

Minutes of Balerno High School Parent Council 09/05/16

1. Attendance

Tony Foster (TF), Chair
Liz Carrie (LC)
Mike Humphries (MH), minutes
Jessica Bryce (JB)
Marion Milne (MM), BCC Rep
Andrea Brewster (AB)
Mandy Irvine (MI)
Kate Fraser (KF), Interim Depute Head Teacher
Annabelle MacDonald (AM), Head Girl
Peter Reekie (PR)
Paula Miller (PM)
Lindsay Fullarton (LF), Interim Head Teacher
Caroline Anderson (CA)
Sanjay Kallat (SK), Vice Chair

Apologies

Christine Paterson

2. Minutes

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Proposed - PR

Seconded - JB

3. Matters arising from minutes

3.1 TF to request an update on science and maths – on the agenda for this meeting.

3.2 Study/revision classes in Ratho and Kirknewton – no update

3.3 School website

Tom Hendry (computing teacher) has confirmed that the site meets City of Edinburgh Council standards for required content.

Tom has given the school office staff training on how to update the site and will now train teaching staff in each Faculty so that they can update and maintain their own sections of the site. This work is likely to take until after the summer holidays to complete.

The daily bulletin will now be added to the site so that parents and carers can see what's going on within the school and encourage their children to get involved in any opportunities being offered.

The school will issue a Wisepay message to let parents know that the bulletin is being published.

3.4 Positive Behaviour Policy

TF circulated the Policy, which was discussed at the last meeting. There were no additional comments from PC members. LF said that the school had made some changes to the policy to improve consistency and will re-launch it in August.

3.5 Digital learning

PR has passed the Council report on 1-1 digital learning to TF. **TF to circulate.**

3.6 Parent Council involvement in school decision-making processes

TF and LF have discussed this. LF can provide further information on items which are regular features of the school calendar, such as budgeting and timetabling. The PC could also set up a sub-group to look at what's coming. This would help the Parent Council to fit in with 'school rhythms', setting agenda items at appropriate points in the year. **TF to progress.**

The school is about to start Improvement planning – using a new model which has a role for parents.

The school might go back to having update meetings with parent year groups rather than using parent nights. This would allow for more in-depth coverage of topics e.g. UCAS forms for sixth year.

3.7 Active Schools Co-ordinator

The previous co-ordinator has moved to a new role and it's unclear whether a new person is in-post yet. **LF to follow up.**

MM will check the position at Currie HS.

3.8 PR agreed to take on the role of treasurer.

4. Head Teacher report

4.1 LF introduced Kate Fraser, acting Deputy Head Teacher, who has joined from Royal High School. Kate will have particular responsibility for S2 and S4, and for liaison with the SQA. She will also organise the Achievement Evening which will take place on 09/06. This will celebrate the sporting and cultural achievements of students.

It was pointed out that the Achievement Evening clashes with Duke of Edinburgh. The school is attempting to organise the evening so that the overlap is minimised.

If an Active Schools Coordinator is in post they should be invited to the achievement evening. **Action LF**

JB asked how nominations for the evening are made. They come from the Faculties.

4.2 National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher exams are underway. The English exam is a particular logistical challenge due to the numbers sitting it and the large number of students requiring special arrangements such as use of a laptop or extra time.

4.3 The final day in school for sixth year students was a success, with various events taking place during the day. This was the first year to go through the 'Nationals' and it has achieved an outstanding academic performance.

The year group organised their own assembly. They were also responsible for creating a memorial to Calum Kellie.

4.4 60 S3 students took part in the BBC News School Report day. Members of the Parent Council commented on the high quality of the news items produced.

4.5 P3 and P6 pupils from the feeder primary schools are attending Balerno HS this week. The focus will be on chemistry.

4.6 The new timetable started on 09/05, 2 weeks earlier than normal. This will allow courses to start earlier and it may be possible for some courses to complete their first unit before the summer break.

4.7 Over the next few weeks students will be met by members of staff as they arrive. Any students wearing or carrying 'hoodies' will be required to sign them in to the school office and then collect them at the end of the day. There will also be a focus on time-keeping with latecomers sent to the office to register. Lateness will be tracked and any patterns investigated.

The purpose of this is to refresh students' understanding of the school's expectations.

4.8 Drama will now be based in F10 rather than in the Drama Studio. This is so that the drama studio can become a whole school resource and also to make it easier to teach the written elements of Drama courses. The Drama department will still have priority access to the studio.

4.9 PK asked if Balerno had had any checks following the discovery of defects in many Edinburgh schools. LF said that Balerno isn't a PFI school but that checks had been done after the wall collapse at Liberton High School.

5. Senior pupil update

The students enjoyed breakfast with the senior team. The Head Boy and Head Girl organised the assembly which followed. They were pleased that Jonathan Coulson made a speech as Year Head. Souvenir 'hoodies' have been delivered and the year books are almost ready.

The Parent Council congratulated AM on being the first recipient of the Louise Duncan Memorial Bursary. She will use the money to fund a trip to Cambodia to teach English, before going to Glasgow School of Art. MM said that the standard of applications from Balerno HS were of high quality.

The Parent Council also recorded thanks to Sandy Buchan for his contribution as Head Boy.

6. Community Council

The no. 20 bus will no longer be routed through Balerno. Some Balerno students had been using it to travel to work experience placements at St John's.

TF will ask Kirknewton Community Council for their view on the loss of this service. **Action TF**

The school no longer has a mini-bus.

7. Science update

This was a follow-up to the presentation 1 year ago.

LF said that numbers taking 3 sciences have increased – 17 this year, up from 6 last year. Very few students are taking no sciences.

Feedback from students on science teaching is mostly positive. There are some consistency issues and the faculty are taking suggestions on-board. There were difficulties with some students having to make course choices after having done a particular subject for only 2 weeks. This will be fixed for next year.

Students moving into S3 for session 16/17 will get an extra period of science for practical work.

8. General discussion of course choices.

AB asked if some of the science uptake could be due to limited course choices.

CA asked if arts courses have been downgraded in favour of science.

There are no music options for third year. Would it be possible to have more course choices rather than 2 periods of Home Economics ?

LF explained that Music was offered but uptake was very low. However, it has been possible to make 'bespoke' arrangements for some students wanting to do Music. Offering Home Economics allows the school to meet Health and Well-being obligations within Broad General Education (BGE).

The school is looking at timetabling options – for example, rotating students around a group of subjects.

PR asked in the trend is towards 'general' groups of subjects – science, humanities, arts ?

The school is reviewing its approach to BGE at the moment. This work will continue until next year. Part of the purpose of BGE is to develop basic skills which enable future learning.

The school must be able to respond to the Scottish Government's 'attainment challenge' within the next 18 months.

Some schools do 'majors and minors'

It is possible to have multiple levels in one class, although this presents teaching challenges

Can lists of text books/other resources/points of contact for the coming year be provided ?

9. Maths update

Maths results are expected to improve this year. Maths attainment remains an issue for schools across the city. LF has agreed to work together with Heads from other local schools to develop maths capability.

TF will keep maths and science on the agenda. **Action TF**

10. Future meetings

It was again pointed out that a 6 pm start is difficult for some PC members. Also steps should continue to be taken to minimise clashes with Primary School PC meetings.

The PC didn't have Ratho or Kirknewton meetings this year, but these will be resurrected for next session.

The date of the next meeting/AGM meeting was set (5th September) and dates for other meetings will be proposed once the school calendar for 16/17 is clearer.

Post meeting update

The date of the next meeting/AGM will move to 12th September. The following dates are proposed for further meetings:

14th November 2016 – Balerno

23rd January 2017 – Ratho

6th March 2017 - Kirknewton

8th May 2017 – Balerno

The Balerno meetings will take place in the LRC, starting at 6.30 pm. Exact venues and times for the Ratho and Kirknewton meetings are to be confirmed.

11. AOCB

11.1 TF is still keen to receive thoughts on induction of new PC members.

11.2 TF will attend the Parent's Evening for parents of P7 pupils on 23/6.

11.3 Use of the website for information about clubs should be encouraged – lists of clubs and activities were previously provided by the Active Schools Coordinator.

11.4 The PC is happy to fund the paid for version of Wordpress. This would provide extra capability such as the ability to include a Twitter feed on the website. **LF to discuss with the school's technical staff.**

11.5 It was agreed that the minutes of PC meetings can be approved on e-mail rather than at the next meeting, so that they can be published more quickly. Draft minutes will be issued to attendees, who will be given 1 week to comment before they are published.

11.6 KF said that she was very impressed with the school so far – in particular students' adherence to uniform policies and politeness

11.7 The PC wished to record their thanks to all staff for their efforts over the past year.

11.8 Statistics from the Head Teacher recruitment process will be shared once the process is complete.

11.9 This was Liz Carrie's final PC meeting as her youngest son will leave school this year. The PC recorded grateful thanks for her many years of service.