



Balfroon High School Parent Council

Minutes of Parent Council Meeting held on Tuesday 10 September 2024 at 6.30pm at Balfroon High School.

Minutes

Attendance:

Elaine Bannatyne (HT), David Braid (DHT), Fiona Galloway (Chair), Anne Winther (Vice-Chair), Rob McQuater (Treasurer), Fiona Gallagher (Secretary), Amanda Quinn, Grace Johnstone (Head Prefect), Patrick Gallagher (Head Prefect), Adam Mackay (Head Prefect), Tessa (Head Prefect), Robyn Youens (Head Prefect) Annika Tulloch, Anna Mair, Rebecca McEwen, Jenny Dawson, L Craig, Ana Maxwell, Lynsey Cook, Lynn Armstrong, Katie Goodier, Natalie Roger, Louise Newman, Tracy Leggate, James MacLaren, Jillian Owens, Jackie Mackay, Craig Allan, Emma Allan, Kathleen Redmond, G Meridis, Thea Meridis, Ruth Thomas, Richard Chebbi, Carole Chebbi, Lesley Rousselet, Jenny Riches, Jamie Cochrane, Callum Wright, Mairi Wright, Jenny Cochrane, Matt Wood, Andrew Hancock, Janice Hancock, Pam Barclay, Jim McFarlane, Anni Small, Fiona Sharples

Apologies:

Kate Baxter

1. Welcome

Fiona Galloway welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Introduction of Parent Council

Fiona Galloway – Chair

Anne Winther - Vice-Chair

Rob McQuater – Treasurer

Fiona Gallagher - Secretary

3. Head Teacher's Report

Ms Bannatyne presented her Head Teacher's Report (see link)

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1feDv0JgcZzwMfQWwwwzFcqukFGfx7f8wGbYxEAght8o/edit?usp=sharing> which included:

- Staffing update
- Introduction of Head Prefects
- Good news stories
- Overview of 2024 SQA results
- School Priorities for 2024/25

- Increasing consistency in Learning & Teaching with 10 pedagogy leads
 - Curriculum offer
 - Extra-curricular activities for pupils
 - Events coming soon to BHS
 - Eco-flag accreditation
 - General update re Chromebooks, lockers and communication from the school
- Next steps - Frequently asked questions (FAQs) to be emailed out to parents. The padlet will also be updated and emailed.

- Safety

Ms Bannatyne outlined that work was completed over the summer to support disability access for an S1 pupil. A space has been created at the front of school for disability access only – please do not use this space unless you are dropping off or picking up a pupil who requires disabled access. This is important for the safety of our S1 pupil and other pupils like him.

4. School day proposal

Mr Braid presented the proposed changes to the times of the school day.

This is currently going through a consultation process and is a proposal only. Mr Braid is looking for feedback from staff and parents. The current school day timings are challenging for neurodiverse pupils.

It is proposed that form class would reduce to 10mins, break would be 15mins and lunch 45mins.

Parent questions:

Q – would sports events still take place after school?

A – It is likely that sports events would take place on the shorter days (Wed-Fri)

Q – will the times of school buses be impacted?

A – Yes, bus times would be adjusted excluding the service bus

Q – Would after school clubs still take place?

A – Yes

Q – Why structure the school day in this way?

A – It need to work with lunchtime for Balfron PS, there is a benefit to having less periods after lunch, the school are keen to create uniformity across the week especially for neurodiverse pupils

5. Mobile phone policy review

Ms Bannatyne explained that a new set of Scottish Government guidelines re mobile phone use in schools has been published. On the back of this the school is reviewing its mobile phone policy. There is an opportunity to examine what is or isn't working. A group of parents have created resources for pupils and parents around mobile phone use and safety. This group have also examined the risks for young people and issues around mobile phone use.

Pam Barclay presented on behalf of the parent mobile phone steering group. They have been working with the school since 2021. She shared a number of pieces of data relating to mobile phone use and the impact on young people. Their position as a group is that the school should have a full ban of mobile phones.

The Head Prefects have met with all year groups to gather their views about mobile phone use in school. Discussions around full and partial bans took place at Pupil Council meetings. The results of these discussions were presented – *insert link*

The school's current policy is that mobile phones should be in bags in class unless pupils have their teacher's permission to use their phone in class. Pupils are asked to put their phones away in their school bag if they are out without permission. Teachers may request that a pupil hands their phone in if they continue to ignore the policy.

Staff are currently being surveyed re mobile phone use in school – see slides.

Following the presentations, parents were invited to ask questions and share their thoughts. Parents expressed concern around the safety of mobile phone use, the impact on the mental health of young people, worries about young people not being able to contact home were a ban in place, the difficulties of policing a full ban in school, worries about a current lack of socialisation during break and lunch, concern that some pupils feel left out if they don't have all the apps and latest tech.

A parent asked why the Head Teacher cannot go ahead and make a decision herself to ban phones following the Scottish Government's guidelines without further consultation. Miss Bannatyne explained that it must be a joint decision with input from the whole school community in order to take the community with her. The rationale behind a change in policy must be understood. This is the process she must follow as Head Teacher.

There was concern about the current use of phones in class. A pupil was asked to use her phone in art to look at her eye. The parent felt they could have used a mirror and were being asked to use phones unnecessarily.

Following the meeting, Ms Bannatyne has responded to this comment as follows:

Dear Parents and Carers

It was great to see so many additional parents at the PC meeting. It was helpful to hear all of the views shared.

I thought it important to follow-up and feedback on the issue that was raised at the Parent Council last week. I have attached our current school policy for your information.

It was stated that pupils are asked to use their phones in a range of subjects. One specific example was given where a pupil had been asked to take their phone out to take a picture of their eye for art. It was suggested that a mirror would be more appropriate.

Just to clarify, our current policy states that learners can use phones with the permission of their teacher (4.2 of the policy attached).

It is worth noting that the focus at the Parent Council is part of a review process that we are undertaking in light of the new government guidelines (attached).

I went to meet with the art team the following day to investigate. Pupils are asked to take a picture of their eye. The eye picture is part of the 'Me Myself and I/Who am I' inter-disciplinary project between art, PSE, social subjects and English. The focus of the art lesson is self-portraiture. The pupils can choose to photograph their own eye or use a given image. The team report that pupils are more motivated by using pictures of their own eye. They are able to increase the size of the image taken which helps understand the elements of portraiture. The team feel that glancing between a mirror and their work would be much trickier than the screen or an actual picture beside their artwork.

The government guidelines (also attached) recognise that there are times when technology and phone use can enhance learning.

As we unpick and analyse the issues at Balfron High through the review, some staff are highlighting a range of times where, in their opinion, using mobile phones as a tool for learning and course work is very helpful. For example, pupils are required to photograph objects to use for their expressive folios S3-S6. (Pupils are asked to take images at home and upload them to Google Classroom, but often don't so this needs to be done in school to allow them to carry on with their course work. Colleagues in science, music, drama, music technology and technologies have identified times where being able to use mobile phones for recording is helpful to learners and the learning process.

While I can understand that there is a view that we are sending mixed messages to young people, right now I believe the message is clear - phones should be away in class unless you have permission from your teacher to use your phone to support learning.

I have asked all teams to ensure that young people are not listening to music through headphones/mobile devices.

Best regards,

Elaine Bannatyne, Head Teacher

Next steps:

Parents to share views - in-person session and online survey

Finalise staff consultation

6. Treasurers Report

Currently in bank - £3,160

Funds raised/donations:

Virgin Bank grant to fund digital inclusion

500 Club

Tea & coffee donations

Balfron Clothing Co sales (£220)

Parent Council has recently contributed towards:

STEM on Track project

Breakfast club

A Tesco grant has been applied for to further fund the breakfast club.

7. Fundraising

Fundraising to begin at school events where tea and coffee will be served by the Parent Council.

8. 500 Club

The 500 Club will run again this year to raise funds for the school. We aim to sell 500 numbers this session to boost fundraising. Six draws will be made within the year with a £50 prize for each.

9. Pre-loved uniform

There are currently 300 items in the cupboard with a good stock of non-braided blazers. The Parent Council are working with the eco-group to sell items. It was suggested that pre-loved uniform could be sold at the S4 parents' evening on 10 Oct.

10. AOB

PVG Checks

Jackie Mackay reminded parents that she can process PVG registrations. This is required for parents who are willing to volunteer with school. Please email the Parent Council (balfronhighschoolpc@gmail.com) or the school directly (balfronhs@stirling.gov.uk) if you are able to offer your time to volunteer and require a PVG check.

Parent Council meeting dates for 2024/2025 session:

Tuesday 5th November 2024 (online)

Tuesday 14th January 2025 (online)

Tuesday 4th March 2025 (in-person)

Tuesday 6th May (in-person)

Fiona thanked everyone for attending the meeting.