

THE PARENT COUNCIL OF ST NINIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL

PARENT COUNCIL MEETING

7th OCTOBER 2024

- Present: J. Stewart (Joint Chair) ("JS")
S. Reid (Joint Chair) ("SR")
Christopher McLaughlin
Joanne Logan
Meenal Poddar
Mukesh Poddar
Elizabeth McHaffie
Hilary Young
Dougie Wilson
Katrina Adams
- Apologies: A. Wilmott (Vice-Chair)
Jennifer Clare Abalo
Michela Pagliocca
Mo Wright
Julie Flaherty
Lynsey O'Dwyer
Iltaf Dean
Mairead Brophy
Anne Marie O'Brien
Lorna McIntosh
Samantha MacConnell
- School: G. O'Neil (Head Teacher) ("Mr O'Neil")
T. Creighton
J. Cumming
M. Gallagher
C. McCrea

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 Annual General Meeting and Parent Council Meeting, both held on 9 September 2024, were proposed and approved.

4. **Update on Diocesan Parent Forum Meeting**

The OB reported on matters discussed at the meeting of the Diocesan Parent Forum ("DPF") on 23 September 2024. A note of the meeting was tabled (Annex 1).

In summary:

- (i) The S1 Religious Education Course has been re-written, and the S2 course is currently in the process of being re-written, by the Diocese of Paisley Education Department. Senior Management Teams will be encouraged to make parents aware of the new courses. The content is impressive.
- (ii) A new suite of materials is being prepared by the Diocese to support teachers in their understanding of the authentic teachings of the Catholic Church on issues concerning social justice, inclusion, equalities, bullying and discrimination.
- (iii) The key messages from the recent visit of the Papal Nuncio were: (a) the Diocese of Paisley remains fortunate to have priests available to act as chaplains to school communities; (b) evangelising initiatives (such as the travelling crib and rosary) are hugely encouraging; but (c) concern was expressed that many Catholic children are not experiencing the fullness of prayer in family or attendance at Sunday Mass.
- (iv) The DPF expressed its gratitude to all parents who responded to the Scottish Government's RSHP Consultation in late 2023, which had threatened the existence and distinctiveness of Catholic schools in Scotland.
- (v) The first Diocesan Mass for children with additional support needs is to become a welcome annual event in the Diocesan diary.
- (vi) The theme of the forthcoming Holy Year 2025 will be "Pilgrims of Hope".

5. Head Teacher's Report

Mr O'Neil reported on the following:

- (i) What are the School's "values"?

Mr O'Neill has started a consultative process to identify and articulate the School's "values". The views of pupils and staff have already been sought.

The suggestions that emerged from that process included the following: "love", "forgiveness", "respect", "honesty", "compassion", "resilience", "respect", "accountability", "work", "empathy", "kindness".

Mr O'Neil intends to send a communication to parents and carers later in the year asking for their suggestions on a list of the School's "values".

Mr O'Neil agreed that the PC be afforded the opportunity to provide suggestions to Mr O'Neil, prior to the Parent Forum being consulted.

- (ii) Mr O'Neil offered insightful comments on the Exam appeals process (including the significance of prelim results). The appeal process is stringent. There is limited success. He recommended that any appeal should be considered and submitted only in collaboration with the School. He alerted the PC to the fact that appeals can result in grades being reduced.

Mr O'Neil also explained the separate scenario of "exceptional circumstances".

The PC members raised the issues of plagiarism (including the impact of AI) and the extent to which quality of handwriting was a factor in marking.

- (iii) HMIS recently carried out a “mini” collaborative inspection of ERC schools. SNHS was last fully inspected in 2019; before that, it was inspected in 2008. The inspection “model” has changed in the interim.

AGREED ACTION

The agreed action point was:

- 1. The PC will consider and suggest a list of School “values” for consideration by the Head Teacher and the Parent Forum, in advance of the Head Teacher’s proposed consultation.**

6. Parent Questions

Two parent questions were raised.

The first concerned the format of Parent Evenings (involving parents meeting only one nominated teacher). Mr O’Neil advised that this format now has a proven track record; it works well; it is significantly more efficient than the conventional format; it is flexible; it allowed trends to be identified; and it is generally popular. Its success depends on parents engaging *in advance* with the nominated teacher by asking questions and requesting that inquiries be made of specific teachers ahead of the Parent Evening. In any event, Mr O’Neil reminded parents of the role of the Pastoral Teacher as a first port of call to address parental concerns.

The second question was whether there is a central information source for parents with ASN children. Mr O’Neil explained that there was no such group or source, not least due to the number and diversity of additional support needs within the School. Information is shared on an ad hoc basis when received.

7. AOCB

A request was made that consideration be given to the re-ordering of Agenda items at future meetings, whereby the “Head Teacher’s Report” would appear as the first substantive item on the Agenda.

The business of the Parent Council Meeting was then concluded.

The next PC Meeting is on 11 November 2024.

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

<i>Ensuring fair access to University</i>	<i>Who?</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
1. The OB will consider the Report of the Fair Access Commissioner, and revert with proposals.	OB	Ongoing
<i>The new Leisure Complex</i>		
1. The OB will monitor the planning application process.	OB	Ongoing
<i>RSHP Education: Scottish Government Consultation</i>		
1. The OB will report on any response from the Scottish Government to its submission on the RSHP Consultation.	OB	Ongoing
<i>Vaping</i>		
1. The OB will monitor progress on the proposed UK and Scottish legislative interventions to restrict the sale of single-use disposable vapes	OB	Ongoing
<i>Head Teacher's Consultation on School "Values"</i>		
1. The PC will consider and suggest a list of School "values" for consideration by the Head Teacher and the Parent Forum, in advance of the Head Teacher's proposed consultation.	PC	Nov 24
<i>PE/Sports Kit</i>		
1. Mr O'Neil will pursue discussions with suppliers.	HT	June 24

ANNEX 1

DIOCESAN PARENT FORUM UPDATE

1. Note of the meeting of the Diocesan Parent Forum (“DPF”) on 23 September 2024.

Diocesan Parent Forum
Monday 23rd September 2024
Notes of Meeting

1. Opening Prayer
2. S2 Religious Education Course – being written by Diocese of Paisley Education Department. Raising the pace and challenge for RE.

A very full presentation was given by Tommy Hughes on this new course being written for S2. See Handouts:

- S2 Books 1-3 Strands and Content: Information for Parents
- Detailed Slides: Fides Quae Creditur: The Faith With Which We Believe
- (S1 course was presented in a similar level of detail September 2023).

Senior Management Teams in schools will be encouraged to make parents aware of this new course at Parents Information evenings and other similar opportunities and to give parents the opportunity to inspect the new resources.

Very impressive and learned a lot!

3. Equalities and Inclusion and Tackling Bullying and Discrimination – The Catholic Perspective

New suite of materials has been prepared by Father Matthew Carlin for use across the Diocese in response to feedback from Head Teachers and Senior Management Teams who have asked for fuller insight into what the Church teaches and how we remain authentically Catholic in the context of the Equalities Act. See Handout re Equalities Presentation as prepared by Father Carlin.

Bishop John gave a fulsome presentation in Father Carlin's absence.

- In essence, the Christian understanding of what it means to be a human person "created in the image and likeness of God" with a nature given by God and knowable by reason is very different from the secular idea of the human person.
 - Equality – each of us is made in the image and likeness of God which is rooted in the co-equality of the 3 Persons of the Most Holy Trinity
 - Diversity – of Father, Son and Holy Spirit
 - Inclusion – reciprocal self-giving love found in the inclusion of each person in society
- This understanding is fundamental to the meaning and purpose of Catholic Education and Catholic Schools
- Pastoral accompaniment v classroom teaching

- We teach this to allow every individual to achieve personal fulfilment in accordance with their God given nature and so contribute to the Common Good of the school, the nation and the world.
- Diocesan Training to Head Teachers and SMTs will be rolled out starting in Inverclyde and followed by Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire

Further presentations for the training of staff in “Tackling Bullying and Discrimination in Schools” are being prepared by Mr Anthony Horan, Director of the Scottish Catholic Parliamentary Office. An overview of Policy and Legislative Framework for the above in accordance with Catholic Church Teaching. This will include papers written by the Bishops’ Conference of Scotland and will provide authentic teaching and guidance for key staff to be rolled out over the next few months.

Update will be given at the next DPF March 2025.

4. Key Messages from the Papal Nuncio Visit

- Priests as Chaplains is a great gift to our School Communities as they make the Sacraments available to all (vs lay chaplains in other countries)
- Evangelising initiatives such as Travelling Crib, Travelling Rosary, all initiatives strengthening home/school/parish and their complementarity are hugely encouraging and most welcome
- Notably concerned that children are not experiencing the fullness of prayer in the family and in particular their attendance at Sunday Mass along with full participation in the life of the Parish with their families

5. Updates from the Diocesan Education Department

- Thanks given to all responders to the RSHP Consultation in late 2023 which threatened the existence of Catholic schools and their distinctive approach. Original wording has now been reinstated.
- First Diocesan Mass for ASN children after meeting with SPRED and this will become a very welcome annual event in the diary
- Asked by schools to look at God’s Loving Plan and this has now been redesigned to tie into the liturgical year
- Meeting with the Diocesan Coordinating Commission and those for Marriage and Family, Education and Youth. Theme for the Holy Year 2025 will be Pilgrims of Hope. Themes for schools to involve being Communities of Hope and Pilgrimage. Are we a Community of Hope? Looking closely at Carlo Acutis and associated themes.

6. Closing Prayer and Blessing by Father John Morrison