**Bell Baxter High School Parent Council**

**Minute of Meeting held on Thursday, 29th August 2019 at 7.00 p.m.**

**Conference Room, Bell Baxter High School**

**Present:** Karen Brown (Chair), Nicola Joy (Treasurer), Lindsey Alexander, Chantelle Kidd, Holly Clark, Elaine Blake, Crispin Hayes, Anita Petrie, Maria Sanchez-Lluelma, Jonathan Staal, Carol Ann Penrose (Headteacher), Cllr Karen Marjoram, Cllr Margaret Kennedy, Linda Orr, Shona Rust, Lisa Ingram, Angela Murray, Rachel Graham, Kirsty Cooper, Jennifer MacFarlane

**Apologies:** Ian Jones (Vice-Chair), Stephen Gethins MP, Willie Rennie MSP, Cllr Tony Miklinski, Christine Dunnett, Julie Goad, Sara Duncan

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

Karen Brown welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Previous Minutes**

Approved

1. **Rectors Report**

Ms Penrose gave an update on staffing including probationers and new teachers across the school, as well as some internal changes. She said there had been a positive start to the new term with good ideas being shared for going forward, including new staff putting forward ideas for extra-curricular activities, which she welcomed.

The dress policy was discussed. Ms Penrose said she was delighted with the response to the uniform policy, stating 99 per cent of young people were complying and some were almost there, just awaiting new shoes and trainers. It is now those who turn up in hoodies and denim who feel ‘out of place’. Staff have been greeting pupils in arrival and asking them to take jackets off and put their blazers on if they have them. Ms Penrose said she was pleased to see so many pupils in S1-3 choosing to wear blazers. A survey undertaken of S4-6 showed 30 per cent wearing blazers that day, a significant increase on previous years. There is a compliance of 60-70 per cent amongst National 5 pupils and she hopes this will influence other, younger pupils to wear blazers. Ms Penrose said this had led to a discussion about whether the blazer policy should apply to the whole school next year (and for all S1s) and the parent council agreed this would be worthwhile pursuing.

Ms Penrose asked for volunteers from the parent council to attend the short life working group to re-write and update the School Standards and Quality report. Those interested were asked to contact the chairperson.

Ms Penrose said work on updating Bell Baxter’s Vision, Values and Expectations was done during the two in-service days before the school term began. This is where the ambitions for the school are set and she said this requited some ‘blue sky thinking’ about what kind of school everyone wants it to be and how this can be achieved. The last time this was reviewed was in 2006 so it needs updated. Pupils and parents are also to be asked what their ambitions are for the school and all ideas will be put together. A short life working group of ten staff who have volunteered, plus a group of pupils, will the work together to reduce this information into three or four visual statements which will be voted on by the community. Ms Penrose asked if a few members of the Parent Council could help with that it would be appreciated.

Ms Penrose also spoke about the local authority review that was due to take place the following week involving a team of around 12 people from Fife Council. The last time this was done was in October 2017 and they would be looking to see what progress had been made. She will share the findings of this review afterwards.

Ms Penrose was asked about several matters during her report including:

Bi-level Spanish lessons – it is not uncommon to teach different levels in one class and this is necessary to allow the school to continue to offer the class, despite budget pressures.

Woodmill High School fire – Ms Penrose was asked if Bell Baxter had offered and could accommodate extra pupils if necessary. She had been in touch with the Head Teacher there and had offered support but because of the distance it was not felt Bell Baxter would be a good option for accommodating pupils when there were other options available including Bertha Park in Perth which had just opened and had capacity. Mr Penrose said Bell Baxter has capacity for 1800 and would have offered help if needed.

1. **Chairperson’s Update**

* The meeting calendar for the upcoming academic year has been drafted with a selection of possible dates, please feedback those that are/are not suitable. This will be approved at the AGM.
* Ian Jones has resigned from his post as Vice-Chairperson.
* New In-Service days have been introduced – Monday 21st October 2019 and Monday 6th January 2020. These were agreed nationally with the Scottish Negotiating committee for Teachers (SNCT).

1. **Treasurers Update**

Nicola Joy said the account was £1400 in credit although the cost of the S1 ties would have to come from this and she expected the office to ask for this soon. She will set up the online banking as previously discussed. She made a complaint to Bank of Scotland and received £100 in compensation which will go into the account. The Parent Council made £360 on blazer sales. Nicola is in the process of resurrecting the 500 Club and will set up a generator. The relaunch will require publicity to be sorted, hopefully people will be interested and this will help raise additional funds.

1. **AOCB**

A charge (£25) for home economics was raised. Ms Penrose said she did not think the charge was the same across schools and would make enquiries. It was recognised that this amount may not be affordable for everyone but that assistance was in place for the families of young people receiving free school meals. Other funds are available to help meet costs. It was agreed that further enquiries would be made about the charge.

The increase in school dinner prices were raised and it was felt that this rise coincided with food portions getting smaller. Prices were also said to be a lot higher than town centre prices, particularly the supermarkets. Ms Penrose said the school does not set the prices and these are dictated by an outside contractor. She said the school had success in lobbying them to stop using plastic etc but that the prices for food were set across the board and not by the school.

Some discussion also took place about how best to manage lunch queues to be fair to all pupils and ensure queues move quickly enough. It was felt it might be worth trialling a rota system for year groups. Ms Penrose was not aware of the ‘snack shack’ hatch but would investigate if this could sell cold food e.g. sandwiches and drinks to help alleviate pressure on the dinner hall.

Ms Penrose was asked about the school’s responsibility for pupils when they leave school grounds e.g. at lunch time. She confirmed the school is only responsible for pupils when they are within the school building and grounds.

Councillor Marjoram said Fife Council was moving towards removing products containing palm oil across its estate including in schools. The use of sustainable palm oil was discussed. She was asked if Fife Council could include cleaning products in this policy. Cllr Marjoram added that Fife Council was also removing all single use plastics from use, although there were exceptions such as medical items.

Ms Penrose was asked if pupils would be receiving homework diaries. The answer was no and that many pupils keep a note of homework on their mobile phones. Pupils were welcome to buy academic diaries if they preferred.

Clarification on the school’s mobile phone policy was requested and Ms Penrose said this is one area that continues to annoy teachers and said it is something the school needs to look at. At present the policy is no mobile phones in class.

Music tuition was also discussed, and Ms Penrose was asked what pupils should do to catch up in lessons which they have missed due to music tuition. She said it would be helpful for teachers to advise and for fellow pupils to share information on any homework allocated.

The Polar Academy: Bell Baxter High School was selected to take part in the 2020 Polar Academy expedition. Two parents, whose children are taking part, attended the Parent Council meeting to ask for support and to explain more about the expedition, fundraising and other preparations ahead of the trip at Easter next year. At present pupils are training very hard and Ms Penrose had taken part in the ‘insanity’ training shortly before the meeting. Ten pupils will journey to the Arctic while a further ten will take part in an expedition in Scotland. All of them are involved in the full training programme and helping of fundraise. They have raised over £10,000 of their £75k target so far and have activities planned including a car boot sale on Sunday, September 22 and a band night and fashion show. An information evening for the trip will take place on September 26. Bell Baxter Polar Academy has its own facebook page with more information.

Ms Penrose said the Weekly Update had been changed following a request by the Parent Council. The website will now be updated each week with specific sections for S1-3 and S4-6 and a link will be sent out each Friday advising of the update. This method has overcome issues with the amount of space available for content.

Ms Penrose was asked about the school’s relationship with Cupar Youth Café and the opportunities it offers young people and the work it does on LGBT issues. Cllr Kennedy supported this saying it helps boost confidence. Ms Penrose said she was aware and that not enough is perhaps being done in school to increase awareness of LGBT issues but this should be part of the school’s work on Vision and Values. She said this also extended to all young people with specific needs. She agreed to invite Gemma Frail from the Youth Café to the school to discuss increasing engagement with the Youth Café and promoting it amongst pupils.

A request was made to have school terms times and dates made available electronically through iCAL. This was discussed.

The quality of AV equipment available at the winter and spring concerts was discussed. It was mentioned that Castlehill PS owns equipment and may hire this to Bell Baxter if required. It was noted that the recent production at the Byre Theatre was very professional thanks, in part, to the equipment available there. If Bell Baxter wishes to fundraise for its own equipment it was suggested the Tesco Bags of Help scheme may be of interest.

Plans and fundraising for a therapy dog at Bell Baxter were also discussed.

1. **Date of Next Meeting**

Please note change of date – Tuesday 24th September 2019 - AGM