

Minutes of Balerno High School Parent Council 01/02/2016

This is the meeting rescheduled from 11/01/16.

1. Attendance

Tony Foster (TF) Chair
Sanjay Kallat (SK) Deputy Chair
Lauchie Scougall (LS) Treasurer
Mike Humphries (MH), minutes
Marion Milne (MM) BCC Rep
Paula Miller (PM)
Jessica Bryce (JB)
Andrea Brewster (AB)
Neil Greer (NG)
Bill Henderson (BH) Councillor
Mandy Irvine (MI)
Graeme Sives (GS) Head Teacher
Annabelle MacDonald (AM) Head Girl
Sandy Buchan (SB) Head Boy
Susan Stride (SS)
Vaila Wright (VW)
Rehana Shanks (RS)
Peter Reekie (PR)
Christine Paterson (CP)

Apologies

Liz Carrie
Peter Maclean

2. Minutes

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

3. Developing Scotland's Young Workforce

Vaila Wright attended the meeting to talk about the above initiative.

All Scottish schools must aim to establish long-term partnerships with employers over the next 3 years. Whilst these partnerships could help the school to secure work experience placements, this isn't the only objective. There is also interest in having business people come into the school to share their experience with students.

One partnership has been established with Brookfield Multiplex and other potential partner companies have been suggested by parents and staff. Ms Wright will e-mail details of what she's looking for to TF and he will pass these on to PC members. **ACTION VW/TF.**

4. Discipline

Discipline will be discussed at the March meeting. Please e-mail any questions to Tony in advance of the meeting if possible. **ACTION ALL**

5. Head Girl & Head Boy report

5.1 A new 'self registration' system for 6th year study periods has been implemented and is working well.

5.2 Discussions on how best to introduce LGBT support within the school are underway. Some guidance is provided by Edinburgh Council. A group are working their way through available documentation and are considering next steps. TF suggested talking to organisations such as Heriot-Watt University to see if they can provide any input.

5.3 Funding has been allocated to replace some of the furniture in the 6th year area and also to repaint. This work will be done in time for next session (16/17). GS noted that the current 6th year have benefited from an exclusive space redesigned and refitted for their use, an additional redecorated study space and a reconfiguration of the LRC.

5.4 A 'send off' event is being planned, possibly a BBQ on the Friday before the Prom.

5.5 A group is considering ways in which the 6th year experience could be improved.

5.6 More supported study is wanted but it is difficult to find time for it. Break and lunchtime are out as students need time away from study. After school is also difficult because of the need to transport Ratho and Kirknewton students home. One option might be to use study facilities in those locations.

AM and SB left the meeting.

6. Maths Presentation

Susan Stride, Head of Maths, attended the meeting to provide an update on work to improve the maths experience at Balerno.

Susan and team have identified a number of things that can be done, particularly:

- Visits to other maths teams and increased discussion with colleagues
- Better engagement of students
- More feedback from students
- Less focus on marking schemes and assessments
- An improved revision processes
- More self-evaluation
- Better tracking and monitoring to catch and fix issues earlier. This will include use of results from primary school onwards.

Work is ongoing, but progress to date includes:

- Visits to Broughton High School (deemed to be particularly strong in active learning strategies) which have generated some ideas for good practice.
- Focus groups with students run by Lisa Coffey. The results of these were encouraging with students feeling positive and supported. However, they would like more variety and creativity in their maths study.
- Development of a new department website to ensure that the best resources are available to all.

The site can be linked to from the main school site and in turn provides links to individual teacher sites.

Practice papers with answers, but no working, will be on the site. This will ensure students talk to staff if they don't understand how a particular problem has been solved. However SQA papers do include working so students can still choose to use

these.

The site will have revision booklets and a 'directed study' calendar.

The department is planning to text parents to let them know that the site is available.

A discussion followed the presentation. The key points were:

- Use of text messages to tell/remind parents about the website is a good idea
- Some parts of the site are password protected, e.g. the area holding text books. Students will be given access.
- Individual teacher sites will be kept and used e.g. for homework
- At level 3 and 4, students have 3 formal assessments plus are given feedback from their teacher.
- Assessment is now more sophisticated than it used to be. Maths progress and results will be cross-referenced with other areas such as English and also with information from guidance in order to provide a richer/more rounded indication of student performance.
- SS will aim to intervene as early as possible when there are issues. Increasingly she 'phones parents rather than writing letters.
- The full curriculum is taught at all levels. Nothing is missed out.
- Is there anything in the work done by the maths team that could be rolled out to the rest of the school ?
- There needs to be a balance between fun and learning. Both are important.
- Parents are not expected to assist their children with maths, as that is the job of teaching staff. SS is hoping they will encourage them to use the website.
- Broughton HS was recommended for a visit by Balerno's Quality Improvement Officer.
- There may be a future visit to Graeme HS in Falkirk as it produces excellent maths results (top 10%).
- Are there any issues with excluding those who might not have website access ? SS wasn't aware of any, but said help could be offered, e.g. hard copy or access to the LRC.
- SS would like feedback on the website.

The Parent Council recognised that the maths team have done a lot of work since initial discussions in November and thanked SS. It was agreed that the next formal checkpoint with SS will be after this year's National/Higher results. GS will provide an interim update before the exams.

SS left the meeting.

7. Website

The PC congratulated GS on the launch of the new website and recognised progress made so far with adding content. They also noted that there is still a substantial amount of information to add and are keen to see this done as soon as possible. There's also an appetite for more news and updates on the site.

GS explained that this is a particularly busy time of year for staff and the priority has to remain on supporting pupils through the post Prelim phase in the lead up to folio deadlines and exams in May.

Post meeting: All Board of Studies members have been informed of the Parent Council viewpoint after the PC meeting and the level of expectation with regard to the website.

TF asked GS if he could provide a target date for completion of the updates.

Progress to be reviewed at the next meeting.

8. Matters arising

8.1 Pitchfever is almost there. Discussion is underway as to how the tender process should be run.

An anonymous donation means that it will now be possible to incorporate a 'shockpad' in the specification.

The design and build work will be managed by Sports Labs.

The Village Trust will run the pitch on behalf on the community. It will be available to Balerno HS during the school day and will be let out at other times. The Trust will be responsible for carrying liability insurance.

8.2 There will be more rigorous checks on bus passes to ensure that buses do not become overcrowded.

9. Head Teacher's Report

9.1 GS commented on prelim results which were a 'mixed bag'. Some students don't see the value of them, particularly as they can't be used for appeals any longer, so may not put enough effort into revision. Results are being analysed in preparation for possible interventions. Families will be involved in discussions.

9.2 The school has run a couple of 'development afternoons' for staff. One on 'teenage brain development' will help teachers to understand the impact that they have on students. The other, on structured feedback, is designed to improve the process of giving feedback to learners.

9.3 There was an 'away day' in November for all Principal Teachers. GS is now following up with individual meetings with PTs.

9.4 It might be possible to run support/revision classes in Ratho and Kirknewton. This could be more cost-effective than spending money on a minibus to transport students from Balerno out-of-hours.

9.5 The timetable change (i.e. 4th year moves up to 5th year, etc) will take place on May 9th this year. This is 2 weeks earlier than last year and will enable new courses to start sooner.

9.6 The school came second in this year's Heriot-Watt Construction Challenge (3rd last year). 50 schools took part and Firrhill were the winners.

9.7 Next session, 3rd year will have an integrated social science course (3 periods), along the lines of the integrated science course already in place (increased to 4 periods). There will be improved access to courses in expressive arts (music, art, drama, media, dance) and technology (design, engineering, business education, computing, music technology).

Everyone will have 2 periods of HFT which will be certified at National 4 level (this is already done with PE).

PR asked if it would be possible for subject choice changes to be discussed with the PC in advance to give the opportunity for input and feedback. GS assured the PC that these changes are development and enhancement rather than revolution and that they are already driven by feedback from parents and students. The window of opportunity for such discussion would be between October and December in preparation for the timetabling

exercise which kicks off in January.

9.8 As things stand, it looks like the roll will drop next year. If so, there could be an impact on staffing. The picture won't be clear until placing requests are known.

10. Catchment Review

BH confirmed a possible catchment realignment but not until the new Local Development Plan is agreed with the Scottish Government.

11. AOCB

11.1 TF thanked the school for the Christmas event, which he attended.

11.2 Edinburgh Council has rejected charging for music tuition for the moment.

11.3 No progress yet with the refurbishment of the janitor's house.

11.4 GS confirmed that staff shouldn't be asking students to use the data allowances on their phones to do research in class.

11.5 TF raised the possibility of using the knowledge and experience of long-standing PC members to create an induction process for new members. He will discuss with aforementioned long-standing members. **ACTION TF**

Date of next meeting 07/03/16 in Kirknewton at 6.00 pm (venue tbc)