

# Balerno High School Parent Council

## Minutes of Meeting 6:00pm - 10th September, 2012

### Apologies:

Bobby Smith, Carol MacLeod, Chris Merchant, Ishbel Smith, Dominic Heslop

### Present:

Helen Purves, Chair	Graeme Sives, Headteacher
Sue Mcleod, Vice-Chair	Lindsay Fullerton, Teacher Rep
Kirsty Mckeown	Ruth Douglas, Teacher Rep
Aileen Macleod	Gillian Miller, Head Girl
Mike Humphries	Bruce Collie, Head Boy
Liz Carrie, Treasurer	Ricky Henderson, Councillor
Sally Gartside	Bill Henderson, Councillor (part of meeting)
Carol Calder	Marion Milne, Balerno Community Council
John Thomas	Karen Scott, Chair, Balerno HS PTA (part of meeting)
Sanjy Kallat, Kirknewton PC Chair	

### Matters arising from previous minutes

A member of the Parent Forum has suggested changing the previous minutes to indicate that it was those present at the meeting who were 'largely in support' of uniform rather than parents generally. However PC members indicated that they continue to detect general support for the uniform policy. Helen will discuss with the parent concerned.

### Parent Council Annual Report

Helen talked to the written report she had produced (attached to minutes).

### Head Teacher's report

Graeme indicated that last year was a 'good year' with lots of change.

### Exam results

An improvement on last session with excellent Higher results (better overall than 16 out of 20 comparator schools). For S5 pupils:  
63% achieved 1 or more Highers (better than 14 out of 20 comparator schools).  
44% achieved 3 or more Highers (better than 14 out of 20 comparator schools).  
23% achieved 5 or more Highers (better than 13 out of 20 comparator schools).

For S5 pupils taking Highers:

Physics, PE and Modern Studies results are at the top of the comparator group  
Product Design, Biology and Chemistry are 2nd in comparator group  
English, Geography and Computing performed strongly.  
Maths, Music, History, Art, Drama and Business Studies did less well

For S6:

Given the multiplicity of reasons for students returning to S6, performance is not as strong as S5. Combined S5/6 performance ranked top of comparators in Physics and PE. English and Maths also performed strongly.

For S4

5 or more Credit passes was higher than 16 of the 20 comparators but down on last year's spike in performance, in line with the general ability of the year group.

The next step is to review performance in detail with each department (Jim Gladstone will lead). This will be done by the end of September. Where departments are deemed to have underperformed, the root causes will be sought and appropriate remedial actions identified.

### ***Improvement Plan***

Graeme has the impression that parents weren't sufficiently involved with the improvement plan in the past, and wants to rectify this. He has sought input from parents, pupils and the local community. 3 priority areas are documented in the plan:

1. Learning and Teaching – led by Lindsay Fullarton
2. Pastoral & Community – led by GS and Isabel Forbes
3. Performance & Systems – led by Jim Gladstone

The draft improvement plan will be signed off by the school's Quality Improvement Officer. This is expected mid-October. The current draft of the plan is attached to these minutes. A Council review team will return in April next year to assess progress with the HMIE recommendations. It is the intention to gather and preserve more evidence in the future. A Standards and Quality report, looking at last year, will be prepared by the end of September. This will be on the website by the October break, provided it is signed off in time.

Continuous Professional Development is linked to General Teaching Council Standards. The rationale for the curriculum and its implementation are kept under constant review. There will be 8 Friday afternoon sessions involving all staff to take forward 'whole school' initiatives.

The school is aiming to 'profile' future S1 groups using a Cognitive Ability Test, which is common practice in some other Local Authorities. This allows for benchmarking of whole year group, identification of learning profiles, targeted approaches and performance projections.

### ***Community links***

Graeme will attend Parent Council meetings at feeder primary schools.

The school's 30th anniversary approaches and will be an opportunity for much celebration - Rory McKenzie will be asked to get involved in preparation.

Jim Watson, Sirius is coming into the school later in the month to provide training in the preparation of on-line questionnaires for use with pupils, staff, parents and the wider community – PC members welcome to attend.

### ***Fabric upgrade***

- £160k has been spent – all on painting and flooring. A clear difference is evident.
- Funds were promised by the Council via a schedule drawn up in 2005. The commitments given haven't been met. Ricky is happy to follow up on this if required. The school needs structural work, e.g. new windows. The school can't afford to put the heating on until after October break, no matter how cold it gets.

### ***Systems***

- The school is trying to gather e-mail address for use by Wisepay and mobile phone numbers for texting (Groupcall). Anything that reduces pressure on the admin team is worthwhile.
- Staff are being trained on Electronic Registration which will go live after the September holiday.

### ***Uniform***

No significant compliance issues – any that have arisen have been dealt with via a 'quiet word'. This will need to be monitored in case compliance diminishes over time.

### ***Senior Pupil Perspective***

- A sixth year 'residential' is being considered. It looks like there is support for this – a survey will be conducted to confirm.
- 'Prom' and Year Book committees have been formed.
- Consideration is being given to approaches that will better integrate the different years. Could better use be made of the Pupil Council? In the past discussion between the Pupil Council and its 'constituency' has been limited. A further update will be provided once this has been given a bit of thought.
- Each House will select a charity and then one will be chosen by the school to benefit from fundraising.

- Ricky asked the HB/HG if they could use their influence to reduce littering in the village.
- Helen asked if they had come across the Pupil Parliament – no
- The Parent Council and Pupil Council will look for opportunities to collaborate.

### **Local update**

- New parking controls will be put in place opposite the school.
- Rugby Club now has additional training capacity which will reduce pressure on school playing fields.

### **PTA update**

The PTA is pleased with last year's fundraising efforts. Upcoming events include a quiz night in November and the fashion show next year

### **Election of Parent Council members**

2 of last year's members have resigned (Carol McLeod and Chris Merchant)

Helen invited Carol and John to join. John will join, Carol needs to check her availability for meetings. Helen will remain as Chair. Liz will remain as Treasurer.

Sue has resigned as Vice-Chair. Aileen will take this on.

### **AOB**

#### ***Engaging with more parents***

Liz suggested holding PC meetings at Ratho and Kirknewton to give non-Balerno parents an easier opportunity to attend meetings. One might also be held at a venue to benefit Murieston parents – suitable venue required. Liz to look into logistics for these meetings

#### ***Roll***

Worries about the roll continue. First year numbers are down significantly. Currie has similar issues. Graeme pointed out that a loss of 14 pupils means the loss of 1 member of staff. He always follows up with those moving elsewhere. Any options to increase headcount will be considered. Are there FPs who have 'done well' who could promote the school?

#### ***Website***

Sue would like volunteers to assist with PC website updates – John and Kirsty will get involved. Other PC members were asked to update their profiles.

#### ***P7-S1 Transition***

Sanjay asked for views on the process for transitioning from P7 to S1.

Lindsay is happy to raise the topic with primary heads at Cluster meetings.

#### ***S1 parents' Focus Group***

Proposed for end October, early November – liaise with SMT

#### ***S5/S6 curriculum evening – new format***

Lindsay explained about this event scheduled for late September. This is mainly for parents. Pupils are already aware of the expectations. The PC has a role to help build dialogue between this parent group and the school.

#### ***Higher Prelims***

Lindsay explained that prelims will be delayed until post-February holiday. Some parents are worried by this. The rationale is that it allows all 3 units within a Higher to be examined. This in turn will make any appeals more credible.

#### ***Pupil Stress***

Liz pointed out the school may put unnecessary pressure on pupils regarding their performance in exams. Lindsay confirmed that the school is aware of this and will ensure that all departments understand. Moving the prelims is an example of the school trying to ease the pressure. Deputes hold study sessions with S5 to help them develop skills in this area. This was acknowledged by parents who had experienced interesting workshops in the past on study skills and wondered if these might be reintroduced.

***S3 cross curricular initiative***

S3 will participate in 'Project Dream' with the Lyceum Theatre. They will go to the Lyceum to see a performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Staff and pupils will be off timetable for three days in November as part of an interdisciplinary learning opportunity where, assisted by professionals from the Lyceum, they will create an installation event to be enjoyed by parents. Balerno has been picked as a 'feature school' and will be mentioned in a forthcoming Times Literary Supplement article.

**Date of next meetings**

Monday 5 November 2012

Monday 14 January 2013

Monday 11 March 2013

Monday 3 June 2013

**Balerno High School**  
**Parent Council**  
**Annual Report - September 2012**

## 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:

10<sup>th</sup> September, 5<sup>th</sup> November, 14<sup>th</sup> January 2013, 11<sup>th</sup> March, 3<sup>rd</sup> 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

An electronic version of this report is available on our website where you can follow the online links.

Websites and online resources

Balerno High School Parent Council	<a href="http://www.balernohighschoolparentcouncil.org">www.balernohighschoolparentcouncil.org</a>
Balerno High School	<a href="http://www.balernochs.edin.sch.uk">www.balernochs.edin.sch.uk</a>
City of Edinburgh Council	<a href="http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk">www.edinburgh.gov.uk</a>
Education Scotland	<a href="http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk">www.educationscotland.gov.uk</a>
Scottish Qualifications Agency (SQA)	<a href="http://www.sqa.gov.uk">www.sqa.gov.uk</a>

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](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/859/schools-parental_involvement/1192/consultative_committee_with_parents/1)



# Improvement Plan 3 key areas for school improvement

<b>Priority 1 – Improve Learning and Teaching</b>	<b>Overall Responsibility</b>	<b>QIs</b>
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Outcome A :

Impact on learners:

Tasks	By Whom	Resources	Timescale	Progress/evaluation of task
Establish Teacher Learning Communities to aid consistency of pupil experience				
Deeper analysis of performance data to inform targeted improvement projects				
Incorporate research findings and innovative methodologies to move towards an evidence based practice approach				
Continue to extend opportunities across the 4 contexts of learning to develop the 4 capacities				
Develop whole school strategy for Creativity, ICT and Enterprise				

Develop and support approaches for targeted cohorts of students: G+T, LAAC, MC2				
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<b>Priority 2 – Strengthen Community links</b>	<b>Overall Responsibility</b>	<b>QIs</b>
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Outcome:

Impact on learners:

Tasks	By Whom	Resources	Timescale	Progress/evaluation of task
Increase opportunities for community influence and involvement in life and work of the school				
Integrate <i>Community Learning and Development</i> function into life and work of the school				
Refresh remit of Pupil Council				
<i>Balerno 800</i> project (school roll)				
Balerno HS 30 <sup>th</sup> anniversary project				
Improve communications to connect better with staff, families and communities				

<b>Priority 3 – Increase effectiveness of self- evaluation</b>	<b>Overall Responsibility</b>	<b>QIs</b>
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Outcome

Impact on learners

Tasks	By Whom	Resources	Timescale	Progress/evaluation of task
Overhaul systems for generating, capturing and using evidence to improve learning and teaching				
Integrate electronic surveys into work of school and depts				
Integrate professional review and training frameworks to better articulate with improvement priorities				
Continue to review and refine curriculum rationale and implementation				
Promote a culture of reflection and improvement				
Increase leadership opportunities for students and staff				