new Leisure Complex in Eastwood Park – We have reported to the Parent Forum on progress with the proposed construction of a new Leisure Complex within Eastwood Park. We hosted a presentation from the Director of Education on the proposed development and discussed its implications, good and bad, for the School and its pupils, during the construction phase and beyond. We shall continue to engage with the Parent Forum on this issue.

4. Review of Constitution

We revised and updated the PC Constitution, not least to take account of the significant and welcome increase in parental engagement at PC meetings. The proposed amended Constitution was circulated to the Parent Forum, and has received the requisite statutory consent.

5. Spiritual Recovery

The SNHS PC has been represented at 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 mission 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.

6. Parental Communication

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

Minutes of all our PC Meetings are accessible on the PC webpage (on the School website).

All parents and guardians are encouraged to email questions, comments or ideas to the PC on: pcstniniangiffnock@gmail.com

We also encourage 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).

The SNHS PC extends its sincere thanks to our wonderful head teacher, Mr 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.

They selflessly give up their time to attend our PC Meetings and their contributions are greatly appreciated.

J. Stewart
Joint Chair

S. Reid
Joint Chair

A. Wilmott
Vice-Chair