

THE PARENT COUNCIL OF ST NINIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL

PARENT COUNCIL MEETING

10th MARCH 2025

Present: J. Stewart (Joint Chair)
S. Reid (Joint Chair)
A. Wilmott (Vice-Chair)
Lynsey O'Dwyer
Julie Flaherty
Joanne Logan
Christopher McLaughlin
Meenal Poddar
Mukesh Poddar
Michela Pagliocca
Mo Wright
Katrina Adams
Lorna McIntosh
Mairead Brophy

Apologies: Anne Marie O'Brien
Jennifer Clare Abalo
Elizabeth McHaffie
Iltaf Dean
Samantha McConnell
Dougie Wilson

School: G. O'Neil (Head Teacher) ("Mr O'Neil")
J. Cumming
M. Gallagher
T. Creighton
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 Parent Council Meetings held on 9 December 2024 and 27 January 2025 were tabled and approved without adjustment.

4. Update on Action Points

The OB updated the meeting on the Action Points from previous meetings:

- (i) Scottish Government Consultation on Religious Observance/Religious Education Opt-out – The PC had previously submitted a Response to the SG Consultation. The outcome of the Consultation is awaited.
- (ii) Eastwood Park Development – The PC had previously submitted an Objection to East Renfrewshire Council's ("ERC's") Planning Application for a major development in Eastwood Park. The Planning Application has now been approved by ERC's Planning Committee. The OB will seek to maintain a constructive dialogue with ERC on the issues of concern raised in the Objection.

5. Report on the ERC PC Chairs' Forum Meeting

The OB reported on the issues discussed at the recent ERC PC Chairs' Forum Meeting:

- (i) The Provost's Defibrillator Fund

The OB reported that there had been much discussion (and concern) about the inconsistent approach across ERC schools to the installation of defibrillators. It was not clear if all schools had defibrillators – but the key issue of concern was the lack of uniformity around funding (both to purchase defibrillators and, critically, to maintain them).

Some schools benefited from the Provost's Fund, others bought them from school funds; others were Council-funded.

The inconsistency was perceived to be unsatisfactory.

Mr Cumming reported that SNHS did have a defibrillator (at the office); it was newly-installed (2 years ago); and was widely publicised around the School.

There was a lack of clarity as to (i) whether the defibrillator had been purchased by School funds or funds raised by parents, and (ii) how the cost of maintenance was funded.

Some PC members expressed the view that ERC ought to be able to negotiate discounted purchase and maintenance costs, if these items were purchased in bulk.

- (ii) Education Scotland: HM Inspectors' Consultation

HM Inspector of Schools is currently consulting on various issues, including as to the frequency of inspections, whether advance notice should be given, and how ratings should be communicated (e.g. should "one word" judgments be avoided?).

Mr O'Neil confirmed that the last HMIS inspection of SNHS was in 2019. However, ERC operates a frequent and rigorous system of rolling collaborative inspections.

The OB asked whether HMIS inspections include an assessment of the faith ethos of a denominational school (e.g. the "Catholicity" of a Catholic school). Mr O'Neil confirmed that no such provision is made within HMIS inspections, but that it is normal practice to request that an associate inspector from the Catholic sector is nominated as part of an HMIS inspection of any Catholic

school. In 2019, HMIS feedback on the Catholicity of the School was good. In addition, an annual report is submitted by the School to the Diocese and SCES on such issues.

Some PC members suggested greater parental (and pupil) engagement in such inspections, perhaps with randomised invitations to parents to provide feedback to HMI, to foster “collaborative improvement”.

(iii) Projecting pupil capacity, and placing request, across the School Estate

The OB reported that ERC staff had given an interesting presentation on their approach to the difficult issue of projecting pupil capacity in ERC schools, taking account of birth rates, house-building and population fluctuations.

Significant concern had been expressed (at the ERC PC Chairs Forum) about alleged errors in ERC's projections in recent years - resulting in alleged serious under-calculation of the number of pupils in Maidenhill and Crookfur Primary Schools.

Mr O'Neil reported that the 3rd & 2nd Year cohort at SNHS were unusually large (being about 360 each), which was largely attributable to the St Cadoc's feeder primary being a four-stream school at that time; but that the current 1st Year intake had reduced to 340 (due to the St Cadoc's feeder primary being reduced to a two-stream school). The School roll is expected to decrease in succeeding years.

(iv) Census on Parental Involvement & Engagement Strategy

The OB reported that ERC is publishing a consultation on the effectiveness of its parental involvement and engagement strategy.

6. Head Teacher's Report

Mr O'Neil reported the following:

- (i) The School is in full exam mode. Exams are ongoing. There has been wonderful support from senior pupils to those seeking additional assistance. Exam dates have changed at short notice. Letters will be issued.
- (ii) The School has been represented at many sports competitions. The mini-bus has been an invaluable resource.
- (iii) The Careers Convention was well-attended by parents and pupils, and was judged a huge success.
- (iv) SNHS staff attended at the Scottish Parliament to receive an award for their excellent participation in Holocaust Memorial events.
- (v) Transition days for the cluster primaries have been progressing well.
- (vi) Five pupils have succeeded in being invited to participate in the (advanced paper of the) UK Maths Challenge, which is a remarkable achievement for the School.

(vii) During Lent Mass is being celebrated every day (with Monsignor Monaghan, and Fathers Woodford and Fitzpatrick).

The PC expressed its sincere thanks to Mr O'Neil and his staff for their hard work, especially during the exam period.

7. Parent Questions

Two questions were raised by parents:

- (1) Easyfundraising – Was the School aware that a recent payment had been made to the School from “easyfundraising”; and how are these funds being used?
- (2) School Trips – How is participation decided? Is the “balloting” “weighted” so that a child who misses one trip, may have a greater chance of being selected for another trip?

On the first question, Mr O'Neil was not aware of the recent payment. Such money simply goes into the “School fund”, and is used for a myriad of purposes (such as petrol for the minibus). The OB asked for clarification of the source of money going into the “School fund”. Mr O'Neil explained that it has come from various sources over the years: discos, Easter camps, etc.

The School staff authorise expenditure up to a certain level, but Mr O'Neil stated that he would like to set up a “committee” to “sign off on expenditure”.

PC members reiterated that the “easy fund-raising” arrangement is a cost-free and easy way for parents to raise funds for the School. It deserved to be more widely publicised and promoted. It was suggested by PC members that the facility might usefully be highlighted in the next School newsletter.

Mr O'Neil observed that he was “looking to resurrect” the entity known as “Friends of St Ninian's”, not only for the purpose of fund-raising, but to promote a spirit of collegiality and community within the parent body.

On the second question, Mr O'Neil stated that he was looking into the issue of the selection procedure. There are four trips in the lower school (S1 to S3) and four trips in the upper school. The Rome trip this year has proved to be popular – and that cost increases (which had caused concern) have been satisfactorily addressed through “hard negotiation”.

The business of the Parent Council Meeting was then concluded.

The next PC Meeting is on 12th May 2025.

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

<i>Scottish Government Consultation on Opting-out of Religious Education</i>	<i>Who?</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
OB to monitor the outcome of the Scottish Government Consultation.	OB	Ongoing
<i>Canonisation of Blessed Carlo Acutis (27 April 2025)</i>		
OB to check on steps taken to publicise the canonisation.	OB	May 25
<i>Friends of St Ninian's</i>		
OB to check on steps taken to "resurrect" Friends of St Ninian's (for the dual purposes of fund-raising and promotion of parental collegiality).	OB	Ongoing
<i>Eastwood Park Development</i>		
OB to open a dialogue with ERC regarding concerns/aspirations around the Development	OB	Ongoing