



Balfroon High School Parent Council

Minutes of Parent Council Meeting held online on Tuesday 5th November 2024 at 6.30pm.

Minutes

Attendance:

Elaine Bannatyne (HT), Claire Appelquist (DHT), David Braid (DHT), Rob McQuater (Treasurer), Fiona Gallagher (Secretary), Steve Rivers, Robyn Youens (Head Prefect), Hannah Smith, James MacLaren, Adam Mackay (Head Prefect), Amanda Quinn, Grace Johnstone (Head Prefect), Helena, Lynn Armstrong, Lynsey Cook, Stuart Johnstone, Tessa Knowles (Head Prefect), Patrick Gallagher (Head Prefect), Jackie Mackay, Ruth Thomas, Tracey Leggate, Elizabeth Christie

Apologies:

Fiona Galloway, Anne Winther

1. Welcome

Fiona Gallagher welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Head Teacher's Report

Ms Bannatyne presented her Head Teacher's Report – please see attached PDF. The following updates were outlined:

Staffing – recruitment on hold due to restructure of Principal Teachers staff across Stirling Council schools. Ms Bannatyne confirmed one member of staff is to be cut.

Head Prefect's Report

The Head Prefects outlined the following activities and campaigns taking place in school:

- Remembrance Day ceremony
- 16 Days of Activism
- Men's Mental Health month
- Children in Need
- Strathcarron Hospice – Santa dash
- Save the Children - Christmas jumper day
- Study skills for S4 pupils
- Eco club - clothing pop-up event
- STEM on track - 100 applicants for 30 places, programme where young people build a cart and learn about Mechanical Engineering by building a race cart

Ms Bannatyne thanked the Head Prefects for the positive impact they are having.

Ms Bannatyne outlined activities that have taken place across the school since the last Parent Council meeting:

- Participation & Engagement – Active Girls Day, S3 Columba 1400, S1 Auchengillan day trips, Pupil Parliament
- Wellbeing & inclusion - Inter-House activities
- Mental Health & Wellbeing – partnership with Back Onside
- Wellbeing & inclusion - equalities assemblies led by Head Prefects

SQA coursework/assignment deadlines

- Available on school website

S4 study skills

- Peer approach, Live & Learn working with S4s
- S4 parents' session will follow

Prelims January 2025

- Approach to prelims changing following feedback from last session.
- Length of exams to be shortened - no exam longer than 1.5 hours.
- Feedback from staff - concerns about time left to complete courses after pupils return from prelims.

Mobile phone policy update

Following the last Parent Council, Ms Bannatyne explained that there are Strong views on both sides of the argument. The school has a desire to improve the policy in order to improve focus in the classroom and improve young people's wellbeing. Further consultation with staff has taken place and a staff working group have reviewed the feedback from parents, pupils and staff.

Version 4 of the policy will be in place from January - shared with parent w/c 11 Nov
The new policy will run for 4 weeks and then be reviewed.

A mobile phone policy information evening will take place on Tuesday 27 November for all parents with input from the parent mobile phone steering group, head prefects and Ms Bannatyne.

Ms Bannatyne responded to the following questions were raised by parents:

Q - Why will S1 to S3 mobiles be kept in a box? Why not just in bags? Phones not insured in box

A – The current policy is that they are kept in bags, and it is not working

Q – Why are there no points in the new policy about reduction around usage at lunch and break, asking young people not to use their phones? Could this be added to the policy?

A - Staff could not manage that at break and lunch, staff are running activities for pupils at these times.

Q - How will putting a phone in a box be managed?

A – It will be the classroom teachers’ responsibility to manage this within their classroom.

Q - Will the school be liable if phones are stolen?

A – The school is not liable for the loss of mobile phones. The school policy suggest mobiles are not brought to school due to their value.

Q – Will they be taken from pupils at form time?

A - Yes

Q – This is a positive step forward following the last meeting, but are the school still exploring increased restriction of mobile phones?

A – The first step is to tighten up the policy. Ms Bannatyne is personally aware of the research that links health and wellbeing and mobile phone use but the rural location of the school makes a full ban difficult. Cultural changes linked to social media are concerning but the school is not ready for full ban.

Q – It is important to teaching children to use phones responsibly. Parents suffer from anxiety not knowing or understanding what their child’s phone is being used for.

A - Some parents don’t have the knowledge of what phones can be used for. Information shared with parents last year can be re circulated.

School Day Proposal

Mr Braid gave an update on the ongoing consultation on changing the times of the school day – see presentation attached.

Mr Braid responded to the following questions from parents:

Q - Were form class teachers consulted?

A - Yes - 97% felt form time would be better at just 10 mins in length. By reduce form to 10minutes, an extra period of 50 minutes can be added per week. There are a huge amount of pupils arriving late every Tuesday morning (8.45am start with no form class) which is having a massive impact on learning and teaching.

Q - Do pupils arriving late come by bus?

A – The majority of these pupils are coming from either Stirling or are local Balfron pupils

Q - Have Gargunnock pupils been considered in the consultation?

A - Yes, on Mondays and Tuesdays these pupils would be getting their bus home an hour later than they currently are based on the new proposed times. The school are

trying to strike balance between improving the school day times and the impact across all pupils within the school.

3. Grease Movie Night

It is planned that a showing of Grease will take place in the theatre on an evening to raise funds for the school show, organised by the Head Prefects. A date will be confirmed for this event in due course.

4. Treasurer's report

Virgin Money grant of £1650 has been transferred to school and will be used to support digital inclusion including purchasing Chromebooks to lend to pupils in school and the purchase of myfi units for pupils unable to access wifi at home. £300 of the grant remains to be spent.

Current balance - £2,000

5. Fundraising

The school and Parent Council are currently fundraising to purchase a minibus. The school is constantly faced with difficulties in hiring minibuses. Although the preference is to rent minibuses when required, it is evident that they need to have their own to be able to transport pupils to numerous events. The cost of a second-hand bus is £33,000.

Preliminary fundraising talks have taken place with options being considered such as crowd fundraising and grants, National Lottery. The school have met with community councils to discuss the option of purchasing a shared community bus with financial support from them.

The Parent Council has requested that any parents with experience of fundraising or running events, please contact us if you are willing to get involved with this fundraising effort.

6. 500 Club

Information to follow to all parents and carers about the re-launch of the 500 Club. The first draw of the year is likely to be around Christmas time.

7. AOB

A parent asked if there are plans to reintroduce Computer studies to the curriculum? Ms Bannatyne advised that it was unlikely at this stage due to a member of staff being cut as mentioned earlier in the meeting.

A parent asked if there was a full traffic ban in place on the school campus? Ms Bannatyne reminded parents that yes there is a full ban in place and that pupils should not be dropped off in the disabled space outside the main entrance. This is a designated space for pupils who require disabled access.

Jackie Mackay reminded parents that if they would like to volunteer within the school a PVG is required. This can be organised through Jackie by emailing the parent council – balfronhighschoolpc@gmail.com.

Parent Council meeting dates for 2024/2025 session:

Tuesday 14th January 2025 (online)

Tuesday 4th March 2025 (in-person)

Tuesday 6th May (in-person)

Fiona thanked everyone for attending the meeting.