

Balerno High School Parent Council Meeting - Minutes - 18/3/13

Present: Helen Purves, Aileen Macleod, Kirsty McKeown (minute), Mike Humphries, Sally Gartside, Jim Gladstone (DHT), Bill Henderson (councillor), Marion Milne (BCC rep), Caroline Anderson, Jessica Bryan, Jenny Barr, Gillian Knight, Lindsay Masterton

Apologies: John Thomas, Liz Carrie, Graeme Sives (HT), Lindsay Fullerton (DHT), Ishbel Smith (Dean Park PC), Ricky Henderson (councillor)

Context: This meeting was run in a slightly different way given the inclement weather and the request from all was to keep the meeting as brief as possible. Subsequently, the main issue discussed were the policies presented by Jim Gladstone.

Previous minutes were not discussed

Matters arising:

- Helen welcomed new parents who were attending the meeting

Communications Policy

•Jim Gladstone presented his Communications Policy position paper explaining what the premise of this is. The areas the school is interested in are how well BHS communicates with parents.

They want parents to know how they can expect information to be disseminated. He noted that parents are vital to this process.

Jim asked for the Parent Council to comment on this position paper and noted that on occasion things may be repeated but this is preferential to a lack of information.

It was noted that there might be a possibility of an alert to notify parents of new information - Facebook or Twitter were not discussed but may be discussed at a later date.

Mike asked if one of the drivers was to reduce paper, and this was acknowledged as a definite area BHS might save in.

Jim noted that not all parents are on-line and therefore communicating exclusively in this way would not be an option; he wasn't able to give exact numbers of families without access to the internet.

It was suggested that parents might opt in for hard copies of documents otherwise everything will default to being online.

Helen mentioned that only 26% of parents have not registered for Wise Pay therefore it seems that at least three quarters of the parent body have online access and we hope that this will be increased as we progress throughout the year.

Mobile phone position paper

- Jim presented this paper and discussed the advantages for pupils in terms of learning and teaching when using mobile devices in class. The examples of taking photographs in a classroom of scientific experiments, or using dictionary apps were mentioned as possible advantages.

- Jim stressed that pupils should never be in contact with teachers via mobiles with the odd exception such as school trips where common sense prevails.

- One parent mentioned her concerns over inappropriate downloading of material. Jim acknowledged this but noted that this is not something that is exclusive to classroom time - pupils may do this at break, on the way to school etc.

- Sally stressed that the inclusion aspect of this policy was a concern, and also that the safety of individuals be of prime importance in this policy.

- Sally suggested the parent body be made aware that parents should refrain from contacting their children directly during the school day. This should be done through the school office.

- The mobile phone position paper is hoped to be ready for the new session in 2013

- Teachers who are on the working group will carry on working on this.

- Kirsty mentioned Edmodo and how it can be beneficial to pupils and may help with the issue of inclusion. Jim agreed to look into this.

Extended learning programme was discussed

- 7 pathways are available and Jim discussed some of these.

- Core Plus was explained as a pathway that will give support to those who are still in need of literacy and numeracy skills
- Independent will serve those ableist students whereby they can be stretched.
- Sally said she was concerned about the jump and thought that this time would be better spent on pupils' subjects.

•Jim is to collate views and then send a school bag drop with the information on this extended learning programme to parents. This will demand a parental response. Helen asked if there will be 'face to face explaining' for parents regarding this programme. Jim said not on this occasion, but face to face would continue at the time of main subject choice.

•Helen suggested a podcast might be an idea. Jim stressed that there were only so many hours in the week and that the school did not have any extra funding for this. Helen suggested that Graeme Sives might be willing to be interviewed in order to explain this programme, and videoed, and then posted on to the website especially if we are to embrace new social mediums.

AOCB:

•A visiting parent asked about the Activity Agreement section on the S5 to S6 subject choice and would like more clarification made available to parents so that this can be a smoother process for parents and pupils.

•Councillor Bill Henderson gave an update on the all weather pitch and reported that the council have had encouraging meetings with various stakeholders.

•Letters of support from the parent forum would be welcome in terms of supporting this programme.

•Aileen mentioned that she has stressed at a neighbourhood meeting that an all weather pitch is an essential addition for the community.

•A parent has asked if the Parent Council would be able to advertise a hydro electricity scheme being operated by 'Harlaw Hydro a Balerno village trust project', on our website. It was pointed out that Ratho and Kirknewton parents have no stake in this initiative, that we need to have home-school-home communication at the heart of what we do and therefore it was agreed it was not PC business.

•Bill Henderson discussed the proposal that given we are a community high school, if we moved the local library into the school, it would encourage the community to be more aware of what the school offers the community. The benefits of the library being in the school needs to be explored further before a decision can be made. B Henderson is keen, G Sives is keen and the library is keen because it could stay open all week. It was generally agreed that this would be a good move and Mike noted that he would like reassurance that this would be cost neutral to the school at the very least.

•Sally noted that she and Caroline Anderson had recently had a discussion about the changes taking place within social media - and wondered if it would be worthwhile to have a link on the website to educate people on the dangers. Helen noted that there hasn't been a working group set up on any items, and wondered if there is a parent who would be willing to lead a working group on a dummies guide to social media for parents.

•Aileen suggested that G Sives could keep the PC updated on all working groups that are in operation within the school that involve parents. The PC is very much in favour of these staff/parent working groups but think it helpful if the PC were aware of these. This is an area that we will revisit at future meetings.

•Communication questionnaire was discussed and parents talked about how easy this was to do. It was noted that this was an unsophisticated survey and could be improved upon easily.

•Caroline Anderson commented that all schools across the council should have a website template that just needs information uploaded as opposed to spending countless hours creating a website.

A discussion followed on the school's website and how it might be improved; ideally this would be picked up on by the team in school who work on the website, but perhaps getting a professional person/company to create a template that teachers can then input information frequently. If anyone is keen to pursue any research regarding this then it's essential that only secondary school websites are researched.

•Mike offered to lead a working group on social media; Caroline Anderson offered to join Mike on this.

Next meeting: May 15th at 6-8pm venue tbc