**Bell Baxter High School Parent Council**

**Minute of Meeting held on Tuesday, 14th January 2020 at 7.00 p.m.**

**Conference Room, Bell Baxter High School**

**Present:** Karen Brown (Chair), Carol Ann Penrose (Headteacher), Holly Clark, Christine Wilson, Suzanne Morton, Vicki Cromar, Chantelle Kidd, Kay Anderson, Katherine Black, Jonathan Staal, Sarah Cutler, Elaine Blake, Cara Fearon, Christine Dunnett, Gaynor Davidson, Kirsty Cooper, Kim Brown, Penny MacKenzie, Ali Rankin, Nicola Joy (Treasurer), Monica Ironside, Morag Scott, María-José Sánchez-Lluelma, Crispin Hayes, Faith Nicholson

**Apologies:** Lindsay Alexander, Anita Petrie, Andrew Wallace, Lisa Ingram, Shona Rust, Jennifer Macfarlane

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

Karen Brown (KB) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Update on Recent Fire**

KB thanked Carol Ann Penrose (CAP) for getting everyone out of the buildings safely and following Fife Council protocols for such events. CAP reported that a letter had been issued to all parents and carers on 14/1/20 explaining what happened as rumours on social media were rife. There was a small fire in a toilet on the blue corridor which the fire brigade were called to attend. CAP explained the procedure that was followed to evacuate everyone (it took seven minutes to evacuate) and to communicate with all relevant parties during the event. Communication was issued to parents/carers on re-entering the building as soon as it was possible to do so. CAP then explained how the pupils were accommodated with the minimum possible disruption once they were allowed back into the buildings.

A question was raised regarding what lessons were learned from the event. CAP responded that there were minimal changes to be made: the Fire Officer has recommended that somebody should be available to direct the first fire engine to the necessary location, and that there are improvements that will be made to the tools and techniques for communicating information during such an event (implement texting hierarchy and to obtain a more effective loudspeaker).

The Fire Service will deliver fire safety talks to pupils in the upcoming weeks.

The school and the Police are working together to identify the perpetrator.

There have been two other small fires recently that didn’t set fire alarms off. The School is working with Health & Safety to ensure all alarms are functioning correctly.

1. **Rectors Report**

CAP presented the new visions and values for the school and explained what they stood for. An external facilitator was engaged to assist members of the school community with the task of forming the visions and values.

Vision statement – The future is in our hands

Values – Curiosity, Togetherness, Excellence

The vision and values have been discussed in assemblies and will be added to the school website which is currently in the process of being redesigned. CAP is reviewing the structure of the website and how it will be kept up to date. The new Librarian will be tasked with keeping the revised website and other social media up to date going forward.

In addition to a new Librarian joining the school staff attendees were advised of other staff changes: David Lowrie is leaving the school on 3/2/20 and Martin Gibbons is leaving on 15/2/20, his post will be advertised imminently. There are three teachers coming into the school shortly.

1. **Course Choice and Curriculum Model – Presented by Carol Ann Penrose**

CAP explained the background to the changes to course choices and the curriculum model, and that similar work done with other years further up the school had demonstrated an improvement in educational outcomes. There is a drive to improve the number of pupils obtaining five Highers as the school is not currently performing at the level it should be against appropriate comparators. To make improvements CAP is looking at what can be done differently with regard to the curriculum but a ‘culture shift’ amongst pupils will also be needed to reach desired performance levels.

The slides presented will be shared with all parents and carers.

In brief, pupils will now make choices a year earlier than they previously did and will follow the same programme into S4. From S3 pupils will study English and Maths along with five other choices from curriculum areas. A maximum of two choices can be made from any one curriculum area. PE will be a compulsory 8th subject. There will be some flexibility regarding course changes at the end of S3, but this will depend on the particular subject.

In S3 each subject will be delivered as a double period and two singles. In S4 all periods will be doubles (100 minutes).

The aims of this model are to allow breadth of education and defer narrowing of pathways, to put in place something that works for as many pupils as possible, improve continuity, optimise available teaching and learning time, and maximise chances of performance success.

If there is not enough interest in some options to justify running a class those options may not be viable and alternative choices will need to be made. Likewise there may not be capacity for all interested in taking a particular option to study it and in these circumstances an alternative choice will need to be made. This is no different to what has happened previously.

There will be an emphasis on counselling S2’s with regard to their choices, which will be undertaken by the senior leadership team. Prior to counselling sessions reports will be issued to parents/carers. Choices should usually be based on areas of strongest attainment and career ambitions.

Concerns raised by those attending the meeting included the following:

* the requirement for breadth;
* not being able to choose to study exactly what wish, including not being able to study three sciences;
* potential demotivation of pupils resulting from option choices;
* that appropriate guidance be given to pupils regarding choices;
* whether 100 minute double periods will be effective as there could be issues regarding concentration and motivation;
* when and how which courses pupils have been allocated will be communicated.

CAP acknowledged there may be tensions around the proposed changes, which are innovative and being made as a first stage of raising attainment.

CAP is working with Fife College to enrich the curriculum available to S5/6 to show pupils that different pathways to the standard ones are available. A range of HNC and Foundation Apprenticeships options will be offered. The HNC teaching will be delivered by Fife College staff at Bell Baxter so pupils will not have to travel. Additionally, Open University courses will be offered and delivered through online learning and occasional face-to-face visiting tutors.

1. **AOCB**

None

1. **Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 18th March 2020.