



ST JAMES' PARENT GROUP MEETING

Monday 15th September 2025 at 18:00

Minutes

Committee Members: Christina Waltham, Marie Prior, Claire Ferguson, LeeAnn Nelson, Sari Cabrera Valdivia, Luisa Kemp, Cheryl Howitt and Michelle Stelmaszuk

Chair – Claire McLaughlin and Michelle Martinson

1. Welcome and opening prayer

Claire McLaughlin welcomed everyone to the first Parent Group meeting of the 2025/26 academic year including Head Teacher – Mrs Fitzsimmons, Deputies - Mrs Bradford, Mrs Pacitti and Mr Healy, Principal teacher - Mr Moran and Father John Eagers.

Please note that 6 parents from the wider school group were present.

Following the AGM in May a number of parents stepped up to join the Parent Group, unfortunately Cheryl Howitt has now had to step back but will continue to support events, we thank Cheryl for her support.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Michelle Martinson and Cheryl Howitt.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting , 19th May 2025

The minutes were issued to the school forum 29th May 2025. Minutes were accepted with no change.

4. Parent Forum Feedback

The Parent Group issued a link to the Parent Forum for the opportunity to provide items they wish to see on the agenda and require feedback at the meeting, the following items were highlighted;

Giglets

Feedback from parents has shown increasing concerns over the additional levels of screentime the children are getting through homework. Many parents are trying to limit their children's screentime and Giglets is not helping. As well as the web based page not being very user friendly for the children.

This issue has been brought to the group at prior meetings, where the teaching staff advised they would monitor and review.



This monitoring has now allowed for Giglets to be used in conjunction with physical books to allow a balanced approach to reading at home. Giglets will be kept up to date and ebooks issued via class teachers for homework. Physical books will also be issued by class teachers at appropriate levels.

This will continue to be monitored. Feedback will be sought later in the year to understand how this is working. We kindly ask that all books are returned every week to school to allow circulation throughout the year.

The school and staff have signed up to be UK literacy judges in partnership with the Scottish Book Trust and UKLA, which has provided access to free books to the school, these have started to be delivered and we look forward to the presence of quality reading books across the classes and bases.

School Bus

There have been numerous concerns regarding both the Ferry Village and Dean Park School buses.

The Dean Park bus timetable has been altered with the new contract, which is now proving to be a very tight timetable. The bus has been late to stops on a regular basis causing undue stress to the parents and the children, who are now running into the gate as the bell goes, causing a stressed start to the day.

Mrs Fitzsimmons is in regular contact with the Renfrewshire Council school bus responsible person and SPT regarding the issues and these will continue to be monitored and reviewed. There are around 130 children registered to use the buses, but at present only 80 are using it.

Behaviour on the buses was another item raised, this is being dealt with in school and all pupils have been reminded of what is expected on the school bus.

Please note that if your child is entitled to use either of the school buses that they are at the correct stop on time. Behaviour on the bus will continue to be monitored and continued misbehaving on the buses will result in the pupils concerned no longer being able to access this transport to school.

Trinity High School Estates Meeting

The Parent Group Chairs have been invited to attend a meeting being held on behalf of the Trinity High School Parent Group. All Parent Groups from feeder/cluster schools have been invited.

The subject matter is the initial discussion regarding the Renfrewshire Council proposals that due to the expected numbers of pupils expected to Trinity High School in the years to come, the current estate is not fit for purpose and the numbers expected.

The group highlighted a number of points they wish the chairs to raise at the meeting;

- Catchment area of school
- Feeder schools
- Preference for the estate to remain in Renfrew
- Impact on travel to school



The chairs will feedback any information at the next Parent Group meeting scheduled for November.

Drop in

The Parent Group would like to hold a drop in session once a month to allow parents to meet the team, have a catch up and open access to the uniform cupboard where required.

This will be a 45min session to allow the group to work around their employment and have someone present at each session. The school is supportive of this and dates/times will be agreed and issued in advance.

5. Treasurer / Finance Update

Treasurer, Marie Prior updated the group on the finances for the start of the year. The account has approx £7,000 at present, however £3,000 is ringfenced for Renfrew Local Partnership, £1,500 is ringfenced for the Tesco funding to deliver the outdoor learning gardening project. Leaving approx £2,500, before any events, of which the Parent Group contribute to a number of things throughout the school year like;

- Discos; incl 1 free disco
- Christmas Fayre
- Christmas party snacks
- Support to the P1 and 2 nativity production
- Support to the P6 Disney production
- Easter eggs
- P7 leavers event and hoodies
- Big Day In Contribution

This will continue to be monitored throughout the year alongside fundraising.

The group have discussed 3 discos this year, with the end of year disco being free to all.

We are awaiting the 2024/25 leavers contributions from Parent Pay. To be picked up with the school office.

Due to changes with business accounts, a service charge is being applied to the Parent Group bank account. We have reviewed other accounts and spoke with other Parent groups who have faced the same issue, but no alternative is available at present. We will continue to review but we are paying approximately £5 a month.

The group has been attempting to get the accounts audited by external auditors to ensure compliance and transparent accounting. Michelle Stelmazuk has a contact who has agreed to carry this out for the group. Contact details to be shared.



6. Fundraising

Claire Ferguson gave an overview of the funding awarded over the summer

Tesco Grant Funding - £1,500

The St James' Primary Parent Group were recently successful with our 'We Grow Stars' funding application to Tesco and their Stronger Starts initiative and secured funding to purchase plants, fruit and vegetables and gardening tools and gift these to each class in the school. The project will be based around each class becoming responsible for one planter for the entire year, with a view to expand the project and include growing fruit and vegetables as pupils gain experience and knowledge. This will greatly enhance the outdoor learning environment while simultaneously covering a variety of health and wellbeing, and scientific experiences and outcomes.

We have reached out to Broadloan Gardens to ask our local community to support the teaching staff with this project and support the focus on outdoor learning.

Renfrew Local Partnership - £3,000

The St James' Primary Parent Group were also successful in application to the Renfrew Local Partnership Fund to purchase new playground lining and markings. We were successful in this bid and awarded £3,000 for this project. We are currently in contact with the supplier to arrange an install date and can update at the next meeting.

Focus for 2025/26 academic year

The group were asked to think about what the focus for 2025/26 will be.

Claire mentioned there are a number of funds available, like Renfrew Local Partnership, expected applications will be accepted in Feb 2026, National Lottery, Glasgow Flight path - Next Board meeting is Dec, applications due 3 weeks prior.

The school is continuing to focus on outdoor learning, where an application was made over summer to the Tesco Stronger Starts fund for outdoor wear. This will go live in the Renfrew store October through to December 2025, so start saving your blue tokens and get voting.

The school would like a focus on outdoor learning and outdoor play kits, things like seating, boards, playground equipment, as well as a container for the equipment to be stored safely.

7. PVG

There has been a number of the group and teacher staff in attendance on the Scottish Government, Renfrewshire Council and Connect training for PVGs.

There have been changes to legislation which have caused concern and uncertainty to how the group runs the school discos.



We will continue to monitor and review the Connect website, Renfrewshire Council and help pages to gain clarity.

At present the full Parent Group are individually PVG'd, new members have sent away applications. We will ensure that the group continues to be spread across the halls and our good practice on how the discos are run continues and we learn through each event.

8. Disco

The next disco will be the Halloween disco, an email will be sent out to the Parent Forum looking for helpers.

The following dates have been provisionally booked for the 2025/26 discos

- Thursday 30th October 2025 – Halloween disco
- Thursday 12th February 2026 - Valentines disco
- Thursday 21st May 2026 - end of term disco (P1 - P6)

As discussed times are as follows;

- Disco 1 - P1 to P3 from 6.00pm to 7.15pm
- Disco 2 - P4 to P7 from 7.30pm to 8.45pm

9. Christmas Fayre

The Christmas Fayre has been provisionally booked for Thursday 27th November 2026.

This is our biggest fundraiser of the year. There are a number of items to be agreed within the Parent Group to bring forward to the school including;

- LET to be booked
- Grotto building
- Invite for Santa to attend
- Stall holders and prices
- Helpers from p7
- Helpers from Trinity High School
- Christmas Jumper Swap - Eco committee led.

Feedback for improvements on previous fayres included;

- Ticket system to improve waiting times to see Santa.
- Early access to stalls for helpers as they have never been able to attend a Christmas Fayre before.



10. School Swap

The group were reminded that the Parent Group run the following donation/swap/pick up;

- Uniform - no donations required, cupboard has been organised and will be opened at Parents night. We remind the group that if anyone wishes uniform items, there is an anonymous Microsoft Form which parents can complete which goes back to the school office to request uniforms.
- Halloween Costumes - request has been issued for donations, costumes will be out at Parents night.
- Christmas Jumpers - Eco committee to run at the Christmas Fayre.
- Communion Outfit - When appropriate - there are a number of dresses and accessories in the uniform cupboard.
- Leavers Event Outfits - When appropriate - there is a small selection of dresses and suits in the uniform cupboard.
- Winter jackets - stock getting low, looking for donations.

11. Head teachers report

Welcome back, everyone!

A heartfelt thank you to our incredible Parent Council for all their support and hard work last year. We're also delighted to welcome new members to our St James' family—it's wonderful to have you with us this evening, thank you for joining us.

It's hard to believe we've already been back for four weeks! It has been an absolute joy to see our children return in full school uniform, singing cheerfully as they walk through the doors, clearly happy to be reunited with their St James' family.

Alongside our new Primary 1 cohort, we've welcomed an additional twenty children across the school. This growth is a testament to you, our parents, for championing our school and sharing the values we hold dear. The inclusive and nurturing culture we've built together continues to be a key reason families choose St James'—thank you for being such strong advocates.

We're thrilled to have retained our temporary staff from last session and to welcome a new teacher, Miss Megan McArthur, to our team. This continuity helps us maintain a consistent and aligned experience for all our learners.

As shared in previous communications, we were deeply saddened by the recent passing of our beloved janitor, Mr Ken Paxton, due to ill health. He will be fondly remembered by all who knew him. Please keep him and his family in your thoughts and prayers.

Later this month, we'll be sharing our **Standards and Quality Report** in video format once again. It will highlight last year's achievements and feature your amazing children speaking passionately



and proudly about their school. We encourage you to watch it together as a family when the link arrives.

Our **School Improvement Plan** is currently undergoing final quality assurance. It reflects your feedback from the Term 3 questionnaires and surveys, and includes exciting developments such as:

- **Enhancing literacy** by inviting real-life authors into school to work with pupils and train staff.
- **Expanding outdoor learning**, especially in numeracy, using our fantastic outdoor spaces—huge thanks to our Parent Council for their behind-the-scenes efforts to support this.
- **Embedding our Relationships Policy and core values**—Kindness, Respect, and Commitment—into every aspect of school life. This includes a welcoming environment, healthy breakfasts, a strong focus on wellbeing, attendance, anti-racism, and Gospel Values. We'll also continue our journey toward the **Digital Wellbeing Award**, with a focus on cyber resilience and internet safety.
- **Using our Pupil Equity Fund** to enhance the curriculum and ensure that hidden poverty does not hinder success. Every child will have access to tailored support and opportunities to help them flourish and reach their personal best.

I'm truly looking forward to working with our Parent Council again this year as we continue to strengthen purposeful parental engagement—together shaping our children's futures and inspiring limitless possibilities.

St James' Primary – Parking and Road Safety Update

Background & Concerns: St James' Primary has long faced serious traffic and parking challenges, worsened by local housing growth and the school's large catchment area. Key concerns include:

- Heavy congestion due to high car use and bus traffic.
- Unsafe driver behaviour (e.g. pavement parking, misuse of disabled bays).
- Obstruction of staff car park and drop-off zones.
- Speeding and unsafe crossings near the school.
- Negative impact on children, families, local residents and businesses.

Actions Taken So Far: We've implemented several operational and community-focused measures:

- **Staff Deployment:** Early supervision at gates, bus zones, and crossings.
- **Road Safety Education:** Active involvement in campaigns like Walk to School Week and JRSO initiatives.
- **Community Engagement:** Safety videos, competitions, and presentations to parents and councillors.



- **Partnerships:** Collaboration with Road Safety Officers, Community Police, and Renfrewshire Council officials.
- **Interim Solutions:** Park & Stride locations, improved supervision, and requests for Safe Travel Maps.

Proposed Improvements: We've submitted requests for:

- An **electronic barrier** to protect the bus turning circle.
- **Zebra/pelican crossings and protective railings** at key pedestrian points.
- **Speed control measures** and clearer signage.
- **Drop-off zone redesign** and professional modelling.
- Continued development of **Safe Travel Maps**.
- Opening school car parks for **evening events** to reduce neighbour disruption.

Positive Feedback: Early signs of improvement have been noted, with parents reporting a calmer and safer environment during drop-off and pick-up.

Next Steps: We're seeking support from relevant departments to:

- Action outstanding infrastructure upgrades.
- Increase parking enforcement during peak times.
- Continue collaboration on travel education and long-term traffic solutions.

12. Correspondence

The Parent Group have been asked for a representative to attend the Diocesan Parent Forum Meeting on Sept 22nd 7pm, Inle Street Paisley.
We will reach out to the group and advise in due course.

13. AOCB

Seesaw access - some classes are not up and running on Seesaw yet, Mr Moran and Mr Healy have taken the action to review this and ensure all classes are up and running.

Diary dates - query was raised regarding the diary on GLOW, as it's not up to date. Mr Moran highlighted there have been issues with GLOW but they should be getting resolved. All dates will be updated when access is resolved. All dates will be highlighted in the school newsletter going out at the end of the week.

Policies online - request was made by the Parent Group to update and add all Parent Group policy documents to the GLOW page associated. Mr Moran took the action to update and resolve.

Parent Group Emails - IT request was raised with Renfrewshire Council as the Parent Group email address was unable to receive incoming mail Fri 12th - Mon 15th Sept. This is believed to now be



resolved. If you sent in an email and received notification of an issue please resend and we will pick up.

WhatsApp community - Attendees were asked if they wished to join the wider WhatsApp group which supports the Parent Group in requests for feedback and organising.

P7 dates - due to the nature of a busy Primary 7 year, a request was made for the school to share the dates where parent attendance is required in advance in order to plan, like previous years. Mrs Fitzsimons raised that all year groups have events throughout the year where parents/carers would like to attend, like stage assemblies, these dates will be shared with the school forum too, noting they may be subject to change.

14. Date of next meeting

10th November 2025, in person, St James' Primary School, Renfrew, 6pm.

15. Closing Prayer with Father John

Many thanks to all in attendance for their views, input and support.