

Balerno High School Parent Council

Parent Council Chair Annual Report August 2011

Welcome to the fourth annual report of Balerno School Parent Council.

Please note the use of the word parent throughout this report refers to all parents, carers and guardians.

The Parent Council (PC) has had another busy year with the following issues

Head Teacher

Due the retirement of Rory Mackenzie the selection of a new head teacher took place before the summer recess.

Liz Carrie and I along with other representatives from the Education Dept initially interviewed eight candidates and eventually the short list of three were interviewed in the City Chambers. We were delighted to unanimously agree an outstanding candidate in Graeme Sives who was the choice to take Balerno High School forward.

We look forward to welcoming Graeme to the school and look forward to working with and supporting him in the challenges ahead.

Consultative Committee with Parents (CCWP)

The CCWP is formed by PC representatives from across the city, the Convenor and Director of Education, PTA representatives, Local Councillors, Council employees and teaching representatives.

Meetings are held every six weeks to discuss and debate current educational policies and issues, this year the severe Children and Families budget cuts and potential school closures, Balerno High School was not affected, have been the main issues.

Rory Mackenzie (Teaching Representative) and I attended most of the meetings which made sure Balerno High School was very well represented, making sure our specific needs were discussed.

Sharing experiences amongst the interested parties can only bring benefits where best practices and resources can be fully utilised.

Many parents expressed a view over the previous year that CCWP was lacking proper consultation with parent groups and the City Council have made a genuine effort to actively engage with the CCWP

Edinburgh Parent Council Network (EPCN)

Every Chair of all Edinburgh School Parent Councils are invited to join this group with a dedicated web site to exchange views and information between Parent Councils.

There are currently some 170 members of the EPCN.

The budget cuts were the main topic for discussion and debate with the Education Dept advising that Edinburgh Council as a whole were facing a funding gap of £90m from 2012-2014.

Budget review meetings were held throughout the year with the Education Dept to secure feedback from the Parent Councils throughout the city

Secondary School cuts of the following have been confirmed by CEC

2011-2012 £1,667,000

2012-2013 £1,400,000

2013-2013 £63,000

The cuts within 2011-2012 results in circa £98,000 being cut from the Balerno High School budget.

The Council have also agreed to move towards a Faculty system which reduces the number of Depute Heads and Principal Teachers. It means that Principle teachers will run Departments and not just individual subjects.

The full effect of the cuts will need to be worked through by the Head teacher / Senior Management team and in discussions at the Parent Council.

Curriculum for Excellence

The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) will be the most dramatic change to our children's education in a generation.

The concept of the CfE is generally accepted as an inspirational education goal however the real challenge is for schools to be fully prepared with parents and pupils fully understanding what is involved. Teacher organisations have expressed concerns that not enough time or resource has been allocated for this significant change in the education al system, however the Government have insisted the CfE will be commence in the first term of 2011-2012.

There is probably never a good time to commence such a major change in the education system however it is incumbent on teachers, parents and pupils to embrace this challenge and make it a success for the benefit of our children.

Communication With Parents

Members of the Parent Council have attended every parent's night throughout the school year collecting email addresses from parents. Having a complete email address list allows savings to be made on paper and printing which in turn can be used by the school.

Members of the PC and the PTA facilitate annual meetings with parents in small focus groups of S1 parents to review their thoughts and perceptions of the school and how improvements could be made which are then discussed openly with the Head teacher at the end of the evening.

We are delighted to announce that due primarily due to the sterling efforts of Sue McLeod, ably assisted by Clare Atkins, we have a dedicated web site for parents which will allow direct access to a variety of subjects affecting the school, parents and pupils.

The web site will go live in the first term of 2011-2012.

Community Issues.

Marion Milne represents Balerno Community Council(BCC), promoting relationships with the local community which is a core part of the Parental Involvement Act.

The PC and BCC have jointly convinced the Council to improve the road safety measures outside the school with additional road safety signs, re-surfacing and yellow line road markings which will help with the parking outside the school.

Accounts

Carried forward from September 2010	£1358.65
Interest to 1st August 2011	£87
Payment from PIPER	£1000.00
Payment in lieu of clerk fees	£240.00
PC payment from CEC	<u>£664.00</u>

Total £3263.52

Payment for website design and set-up £200.00

Balance at 1st August 2011 £3063.52

Discussions will be held with the new head teacher on how best to spend a significant portion of the funds for the benefit of the school.

New Members

Being a Parent member allows a valuable insight into the educational system allowing an enhanced ability to guide and support their children on the voyage through a critical part of their children's lives and also provide support to the greater good of the school.

Parent members of the PC can only serve whilst they have a child at Balerno High School and as such the PC has a continuous movement of parents joining and leaving.

There are always opportunities for parents to join the Parent Council, for a period to suit parents own personal commitments and the post can be relinquished at any time .

Parent Council are only as active as the members wish it to be and no pressure is ever exerted for members to take on board responsibilities they are uncomfortable with.

New parent members can enrol or make enquiries for enrolment at the AGM on the **12th Sept 7.30pm at Balerno High School.**

Meetings

There are six Parent Council meeting per school year. Meetings are attended by the members of the Parent Council and invited relevant persons and are open to all parents.

Meetings are usually held at 7.30pm in Room F10. Meeting dates for the current session are 12th Sept, 7th November, 9th January, 12th March, 11th June. One more to be added to suit on-going activities.

The AGM will be at 7.30pm on the 12th Sept, followed by the PC meeting at 8pm.

The invited members are: Graeme Sives, head teacher, and adviser to the PC, the head boy and girl, all three Local Councillors, representatives from PTA, BCC, Dean Park PC, Ratho Primary PC, Kirknewton PC.

Parent Members of the Parent Council are

Francis Barkey (chair)	francis@barkey.me.uk
Liz Carrie (treasurer)	liz.carrie@blueyonder.co.uk
Clare Atkins	catkins62@hotmail.co.uk
Kenny Cairns	kenneth.cairns1@virgin.net
Sue McLeod	sue@mcleod-online.co.uk
Chris Merchant	merchants@talktalk.net
Kirsty McKeown	kirstymckeown@talktalk.net
Marion Milne (Co-Opted)	marion724@talktalk.net
Jim Gladstone Staff member	jim.gladstone@balernochs.edin.sch.uk
Susan Stride Staff member	susan.stride@balernochs.edin.sch.uk

I would like to take this opportunity to heartily thank all those parents, school staff, pupils and Councillors who actively participate in the Parent Council without whom the PC could not function.

F Barkey
Chair