

Balerno High School Parent Council – Annual Report – September 2012

Welcome to our fifth annual report. 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

The PC was delighted to meet with Graeme Sives, our newly appointed Headteacher very shortly after the start of session 2011-12 and have maintained a close working relationship with him throughout the year. On arrival as well as getting to know staff, pupils, parents and the community Mr Sives was charged with implementing a number of changes affecting all Secondary Schools. These were imposed from Scottish Government as well as Local Authority (City Edinburgh Council – CEC) level and included:

- School Inspection
- Secondary School Management Structure – reorganisation
- Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) - embedding of new assessment system

Inspection

The school underwent an Education Scotland (formerly HMiE) inspection in October when parents, as well as pupils, teaching staff and non-teaching staff were able to give their views on what they felt the school does well, along with what might need improving. As PC Chair I was interviewed by the Lay Inspector and was able to share both good and bad news stories which parents had told me about. An example of “good” was the excellent support one family felt they had received from their child’s Guidance Teacher; an example of “bad” was complaints from parents about children and staff at times having to wear jackets to stay warm in class. Other ways for parents to engage in this process were via posted questionnaires and focus groups. Parental feedback on most aspects was favourable including comments on children’s enjoyment of learning, feelings of being safe and respected, and being overall satisfied with Balerno High School. The exception was concern the school did not seek parents’ views or take our views into consideration. Improvement in school-home communication was thereafter discussed at several PC meetings and has resulted in this being a dedicated area for positive development in the School Improvement Plan. We are pleased to report it is the school’s intention to evidence taking all stakeholders’ views into consideration. Findings of the inspection are available on Education Scotland’s [inspections pages](#).

Curriculum for Excellence

CfE was discussed in detail at several of our meetings this session which reflected the concern expressed by parents of children in S2 in particular as they are the first cohort who will be affected by the new replacement assessments for Standard Grades which will be known as National 4 and National 5. Sally Gartside agreed to champion this topic for the PC and provided us with links to Scottish Qualifications Authority’s (SQA) useful on-line documents and videos, including their [Jargon Buster](#) and [Myth Buster](#). Sally also framed several questions which parents were finding challenging to understand which helped inform a very well attended information evening for S2 parents in March. We would like to thank the Senior Management Team for spending extra time that evening answering as many questions as possible face to face as we know from feedback this approach was appreciated by parents. Further to feedback from parents it was agreed with the school that 8 subjects would be eligible for certification at the end of S4.

Consultative Committee with Parents (CCWP)

Balerno High School continues to send a representative to the CEC CCWP, and we would like to thank Chris Merchant for taking on this role. Together the CCWP and CEC officers drew up an agenda of topics of interest and provided a mixture of information and feedback meetings for the session 2011-12. These included:

- Support for vulnerable children
- Children are physically and emotionally healthy
- Resources
- Curriculum for Excellence x 2
- Staffing Issues

- Children and young people have improved life chances, especially those children, young people and families who are at risk.
- Parental Engagement

For further information about the CCWP please read Chris's reports on [our website](#), or refer to [CEC's website](#). You might be particularly interested to read their [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Websites

The PC was very grateful to Sue McLeod, our Vice-Chair and Web Manager for maintaining our [new website](#). She managed to persuade us all to post pictures of ourselves on the members' pages to help the wider parent body recognise us should they wish to bring issues to our attention. We have used the website mainly to archive our meeting documents, but also to alert parents to new information as it becomes available particularly in relation to CfE developments. It has also been a useful tool for highlighting forthcoming events such as our meetings and parents' consultation dates. There are some frequently asked questions and a link to the school website which we trust parents find helpful, but as is usual with these things we are always on the lookout for anyone who can help us keep this up to date and interesting.

The [school website](#) was a topic for discussion at several of our meetings with its potential to be the major means of up-to-date communication between school and home. We were very impressed with the quality of photographs and articles included when the new version came online in March. A hands-on workshop was provided for PC and PTA members by Luke McAllister, acting PT Support for Learning and we look forward to continuing to liaise closely with him and Linda Parkes, Business Manager with feedback about content which improves communication. At meetings we pointed out that having as much notice as possible of forthcoming dates is extremely important to busy parents. When this information is made available the more used and appreciated we anticipate it will be.

Parents' Evenings

Unlike at primary school meeting other parents at the school gates is not a feature of secondary, resulting less word-of-mouth sharing of information. The PC has endeavoured to be represented at as many parent consultation evenings as possible this session to be on hand to answer questions or direct people to a member of staff who can help. We situate ourselves beside the PTA who kindly serve tea and coffee throughout these evenings – a warm cuppa is sometimes very welcome when you've rushed from work or come in out of the cold, and it helps school funds just a little bit!

S1 Parent Forum Evenings

The PC regularly pressed for this event to take place each Autumn term after the October break. The activity is run by parents for parents with support from Senior Management and is a time for new S1 parents to feedback about their child's and their own experience of starting secondary school. The process has been found in the past to be informative and reassuring for parents, and provides the school with up to date feedback which can inform future sessions.

Surveys and Focus Groups

The PC looks forward to working with the school in the coming session designing and supporting these methods of listening to the parent voice via ours and the schools websites.

Uniform

On being surveyed the majority of pupils reported being particularly keen to have a more distinctive uniform to wear. Senior Management and PC discussed the perceived pros and cons of school uniform with associated dress code outlining what is and is not acceptable attire for school, and it was agreed that the community and parents appeared to be largely in support of such a scheme being introduced. The school website was used to communicate details regarding ordering and purchase, with a competitive scheme being offered by Marks & Spencer.

Accounts -)

I would like to thank Liz Carrie for her ongoing support to the school and for her role as PC Treasurer keeping track of our funds.

Financial Statement (1/08/11-29/06/12)	
Income	£
Payment from CEC	641.80
Payment in lieu of clerk fees	240.00
Bank interest	1.01
Balance brought forward	3,063.52
Total	3,946.33
Expenditure	
Donation to school fund	2,500.00
Balance carried forward	1,446.33

Meetings

There are up to six PC meetings per school year. Meetings are attended by PC members, invited relevant persons and are open to all parents. Meetings are held at 6.00pm on Mondays in Room F10. Meeting dates for the current session are:

10th September, 5th November, 14th January 2013, 11th March, 3rd June

There is room in this calendar for one other formal meeting of the PC if deemed necessary.

The meeting time has been set to encourage as much interaction between members of staff and parents as possible.

Parent members of the Parent Council Sept 2011-Sept 2012 have been:

1. Helen Purves Chair
2. Sue McLeod Vice Chair & PC website manager
3. Liz Carrie Treasurer
4. Aileen Macleod
5. Carol MacLeod
6. Chris Merchant
7. Kirsty MacKeown
8. Mike Humphries
9. Sally Gartside

Our co-opted member is Marion Milne from Balerno Community Council

Those invited to attend are:

- Graeme Sives, Head Teacher and Adviser to the PC
- Head Girl and Head Boy
- PTA Chair or rep
- Dean Park, Ratho and Kirknewton Primary Schools PC Chairs or rep
- All three Pentland Hills Ward councillors

Minutes of the PC meetings are available on our website, the Parents' Groups pages of the school website and on the notice board in the Community Education reception area.

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

Helen Purves
Chair

Websites and online resources

Balerno High School Parent Council	www.balernohighschoolparentcouncil.org
Balerno High School	www.balernochs.edin.sch.uk
City of Edinburgh Council	www.edinburgh.gov.uk
Education Scotland	www.educationscotland.gov.uk
Scottish Qualifications Agency (SQA)	www.sqa.gov.uk

Balerno High School Inspection

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/BalernoCommunityHighSchoolEdinburghCity.asp>

City Edinburgh Council – Consultative Committee With Parents

<http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/859/schools-parental-involvement/1192/consultative-committee-with-parents/1>