

PARENT COUNCIL AGM REPORT – Tuesday 2nd September 2014

This year has been one of transition, with Helen Purves leaving the post of Chair and Tony Foster accepting the post. As a new parent, from Kirknewton, it was felt this would give a new perspective to the Parent Council. Tony was keen to have those in office bearer posts representing the large feeder school areas and Mike Humphries, from Ratho, took on the post of Deputy Chair and Liz Carrie remained as Treasurer and the font of all knowledge.

We'd like to thank all outgoing Parent Council members for the work you have done on behalf of the school, thank those who are supporting the work of the school by remaining on the Council and welcome any new members today.

WHAT IS A PARENT COUNCIL?

A Parent Council is a group of parents in a school who represent parent views and work in partnership with pupils, the headteacher and the local authority to achieve the best for pupils at that school.

The role of the Parent Council is to:

- **support** the school in its work with pupils
- represent the views of **all** parents
- **encourage links** between the school, parents, pupils, pre-school groups and the wider community
- report back to all the parents in the school (called the Parent Forum)
- **play a role** in the appointment of headteachers and depute headteachers
- **support** the school and pupils during school inspections.

Parents have a key supportive role to play in assisting the headteacher and school staff in their aims to raise standards of education and to secure improvements in the quality of education provided by the school. The education provided must take account of the whole needs of the child in respect of developing a child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. School education is about more than the curriculum and includes the school's provision for social, cultural and recreative activities and for physical education and training.

The Parent Council can support the work of the school in a variety of ways. It can:

- be involved in drawing up the school development plan and consider how parents might support its implementation
- consider ways parents can be involved in children's learning to improve achievement
- build positive relationships between parents and school staff
- support the school in consulting with the wider parent forum on school policy decisions and other matters
- use its own formal and informal channels for communicating about school events and how parents can become involved
- fundraise to provide additional equipment and resources for the school
- facilitate school events and work with the head teacher and staff to devise events which are enjoyable, encourage parental participation and that suit the needs of parents and fit into their schedules.

- The Parent Council may also be involved in consulting the Parent Forum about the full range of school policies, e.g. in relation to uniform, drugs, school ethos, etc. It can collate the views of parents and report them to the headteacher of the school and to the education authority as appropriate.

Given Parent Councils' role in representing the collective view of parents, the education authority must consult them on their arrangements for a complaints procedure. Parent Councils can also make general representations on matters arising from individual complaints where these raise issues of a wider policy or strategic concern.

MEMBERS OF THE PARENT COUNCIL

After the last AGM the Council members were

Tony Foster, Jessica Bryce, Linsey Middleton, Karen Gilhooley, Helen Purves, Liz Carrie, Mike Humphries, Sally Gartside and Kirsty McKeown

Others attending over the year included (apologies for missing anyone) Rhona Baird, Mandy Irvine, Yolanda Montero, Karen Scott, Shona Johnstone, Sandy Waller, Hannah Fisher, Neil Langhorn, Lauchie Scougall, Sally Cavers, Shivaji Rane, Marion Milne, Bill Henderson, Ricky Henderson, Claire McGlynn, Lindsay Fullerton, Graeme Sives, Rehana Shanks.

The typical agenda looks like this

- Present
- Apologies
- Matters Arising from last meeting
- Head Teachers Report / School Update
- Senior Pupils Perspective
- Agenda Items / Parent Voice
- Community Council & Local Updates
- AOCB & Date of next meeting

ACCOUNTS

Payment from CEC.	£ 881.20
Bank interest.	£ 0.97
Carried forward.	£2403.23
Total.	£3286.00
Outgoings.	£00.00
Balance at 28 August 2014.	£3286.00

SCHOOL SUCCESS

The year began with S4 having the highest level of attainment at Standard Grade level since the start of electronic national benchmarking in 2002. S5 Higher results were bang on the average of the previous 5 year trend and comfortably above the average going back to 2007. S6 performance at Higher and Advanced Higher showed marked improvement and most measures were the highest levels recorded going back to 2007. A new quality assurance framework was in place. Monthly tracking was also taking place. The National 5s were also introduced with a number of meetings and briefings between the school and parents.

During the year, the follow up HMI visit suggested 'Balerno CHS has made significant progress since the 2011 HMI report' which was very welcomed by the PC as well as the work of Graeme Sives to overturn a six figure deficit to a surplus.

The PC were particularly encouraged by Young Enterprise initiatives and success (such as 'Branching Out), Project Scrooge with the Lyceum again, Model UN trip to Copenhagen, Comenius project to Stuttgart, London trip, British Council events, academic and achievement awards, the winter carol concerts, the production of Chicago, Rights Respecting School initiative, pupil fundraising and the announcement and construction of the all weather pitch.

Issues on the agenda for the forthcoming year may be a change in timetable, the Curriculum Review to enhance the educational experience for pupils, the impact of CATS and budget cuts of £170,000.

GREEN BELT

The Green belt question was one of the major issues that started the year. The Parent Council felt, unless a ballot of all parents/carers was to take place on the issue, then it was not the role of the PC to have a formal position on the issue. It was noted that work had to be done on improving the number of children attending the school.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

Sue McLeod made changes to our website during handover. Thanks for her help with this. Mike Humphries took over the updating of the website. Thanks for his help on this. Tony Foster launched our facebook and twitter accounts. This was hoped to be part of a wider communications strategy to parents/carers that would be developed over the year. However Community Access To School took a lot of unexpected time and this was not pursued as we would have liked. The PC welcome the Headteachers surgeries at Dean Park Primary School and recommended they take place at Ratho and Kirknewton too, if there was support from those headteachers to do so.

COMMUNITY ACCESS TO SCHOOL & LOCAL COUNCIL CONSULTATIONS ON BUDGET & SCHOOL YEAR

It was felt by the PC that the Edinburgh City Council proposal to 'de-designate' 8 community high schools would have implications for Balerno, our management and budget that had not been effectively consulted on or thought through. This campaign involved several meetings with MPs, MSPs, Councillors and community leaders. The proposals were taken forward but the position of Balerno PC and Balerno Community Council on this invaluable community resource remains the same on this issue.

We were able to consult on the ECC budget and sent a joint submission in to protect management time in primary schools, additional support learning. We also consulted on school holidays, rejecting the idea of a shorter Xmas and longer summer.

MINI BUS INITIATIVE

Balerno PC and the school, working with Kirknewton Community Development Trust, have arranged volunteers to drive the school mini bus back to Kirknewton and Ratho so pupils from those feeder areas can get home following after school clubs. They are currently waiting on CEC to arrange their driving tests before the scheme can go ahead. All volunteers are currently from Kirknewton and we hope volunteers from Ratho and Balerno will come forward to help too.

NEW APPOINTMENTS

The PC welcome new appointments, including the formal appointment on Lindsay Fullarton as Depute Head.

TRANSITION

The issue of enhanced transition towards the end of the school year led to some passionate debate, particularly at Primary School level. The PC welcomed the Dean Park survey of parents/carers and agreed to support its findings, encouraging the other feeder primaries to provide relevant information/conduct a survey if they felt it appropriate. ECC will now take these proposals forward and reps have been requested to take the initiative forward, based on the representation of parents/carers we have been presented with.

BALERNO – A PUPIL PERSPECTIVE

At the end of the year we asked the head pupils to tell us the best bits about Balerno. These are some of their highlights!

- Teachers have good relationships with pupils.
- Many opportunities to get involved out with classroom.
- Music, PE very proactive and the school show a great success.
- Trips are a very positive experience, bonding groups and allowing networking with other schools here and abroad.
- Pupil council much improved. Some members took part in teacher evaluation.
- Mentoring, paired reading and buddying all positive experiences.
- Enjoyed having a float in the Gala. GS suggested this could be a 6th year group.
- S6 a good transition year, feels more independent.
- Atmosphere in the school is really good, no sense of being judged or bullying.
- Uniform very positive.

A FINAL PIECE OF ADVICE

We asked the head pupils for the one piece of advice they would give pupils at the school.

We share this with parents/carers and all members of the Parent Council, as it is good advice for our team too!

The more you put in the more you get out of it.

Tony Foster

Chair, Balerno CHS Parent Council 2013/2014