

Minutes of Balerno High School Parent Council 07/03/2016

1. Attendance

Tony Foster (TF) Chair
Lauchie Scougall (LS) Treasurer
Mike Humphries (MH)
Jessica Bryce (JB)
Andrea Brewster (AB), minutes
Mandy Irvine (MI)
Lisa Coffey (LS) Depute Head Teacher
Sandy Buchan (SB) Head Boy
Peter Reekie (PR)
Christine Paterson (CP)

Apologies
Graeme Sives (GS) Head Teacher
Marion Milne (MM) BCC Rep

2. Minutes

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Proposed by Lauchie Scougall

Seconded by Christine Paterson

3. Matters arising

3.1 Developing Scotland's Young Workforce

Following Vaila Wright's request for business contacts, 6 or 7 responses have been received to the paper letter sent to parents via pupils.

3.2 Follow up to previous maths and science presentations

PC are interested to know the uptake of science subjects by the current S3 in their course choices.

TF to request an update regarding both subject areas (maths and science) for next PC meeting.

Action TF

3.3 School website

Since last meeting levels of expectation for content have been communicated to 'board of studies'.

3.4 Previous HT report had mentioned possibility of support and revision classes being held in Ratho and Kirknewton. TF had offered a possible venue in Kirknewton but no further info at present.

LC said it had been brought up at a board of studies meeting and is still to be followed up.

Action: further discussion between TF & GS

3.5 Catchment review

Liz Carrie not present to give an update. Last information was that nothing would be progressed until new LDP was in place,

4. Presentation on the school merit system by LC

What is it?

This positive behaviour policy was introduced to BHS in Oct-Dec term 2015.

It changes the way pupils are referred (for both positive and negative behaviour) and seeks to bring in a culture change to the way behaviour is managed. Traditional consequences e.g. detention (which have been shown not to produce long term change when used in isolation)

will be retained but alongside, restorative approaches e.g. new ways to build relationships with pupils and introducing a 'rights respecting' ethos.

How does it work?

Using SEEMIS the award of merits and demerits to pupils is electronically recorded and can be used to track behaviour.

Previously only 'dramatic' extremes of good and bad behaviour were focussed on. The new system seeks to recognise consistent good behaviour from what is the majority of pupils. Once a pupil is awarded 30 merits a 'positive postcard' is sent home. (NB. With hindsight this level would have been made lower)

Reasons for merits and demerits are recorded under general headings on SEEMIS (although individual teachers also keep their own records of when and why a merit or demerit is issued). Teachers should tell pupils when a merit or demerit is issued to them in class.

During the weekly PSP period merits are celebrated by the class teacher.

Merits earn house points; are celebrated in house assemblies and also on the Rights Respecting board by F10.

Demerits are monitored by guidance teachers so that 5 demerits allocated to one pupil would trigger involvement of the guidance teacher and 8 demerits would trigger year head involvement.

Some challenges of the system

Some teachers have been using merits as a motivational tool so pupils who have intervention triggered by a number of demerits may also have a considerable number of merits!

Teachers vary in how many they issue.

Staff are working on how to communicate with parents once a number of demerits have triggered guidance / year head involvement for a specific pupil.

There is a need for staff training but as sessions were set at the start of the year and the programme was introduced after this point, training must wait for next academic session.

Questions from the PC

- How will the school communicate with parents and tell them about the new system?

LC suggested posting policy on website and sending an introduction about it to parents via Wisepay. However LC wants next staff training to occur before it is posted on website.

LC asked if there was a need for a parent manual to be written alongside the policy.

Action: LC to email doc to TF to circulate to PC. All PC members to r/v doc and feedback comments.

- How often are merits issued by teachers? Every period? Every day? How do you celebrate the ongoing steady good behaviour and work by the 'middle ground' pupils?
- Seeking clarification on whether merits are given for behaviour or attainment. How easily can teachers discern the differences between pupils who get good results with minimal effort v's pupils who work very hard and achieve less good results?
- In the past some teachers had celebrated success with their own postcards sent home. *LC said teachers were still free to employ their own personal methods to reward or encourage pupils.*

5. Head Boy report

5.1 LGBT support

Mrs Thomson is leading on this. A pupil group has been set up, largely made up of LGBT pupils who are helping to identify problems in the school and identifying an action plan. The group will speak at the faculty meeting this Thursday. Actions include posters in the school and an increase in PSE lessons (largely pupil led) focussing on LGBT issues.

5.2 The school show, The Power Trip was fun and very successful. The largest number of senior pupils involved in a production to date. A lot of money was saved by writing in house rather than buying in a script.

5.3 The spring concert hosted by the music department is in 3 weeks.

5.4 An S6 'send off' is planned for the Friday before the prom. Likely to be a trip to North Berwick beach.

5.5 TF asked if S6s had been asked for feedback on the merit / demerit system.

SB: Not as yet for the merit / demerit system although feedback had been sought on other issues such as the tracking / target setting book.

TF wondered if there was a role for S6s in providing peer support for pupils receiving merits or demerits.

SB: Currently there is a buddy system available between S6s and new S1 if the S1s request it. S6s also provide some mentoring in classes.

5.6 SB was asked if pupils had any input to the school website

SB: Historically pupils have been involved but not at present.

SB left the meeting.

6. Wifi and data allowance

Following the last meeting PR offered to follow up on the issue of pupils being asked to use their data allowance to do online research in class.

City of Edinburgh Council say reason for no wifi in schools in an equality issue (not due to the concern pupils would access inappropriate data).

In other schools 'equality' is achieved by the council providing 1-1 devices for pupils.

However in schools where devices are not provided (certainly in BHS) the issue of 'equality' seems to centre more on how much data allowance individual children have (as opposed to whether they have a smartphone which could access the internet)

PC question why free wifi cannot be provided in the school as a public council building?

The council appear to offer to pay 50% of the cost of introducing 1-1 digital devices. Does BHS have budget to explore this option?

Action: PR to continue to follow up with GS; PR to circulate the council report on 1-1 digital learning format.

7. Website

The PC section is now active.

The PC has three media through which they communicate: Twitter, Facebook and the website.

All will need to be maintained and updated in the future – ideally need several PC members who are able to update with 1 person having overall responsibility to coordinate.

Several pages on the school website still need to be populated.

The PC acknowledged the importance of a good website as the 'shop window' for the school and a means to keep attracting pupils to the school. 'Marketing' clubs and celebrating school attainment were particularly highlighted as important pages to parents wanting to find out about the school.

The PC discussed how we could input to complete and maintain the school website.

Action: TF to write a Communications Review, to forward to GS, making suggestions on how PC could support the school in streamlining and improving communication

8. AOCB

8.1 Issue raised while LC was still present.

An S2 parent had emailed a PC member expressing concern over the way the language choices were managed. Pupils had been asked to vote in class for the option of 1 or 2 modern languages in S3. Parents were unaware that this choice had been offered and there

was lack of clarity on what options were consequently going to be available to pupils in S3 as a result.

Action: LS to forward email to TF, to be forwarded to GS. TF to circulate response to wider PC.

8.2 A discussion on the role of the PC in communicating with the school.

The same topics are regularly raised for discussion at similar times each year e.g. budget, course choices, exams.

Could these topics be proactively factored into the agenda?

As the PC exists to represent the parent body and work with the school to improve communication, how could the PC best serve the interests of parents and the school to streamline communication?

PR referred people to the document 'Welcome to the Parent Council' on the Scottish government website. This gives a generic summary of the role of PCs which we could individualise to specifically suit the needs of BHS.

TF suggested an interim meeting to discuss 'trigger issues' which caused discussion each year and to explore areas where the PC could proactively get involved.

Action: Email TF if you are willing to be involved in the meeting; TF to email a suggested date and venue

8.3 Is there currently an Active Schools Co-ordinator in post?

A parent raised concern that many 'sporty' children were missing out on opportunities to participate in inter school leagues e.g. in golf as the opportunities were not being pursued on behalf of pupils.

Action: Parent to put concern in writing to TF and TF to raise with GS.

8.4 LS tendered his resignation from the PC (and therefore also his role as treasurer).

He was thanked for his input and contributions.

TF asked for somebody to take on role of treasurer.

PR is considering the role.

Date of next meeting 09/05/16 in BHS at 6.00 pm