



Balfroon High School Parent Council

Minutes of meeting held online on Tuesday 5th March 2024 at 7pm at Balfroon High School.

Minutes

Attendance:

Fiona Galloway (Chair), Alyson Nejman (Vice Chair), Fiona Gallagher (Secretary), Elaine Bannatyne (HT), Kathleen Redmond, Kate Warburton, Carsten Mandt, Andrew Hancock, Lisa Dunn, Marcella Graham, Elaine Johnstone, Eilidh Cooper, Murrin Thomson, Anne Winther, Lynn Armstrong, Jim McFarlane, Rob McQuater

Apologies:

Ruth Gilfillan, Kate Baxter, Margaret Christie

1. Welcome

Fiona Galloway welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Head Teacher's Report

Ms Bannatyne is delighted to have been back in school full-time for 2 weeks. She gave a general update, highlighting some recent events at the school:

- S2 DNA Speed Competition
- Pupils 'Leaped' into March on 29th February
- Campsie won the inter-house uni challenge
- Senior pupils attended the ski trip in Austria
- A record number of pupils were awarded Bronze Duke of Edinburgh
- Burns supper catered by the Foundation Apprenticeship pupils
- Safer internet day was promoted through assemblies and focused on positive and negative online influences
- Young Carers week focused on invisible young carers and the support available for them
- Scottish Apprenticeship week

She also highlighted some upcoming events:

- Big Plastic Count – this is a UK wide initiative to encourage pupils to count the number of plastic bottles, lids, containers etc they are using in their household. This will paint a picture of the amount of plastic waste all households across the UK are producing.

- Step Point Challenge – pupils are encouraged to count their steps in groups of five with the chance to win a £20 gift voucher

Mobile Phone Policy

Research shows that pupils have a 20% reduction in concentration and performance if they have their phone in view or someone else's phone is in view in class or while studying. Research also shows that screen time at night has a detrimental effect on sleep. Following the publication of guidance for mobile phone use in schools in England and Wales, it is believed that some guidance will be published by the Scottish Government in due course.

Ms Bannatyne outlined the school's plans for 'Mobile March':

- Assemblies will be held for all year groups
- Focus on screen time linked to learning & wellbeing
- Year group Google Classroom information
- Pupils will watch 'The Social Dilemma' in Form Time with follow-up activities
- Pupils will be challenged to reduce their screen time
- Reminders about expectations around mobile phones in class
- A draft of the updated mobile phone use policy will be shared with staff for consultation
- Online session for parents on 18th March (recording of session to be emailed to all parents and carers)

Prior to the Parent Council meeting, two parents asked questions specifically about mobile phone use in school. One parent queried if a ban were to be considered, how this might impact pupils means of communication with their parents during the day in a rural area. Another parent asked if the school would consider banning the use of mobile phones during lunch and break. The parent is concerned about their child's screen time and feels this does not need to be increased with use at school.

Ms Bannatyne outlined the current policy for mobile phones in school:

- Mobile phones must be left in school bags during class time
- They can only be used in class with explicit permission from the class teacher
- They must be left in the school bag if a pupil visits the toilet during class

A parent, Andrew Hancock, outlined the work of the digital parents group who meet regularly to discuss mobile phone usage and its impact on young people. The majority of the group support the school introducing restrictions on pupil's use of mobile phones in school. They have studied a number of pieces of research and considered the negative impact mobile phone use can have on a pupil's mental health. Andrew noted that a number of schools are changing their mobile phone policies and are becoming more restrictive.

The S6 head prefects have held focus groups with pupils specifically about mobile phone use. Pupils outlined the reasons they use their mobile phone during the school days:

- In class – note taking, taking photos of work, alarms, reminders of deadlines and homework
- SQA app – study plans
- Listening to music to focus in class
- Bus app
- Contacting parents
- Banking
- Spotify
- Social media

Further discussion was had between the parents at the meeting around their concerns about mobile phone use, the impact on pupils' mental health and wellbeing, the impact of not having the ability to communicate with home and the differing thoughts and opinions between parents. Ms Bannatyne highlighted that a previous survey of staff had shown a majority see no need for mobile phones to be allowed in class.

Ms Bannatyne would like to hear the views of pupils, staff and parents and any change to the mobile phone policy would be in place for the 2024/25 session. The draft policy will be shared with parents.

3. Treasurers Report

Activity since the last Parent Council meeting:

- £500 paid to the school to support the Ardeche trip (supporting pupil equity)
- £182 spent on catering equipment to help with the provision of tea/coffee at school events
- Couple of small receipts for second hand uniform
- Couple of small receipts for 500 Club late payments
- Current funds - £5,150

4. Fundraising

500 Club has not been drawn at the previous meeting or this meeting. 3 draws will be made at the AGM on Tues 7th May.

The Parent Council would normally provide teas and coffee at school concerts, however the upcoming Easter concert is shorter and will not have an interval. Refreshments will therefore not be required.

Fiona outlined the plans for a cinema club, starting next month, which will raise funds for the school. Two films will be shown per evening. More information will follow.

The Balfon Clothing Company which is the stock of pre-loved school uniform, is in good order but requires a new volunteer to manage it. If any parent is interested, please contact the Parent Council on balfonhighschoolpc@gmail.com.

5. Parent Queries

Q – A concern was raised about problems with the door on the BF2 bus.

A – Ms Bannatyne will pick this up with Mr Braid. Pupils can also report any concerns they have, including with buses, on the landing page of the pupil website.

Q – Can parents have access to a list of upcoming school trips?

A – Yes, this is currently being pulled together and will be available to parents very soon.

Q – With regards communication about delayed school bus services, a parent asked if it is possible to text pupils with this information rather than parents?

A – Ms Bannatyne outlined that the school does not hold mobile numbers for pupils and that the text message service has limited usability.

Q – A parent asked about the current Anti Bullying policy.

A – Ms Bannatyne outlined that she would check on the status of the current policy.

Since the meeting, the following has been confirmed:

The policy was reviewed and updated this session by Mrs Johnstone (Acting DHT) and a small group of S6 pupil. A pupil friendly version was created and shared. It details how pupils can report through the landing page. The policy was updated to include:

- Details on the whole school approach to Equally Safe at School (ESAS)
- Definition of gender based violence
- Updated appendix with definitions of each protected characteristic and other vulnerable groups
- An additional appendix (flowchart) detailing the steps involved in recording incidents on SEEMiS (Bullying and Equalities module)

Q – Can parents view online the individual items their child is purchasing with their lunch card?

A – This cannot be viewed online through Parent Pay but can be accessed by the school for individual pupils if requested.

6. AGM & Parent Council Positions

The next Parent Council meeting will be the AGM and will take place on Tuesday 7th May at 7pm in the Strathendrick Suite at the school. At the meeting the members of the Parent Council will be elected for the 2024/25 session. The Parent Council requires four members – Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. The Vice Chair and Treasurer positions will become available as the current members are stepping down from these roles. The Parent Council would urge parents from across all year groups to consider joining the committee in either of these roles. To find out more information, please contact balfronhighschoolpc@gmail.com.

The Parent Council are also seeking volunteers to run the 500 Club, Balfron Clothing Company and fundraising events throughout the school year.

7. AOB

No further business was raised.

Confirmation of Parent Council meeting dates:

- Tuesday 7th May 2024 (AGM)

Fiona thanked everyone for attending the meeting.