



Parent Council

AHS Parent Council Meeting Minute & Action Tracker

**Thursday 6 February 2025
6.00pm**

Parent Members:	Carrie Macdonald (Chair), Kenny Pottinger (Vice Chair), Sally Ferguson, Brian Goddard, Tracey Hawkins, Louise Milne, Anna Moar
In Attendance:	Robin Calder (Head Teacher – AHS), Dawn Ratter (Clerk/Treasurer), Helen Kerr (Staff Rep), Cllr J Fraser, Cllr A Wenger, Cllr S Leask, Cllr G Robinson, Isla Chapman (SRC), Erin Watt (SRC)
Apologies:	Marianne Clark, Amanda Hawick, Gowri Saravanan, Carly Cheyney, Caroline Henderson, Cameron Mackenzie (Staff Rep)

Agenda No	Information / Action	Person(s) Responsible
1	Welcome CM welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2	Approval of Minutes – Wednesday 13th November 2024 The minutes were approved by KP and seconded CM. <u>Amendments to Minutes</u> 6(p) Some parent members were unhappy that the Public SIC Guest Network allowed pupils to connect to social media sites e.g. snapchat and tiktok while on school premises. They felt that allowing unfiltered and unrestricted smartphones to be used means parents who are attempting to restrict and moderate internet use are being undermined by the current policy as children can watch/use friends devices. The parent council concerns are with smartphones specifically, rather than mobile phones in general.	
3	Review of matters and actions arising from previous minutes <u>Parent Council Bank Account</u> The clerk will apply for a new bank account with Virgin Money after the final transaction for the financial year have been processed.	DR
4	Head Teacher's Report, November 2024 (attached)	

	<p><u>School Roll</u></p> <p>Cllr J Fraser asked if placing requests are primarily from one geographical area within Shetland. RC said they are predominately from the south mainland catchment area but not exclusively. There are some from the north mainland and west mainland as well.</p> <p><u>School Attendance</u></p> <p>Cllr J Fraser observed the attendance figures, noting that historically they would see lower attendance in the higher year groups, but based on the information provided there is quite a high percentage of non-attendance in the lower year groups. Averaging around 15-20 pupils consistently being absent, rather than just at peak times of illness.</p> <p>RC provided additional information regarding some of the approaches in place to monitor attendance levels in school and actions taken to support children and young people who might find it difficult to attend school for a variety of reasons, both short term and long term. There are different levels of support put in place depending on the reason for absence. This could involve looking at a slightly different timetable for pupils, or a flexible approach to learning e.g. attending mornings or afternoons only, providing support at break or lunch times and involving other agencies.</p> <p>The school are trialling a new text messaging system so that parents are notified each morning if their children are not in school. Parents are also being updated on attendance percentages and late-comings via text message each term.</p> <p>Attendance has dipped nationally since the COVID pandemic, and schools are struggling to get back to pre-pandemic attendance levels. There have been studies around parental attitudes towards attendance at school and with the advances on remote learning, it is possible to access some learning out with school.</p> <p>Attendance is checked and recorded each period and pupils require parental authorisation before signing out during the school day. There is a new additional member of staff in the clerical team to support and help monitor attendance.</p> <p><u>School Improvement Plan</u></p> <p>RC explained the outcomes, actions and monitoring measures in place as part of the current school improvement plan. These can be viewed on the school website: School Information – Anderson High School</p> <p>RC will share more information on the impact of these priorities at the next meeting.</p>	RC
5	<p>Joint School/Parent Council, Pupil Safety and Health and Wellbeing Plan</p> <p>RC updated the parent council on the progress with the Pupil Safety and Health and Wellbeing Plan. RC stressed this document is confidential to the Parent Council and is not to be shared externally.</p>	

There are 14 actions on the plan which runs alongside the School Improvement Plan. The meeting tonight would focus on the new action regarding the use of smartphones in school.

Action (p) – Use of Smartphones in school

The current approach in school is that the mobile phones should be switched off during class time, either stored in phone pockets or schoolbags. They can only be used in class for research purposes, if asked by teachers. Mobile phones can be used freely during break and lunch times. This aligns with the current guidance from the Local Authority.

RC said they have acknowledged the petition that was shared with the school, and the arguments for expanding the digital down time to cover the whole school day, as well as some of the evidence and concerns that have been shared following the petition. There will be further discussion around this with the parents involved in setting up the petition.

The school are currently reviewing their own data, including looking at episodes of bullying and complaints where the use of mobile phones have been an issue. RC is keeping an eye on use of mobile phones in the classroom and any issues around this while carrying out visits to classes.

The recently published Scottish Government guidance is very clear that the use of mobile phones is up to each school, and if a school wishes to change their approach, they must do so in consultation with the school community. RC is interested in what is happening in other parts of the country, where mobile phones have been banned, or where they are looking at the issue. However, they also need to ensure they are following expectations around the digital curriculum and learning. They also need to ensure pupils are ready for the digital world of work.

In terms of engagement, the school are in conversations with the local authority. The local authority have informed the school that they will shortly be leading on a period of engagement with all parents/carers, pupils and staff around the use of mobile phones in schools. A working group will be set up over the coming weeks to seek views of relevant stakeholders. Members of staff from AHS will be included in the working group. The consultation will be led by James Johnston, Quality Improvement Officer. RC would be keen to set up a stakeholder group when the data is available. This would include staff, parents, pupils and members of the parent council.

There was some discussion around what this could mean for AHS. Some thoughts included a full ban on mobile phones in schools, or introducing optional mobile phone drop off points in school, piloting mobile phone free days, a possible phased approach starting with changes for the new S1 pupils or strengthening the current downtime approach.

RC had conversations with the pupil council to gather their views and provide some feedback following the last parent council meeting. Pupils had concerns around a full ban of mobile phones in school with most of the pupils feeling this approach was excessive. They felt they were being punished for the actions of a small group of pupils who were not using their devices appropriately. Mobile phones are used by pupils in school for various things, including keeping track of appointments, organising after school activities, contact with parents, etc. Some pupils who struggle at school or enjoy their own company rather than mixing with groups of people, were very honest and said they found their phone a sanctuary at lunch times.

Some pupils had concerns with how consequences would work if phones were banned. They also expressed concerns that if phones are banned during the school day, it would move the problem to out with school and children and young people would feel less safe. There were discussions around potential exceptions to a ban with some concern that those pupils could then be targeted by their peers for being allowed their phones in school e.g. for health/medical reasons. This could create a stigma amongst pupils.

Another area raised by the pupils was around learning and teaching. If mobile phones were to be banned during the school day, additional devices would be required to ensure there was enough for each pupil to use in class.

Cllr G Robinson raised the topic of affordability of providing children with a smart phone and the increase in smart watches, etc. He also mentioned recent research carried out by University of Birmingham which found there was no difference in outcomes for students who attended school that ban smartphones throughout the school days, including: mental wellbeing, anxiety and depression; physical activity and sleep; educational outcomes, attainment and disruptive classroom behaviour. The research also showed that restrictive school policies did not lead to lower phone and social media use overall.

A parent member argued that the Scottish Government may say policies on the use of mobile phones in school is up to each school but the world health organisation has taken a clear stance on the topic. Ofsted and research suggest a strong correlation between effective school mobile phone bans and improved GCSE results.

Parent members raised concerns that pupils are excluded from activities if they do not have a smartphone, or if their phone is locked down during the school day and they are not able to look things up online for class research.

A parent member noted that they really welcomed the discussion tonight and plans for consultation sound positive. However, they also mentioned that failing to address the immediate safety concern which allows pupils to access unfiltered internet sites and access to snapchat, tiktok, roblox, discord, etc was not appropriate. The SIC Guest connection does not have web filters to block access to these apps/sites but a 4G connection and proxy servers can be used to override that.

	<p>Cllr G Robinson has relayed discussions around the access through SIC Guest to Cllr D Sandison who was going to discuss this with Mrs Flaws, Director of Children's Services.</p> <p>The local authority review plans to have any changes/strengthening of policy in place for the start of the new academic year. This is quite an ambitious timeframe but highlights the importance of the review. James Johnston will be invited to the next meeting to give an update on the review. RC also noted that there will be a discussion on digital learning and teaching at the next Head Teacher development day.</p> <p>Another parent members said the use of mobile phones is a society problem, and not just with children and young people. It is not something the school alone can solve.</p> <p>RC said as a short-term immediate action from the meeting, the school will look at the web filters with the ICT department.</p>	
6	<p>Update on Information Evening for parents/carers</p> <p>The Information Evening for parents/carers will take place on Wednesday 12th February from 6-8pm. The purpose of the evening is to provide parents with key information and tools to support/speak to their children about current topics, such as: Substance misuse, Vaping, Mental Health and Internet Safety. There will be four 15-minute presentations led by guest speakers. Parents/carers will be organised into 4 groups which will rotate around each of the 15 minutes sessions.</p> <p>There will also be a number of stalls set up in the School Hall for parents and carers to visit. These stalls will be run by representatives from agencies that work closely with the school, such as, NHS, Open, Anchor, Dogs against Drugs, Active Schools, Compass, Developing the Young Workforce and Youth and Employability.</p> <p>CM asked members to spread the word and encourage more parents/carers to sign up to the event. There are currently on 5 parents who have expressed an interest in attending.</p> <p>Parent members and RC thanked CM for all her efforts in organising the event.</p>	
7	<p>AOCB <u>School Meals</u></p> <p>A parent asked if the school menu could be shared in advance with pupils, particularly so that pupils with specific dietary requirements could be prepared. RC will look to see if this can be added to the pupil bulletin.</p> <p>There was a general discussion on school meals and parent members agreed to invite Neil Beattie, Catering & Cleaning Team Leader to the next meeting.</p>	<p>RC</p> <p>DR</p>

