**BALFRON HIGH SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL**

 Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 9th September 2025 at 6.30pm, Strathendrick Suite at Balfron High School

**Attendees:** Fiona Burns, Fiona Coleman, Rowan Coleman (Head Prefect), Lucy Bowie (Head Prefect), Fern Condron (Head Prefect), Kara Dawson (Head Prefect), Andrew Burns (Staff Representative), Claire Applequist (DHT), Kate Baxter, Ashley Montgomery (DHT), Elaine Bannatyne (HT), Scott Kennedy (FEL), Lynn Armstrong (Chair), Fiona Gallagher, Jackie Mackay, Kathleen Redmond, Ray Young, Jackie McKechnie, Christine Heron, Mary Nicol, Ruth Thomas, Jenny MacGillivray, Annabel Sharp, Heather Smith, Reece Young (Head Prefect), Alex Ryan (Head Prefect), Emma Condron, Jenny Dawson, Annabelle Gaywood (Vice Chair), Leslie Smith (Staff Representative), Rob McQuater (Treasurer) Katie Goodier (Secretary).

**Apologies:** Margaret Christie, Izzy Griffiths (Head Prefect), Zara Ivana Shiek (Head Prefect)

1. **Welcome and Introductions – Lynn Armstrong**

Lynn welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the Committee. The Parent Council is a registered Charity and we have a Committee of volunteers. Andrew Burns and Lesley Smith are representing staff.

Elaine Bannatyne introduced her senior leadership team, Claire Appelquist, Ashley Montgomery (2 days depute head job sharing with Mr Slavin who is working 3 days) and Mr Braid. She welcomed Ashley as new DHT and said she has made a great start to her time in BHS.

1. **Parent Council Update – Lynn Armstrong**

At the AGM in May we did not have sufficient volunteers to continue the Parent Council as there was no Chair person or Vice Chair. Emails were sent and Fiona and Lynn from the Committee attended the Primary 7 intro evening with flyers which were also handed out at Parents night by Jackie at the Clothing stall.

Lynn has agreed to be Chairperson for her son’s final year at the school and Annabel has agreed to be Vice Chair. We also have Alex and Christine joining the Committee. This means we can continue to provide the valuable link between the Parents and the school. We also help by serving teas at events such as school shows, Sports Awards, Prizegiving, School Concerts. We were recently asked to review the Uniform Policy before it was issued which gave us the chance to offer feedback on its format.

 We will always welcome new volunteers so feel free to speak to us if you would like to join us or have an idea for Fundraising. Any Fundraising is for the benefit of our Young People and Rob will tell you about our donations to the school this year during his report.

Maybe you don’t want to join the committee but are happy to be added to the Volunteer What’s app group to support when you can – for example serving teas and coffees when required.

We meet 5 times a year and the 2 winter meetings are held online.

1. **Election of new volunteers for the Committee, election of Chairperson and Vice Chair**

Election of Chairperson- Lynn Armstrong- proposed by Rob McQuater, seconded by Kate Baxter

Election to the Committee Annabel Gaywood and position of Vice Chair, proposed by Fiona Coleman seconded by Fiona Gallagher

Election to the committee Alex Smeed, proposed by Lynn Armstrong, seconded by Rob McQuater

Election to the committee Christine Heron, proposed by Katie Goodier and seconded by Jackie Mackechnie

1. **Head Prefect’s introductions**

There are 8 head prefects this year. Apologies from Zara and Izzy who couldn’t make it along tonight. The prefects introduced themselves and spoke about their areas of responsibility for the year ahead.

Kara Dawson – Doing prom committee with Fearne and S1 buddying system with Alex. One week in form time S1 and S6 to get together and can ask questions or queries of S6.

Fearne Condron – Study skills and exam stress focus, as well as the Prom Committee.

Lucy Bowie – making school more Eco Friendly and encouraging more girls into STEM

Reece Young - Make more videos for school to let folk know what going on. Digital safety with younger years.

Alex Ryan – Organising the Charities Committee and S1 buddying system

Rowan Coleman – linking with the Equalities Committee and organising assemblies to keep student body updated and aware. Starting up Pupil Parliament.

Elaine thanked the prefects and said they have made a great start.

1. **Scott Kennedy- Forth Environment Link (FEL)**

Scott Kennedy FEL Scotland scott@felscotland.org

Scott spoke about the work he has been doing in school as the School Active Travel officer.

Promote independence, HWB, environment and safety. Runs active travel log.

Challenges: lengthy travel distances, confidence in cycling skills, access to bike

What FEL do:

Bike to school and walk to school week

Stepcount Challenge

SQA bike maintenance

Walk Leader certification

Variety of outdoor activities – walking, cycling and skateboarding

Balfron Bike Shop – flagship programme. Run by young people doing bike maintenance.

Asking for ideas from parents

Asked parents to encourage active travel and share any barriers or concerns.

Discussion arose as to how we can overcome the rural challenges:

60% pupils get the bus.

Difficulties with villages been entered by 60mph roads.

Bike bus could run from villages, e.g. biking together in a group.

A path is being created from Killearn to Balfron – this may help.

Balfron pathways group is working on this.

Young people could maybe aim for once a week cycling to school.

FEL don’t want to put too high expectations or pressure onto pupils. Government guidelines is aiming to change journeys under 5 miles to active travel.

Scott was asked how young people could get involved in the bike maintenance.

A targeted group of learners are undertaking bike maintenance at the moment in partnership with Flexible Learning.  Scott has offered to run a lunchtime club to allow for greater access.

1. **Headteacher’s Report (see attached power point for the full Report)**

Elaine Bannatyne introduced new depute Ashley Montgomery.

**Staffing update:**

New staff: Ashley Mongomery DHT, Andy Murphy PT, Monica Munnes, Home economics Teacher

8 newly qualified teachers.

**Term Update**: a busy few weeks shared through photos

Geography field work

1st, 4th and 6th year school photos

Interhouse competitions

Mr Shearer running a new golf club

Sports leaders disability training

Advance higher geographers in Balmaha doing field work.

Barcelona history trip last weekend, just arrived back.

Dance Club with Mrs Smith

George Thompson has been approached to be the face of Sports Ambassadors for Sports Scotland.

Active Maths class – sharing teaching and learning with SMT

Encouraging ‘Find your Thing’ – through assemblies, to help young people access all extra curricula clubs. Creative, Sports and Academic clubs.

Parents asked to encourage children to get involved.

**High level messages 2025** – breadth and depth shared.

Recent SQA results were shared.

6th year results were stable.

S5 results are down compared to previous year groups.

S4 results were up.

Elaine outlined what they are doing in 5th year to help improve attainment:

Looking to see who need to target support with

Progression rates

In class monitoring of focus group

Use of retrieval tests

Looking at how staff are grouping these young people and optimal ways

Seniors might be approached to support younger pupils in classes

Supported Study has been earmarked for out of school support

Young people will be contacted to engage with this

Tracking period 3 times per year to highlighted target groups

**Learning Community Meeting**

With head teachers of primaries and high school. Thinking about what can we do together to help support young people in general. Common theme – don’t feel we support parents to help support young people digitally.

Event being planned in March for all parents of Balfron Learning Community regarding how to support parents to help support their young people digitally. Workshops and Key note speaker.

Elaine shared details of a Google form they’ve been asked to complete to find out what would be useful. Parents felt all the below detailed on form would be useful:

Using google classroom and google guardian

Chrome book accessibility features to support ASN

Internet safety

Using parent controls. Content restrictors

Navigating Social media

Cyber bullying

Child Exploitation,

World of AI

Keeping children safe when using xbox or playstation.

Elaine asked the meeting for suggestions of any other areas. The following were suggested:

Q: How to help young people with internet searches and useful or reliable sources.

Q: How to avoid accessing pornography/ guidance around this.

Q: How best to broach and talk about tech with young people.

Q: Mental health and impact of screen time etc on cognitive development.

Q: Application of law – ages of use for social media

Q: Teach us how to use the chromebooks they’ve been given including how to access parent controls.

Q: Working with parents and schools how to manage / navigate using chrome books for school work whilst maintaining safety measures.

Elaine explained that Stirling Council are working on safety controls.

There is a new fire wall for the chrome books but it is not ready or in use yet. Unable to say when this will be ready (should have been ready for August).

It has an impact on some of the licences school have e.g. music tech can’t use band lab anymore. This new fire wall when in place will work in home and school.

At the moment the controls on own home wifi will extend to the chromebooks.

It was raised by a parent that chromebooks can’t be found individually on home hub. Rob McQuater said he could help with this and will speak with Elaine.

**A question was asked if there is an update on the new Mobile phone policy and how successful it has been.**

Currently no phones in classroom. If out in class sent to depute for end of day. Not been formally reviewed however evidence is that at the moment less than one a day handed in which is a sign the teachers don’t feel phones are interrupting the lessons.

From class teaching – phones into box very smooth and lessons are starting on time. Very successful and less confrontation from staff around phones.

When phones taken out of box is there more use?

Not seen an increase.

Confiscated phones aren’t buzzing so much indicating messages are being sent less.

**A parent asked if it was on the agenda to move towards a school day free of phones to promote socialisation.**

Elaine explained they had looked into this and it and would cost £15 – £20 000 to implement pouch system as used in some of the east coast schools e.g. Portobello.

Parents and pupils had very strong feelings around this idea, both for and against. The priority which drove the initial decision was to make sure learning wasn’t interrupted which has been a success. The next stage would need to come from a bigger mandate as original aim has been met.

The policy will be reviewed at a later date in the same way that all school policies are reviewed.

**Stirling Council Consultation on Admissions Policy**

Currently exists 4 or 5 policies that they have on this. Trying to pull it all together into one policy so helpful and clear. Window open until beginning of October for parents to get involved. Information has been sent out. BHS have been asked to do a focus group with some of the young people also.

**This term coming up (see slide in presentation for more details):**

Claire Appelquist reported – A group of third years alongside Mr Hague last session were trained by SAMH to become mental well being ambassadors in the school. Monday lunchtimes have a pop up Mental Wellbeing group to provide safe space for our young people to go.

Mindfulness crafts and activities. Place to meet and talk.

This session they will do assemblies raising awareness of this.

They are now in S4 and doing a great job.

Professional Learning from Staff – how we assess, give feedback and link to tracking system taking place over the next few days.

Outstanding Achievement ceremony – 17th September.

A Rugby event in memory of Sandy Holroyd being organised for 19 Sept.

S2 – S5 positive masculinity workshops.

Battle of the Bands will be taking place.

**Any questions?**

Q: What are the school rules about vaping? A young person in S1 reported seeing vaping in the school.

A: Zero tolerance. If seen, vape confiscated and parent contacted. Downstairs toilets have alarms. Talked about in PSE programme about substance abuse each year – first and second year talk specifically about vapes. Elaine is open to any information regarding these rules not being followed.

1. **Treasurer’s report – Rob McQuater**

Financial accounts for year ended 30 April 2025 were approved at the latest Committee meeting and will be sent for auditing. Income received of £6160 and awards and expenses of £7557.Balance of the account was £ 3754.

Since then income of £2483

-From the school lottery, teas and coffees at school show and raffle (thanks to Kate Baxter), clothing company doing fantastic job (raised £1500 in last few months, thanks to Jackie Mackay)

And expenses of £2500

-£1000 given to the breakfast club, £1500 unused grant returned to Stirling Council

Current balance of the account: £3736

Staff have been asked to complete a request form for funding activities / resources. Lynn shared the requests from staff: pickle ball set, sewing machines for drama, choir staging, DofE award for young people with ASN to carry out DofE in school, covers for chromebooks to protect them as they are coming back in a poor condition.

PC will not be able to currently fund all of these requests but will discuss in due course and grateful to know what is required.

1. **Blazer Buy Back Scheme (Balfron Clothing Company) – Jackie Mackay**

-The Balfron Clothing Company, run by the Parent Council is piloting a new project to give a solution to the ongoing problem of pupils growing out of their school blazers very quickly, the gaps of particular sizes donated to the pre-loved uniform shop and also help pupils have access to school blazers at a variety of price levels.

-The Balfron Clothing Company is buying a stock of new blazers to sell BUT we are offering a buy-back option for when it is no longer needed.

New blazers will be sold at £40 each
If it is returned at any point within the 1st year, we would pay £20 for the blazer, if it is in good condition (£10 if it needs repair e.g. buttons missing, torn seams etc)
If it is returned at any point between the 1st and 2nd anniversary of its purchase then we would pay £10 for the blazer, if it is in good condition (£5 if it needs repair)
If it is returned at any point after the 2nd anniversary, then there will be no payment, but the donation of the blazer would be gratefully accepted.

-The blazers that are bought back will then be put up for resale.

-Overtime, the aim is that we would have the following blazers in stock available for sale, in hopefully all the needed sizes!:-

Brand New - £40
Under 1 year old £20

Over 1 year old £10

-It is a pilot project, but we hope it will make a difference to ensuring that the pupils have good fitting blazers when they are needed

Elaine thanked Jackie for her amazing job with the Balfron Clothing Company and all the time she has given, and also thanked Annabel Sharp too for all the help she has given mending clothing in order for resale.

1. **Fundraising & BHS School Lottery update**

Annabel Gaywood shared several ideas for fundraising:

1. Annabel raised the idea of fundraising in each village with different village groups – prefects could get involved too. What can we do in our local area to raise money for the school. Bit of fun village competition. Good to know now what is needed by the school before begin fundraising.

Annabel asked for feedback: Kate Baxter said it’s a good idea to localise it. Success in Primary school / village fundraising. Lots of experience. Idea of competition might help.

Lynn asked if there would be anyone at the meeting to help with the fundraising. Share ideas etc. If anyone is willing or interested please speak to Annabel/ get in touch with the PC via email.

1. Easyfundraising. BHS has an account. Need to publicise this. (Giving machine is another platform for doing this though we are not registered).
2. Businesses. Sponsor ship. Gift in kind. Financial or in kind support.

It was mentioned by a parent that FEL have grants we could perhaps access. Parent Councils are eligible for £1000 grants to do with sustainability and the environment. Climate leadership grants.

Lynn asked about ways to generate donations from parents specifically for school trips to support pupils who are unable to access these due to financial constraints. Charities Aid Foundation is not being used currently due to administration. Lynn asked if it could be added onto a form when trips advertised. It wasn’t clear if this information was possible to go on trip form.

Pupil equity fund is managed by Dr Andrew Burns. He makes all staff aware of things to consider when running a trip through a checklist for staff. Is it going to be accessible to all pupils. Is there an alternative you could offer. They want as many people to be included as possible.

A parent wondered if there was a better way to raise this money. Not asking parents on trip form where parents are already paying a lot of money, but as a crowd fundraiser or some other way.

**Ski Trip:** Mr Braid said he was looking for parent feedback regarding the Ski trip that has been run for 5th and 6th years in the February week holiday. He has been quoted £1950 (flights not bus) for February 2027. 5 days skiing with tuition/instructor. SLT felt too much to ask for this. This year the cost was £1500. 2024 it was £1200. Mr Braid asked the meeting if this is an inappropriate amount to ask for a school trip.

Discussion evolved around balance – don’t want to exclude people due to price, but also don’t want opportunities to not be offered. How make it equitable?

Why skiing? Traditional trip that has always been popular. Not run in school time so valuable teaching time is not missed.

Thoughts shared:

Skiing great opportunity as many can’t afford as a whole family. Cut out expensive trips in younger years instead e.g. water sports. With enough time given, perhaps children can work towards funding the ski trip themselves.

Can Bearsden ski centre be used for a more equitable option?

Domestic trips don’t seem to be as popular e.g. current Yorkshire dales trip hasn’t had a full uptake.

Snow diminishing over next few years so is there another sport? Child learning to ski but questioned are they going to be able to use that skill in the future? It was raised that the trip wasn’t just about the skiing – socialising and activities in evenings etc as well as the skiing itself.

Extra cost for plane perhaps worth it.

Complaints received by the school of some of the foreign trips: too expensive, not enough space.

No clear outcome reached from the discussion.

BHS School Lottery:

Katie Goodier reported there has been a good uptake on the school lottery and thanked everyone who has bought tickets and additionally to those who have donated their winnings back to the school. Information has been sent out to parents recently regarding the lottery, and it can also be found on the school app. 202 tickets have been sold. £1054 has been raised since April for the school, and we are on track to raise £2026 this year.

1. **Parental queries**- emailed in advance of meeting to balfronhighschoolpc@gmail.com

**Q-I wondered if there was an update on the Mobile Phone policy and feedback on the implementation of the new rules? Are there plans to have stricter enforcement/full ban or is that off the agenda now?**

1. See Head Teacher’s Report above

**Q- Would the school consider moving prelims to before the Christmas holidays rather than after?**A- Calendar has been done for this year with the prof association so can’t be altered for 25/26.

January has been decided on because there’s a good amount of the courses that have been covered to be assessed. Prelims are therefore more robust and saves having to do additional assessments later on.

Mr Slavin did a consultation on the time prelims should last after the last prelims. The condensed version didn’t receive good feedback. Going back to a longer period in January 26. There will be another consultation after these

1. **AOB**

Parent council is a charity – option to claim gift aid. Jackie will catch up with a few people in regards to this.

PVG – having volunteers for supporting with things in the school. Parent council can PVG parents to help with children’s activities. They can do this for free, if on list no obligation to commit. Please get in touch with Jackie Mackay or the parent council if want to get a PVG. Elaine said very helpful as minimises teachers needing to be out of class.

If willing to be part of the volunteer group get in touch with any of the Parent Council members to be added to the WhatsApp group.

1. **Dates of Parent Council meetings for the 2025/2026 session:**
* 18th November 25 (online)
* 20th January 26 (online)
* 17th March 26 (in person)
* 12th May 26 AGM (in person)

Head Prefects are welcomed at the online meetings but reminded that if they have prelims then they aren’t obliged to attend.

Lynn thanked everyone for attending the meeting.