



BALERNO PARENT COUNCIL HEAD
TEACHER SURVEY REPORT

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CONTENTS

Page

1	Cover
2	Contents
3	Background, Process, Engagement Campaign, Outcomes & Thanks
4	Qualities required in a new Head Teacher & Priorities
5	Other Skills and Qualities
6	Other Skills and Qualities
7	Other Skills and Qualities
8	Other Skills and Qualities
9	Summary Findings
10	Appendix i, ii

BALERNO PARENT COUNCIL HEAD TEACHER SURVEY REPORT

BACKGROUND

The Balerno Parent Council is involved in the recruitment of the new Head Teacher. They were keen to see what qualities the wider parent forum were looking for. It was considered the opportunity of gathering thoughts via a survey, during a new Head Teacher recruitment process, would help inform partnership work with the school in the future.

PROCESS

The initial survey, recommended as good practice by Edinburgh City Council, was reviewed by a small group of Parent Council involved in the recruitment process.

On advice from ECC changes were made by the Parent Council to the initial survey with views only to be taken from parents/carers.

The Parent Council survey was co-ordinated by the Chair, Tony Foster, who has a certified award from IAP2 in Public Participation and has conducted a number of community engagement appraisals.

ENGAGEMENT CAMPAIGN

The Parent Council launched the online survey on 28th April with a cutoff date of 2nd May. It was promoted via the interim school management via Wisepay twice, daily on facebook, twitter and via e mail to Parent Council members.

OUTCOMES

The target for the survey was 90, for any meaningful statistical analysis from a parent/carer population of approx 800. Despite only five days of consultation over a holiday weekend the survey gathered 126 responses.

126 people answered Q2, with over 200 comments made over Q3 and 4, which make up the main body of this report.

48% of respondents came from the Wisepay e mail (another 6% from wisepay text), 15% from facebook, 10% from Twitter (facebook and twitter run by PC, not school), 8% from school website (note put on by Parent Council, not school), 7% other and 6% word of mouth.

25 respondents would be interested in the Parent Council, 16 the fundraising PTA and 64 people would like further information. The information in this survey will be shared with parents at a suitable time.

THANKS

The Parent Council would like to thank the ECC, Interim Balerno High School Senior Management Team, Parent Council members and particularly parents/carers who participated during this crucial recruitment process.

QUALITIES REQUIRED IN A NEW HEAD TEACHER

12 qualities were identified from recruitment material from Edinburgh City Council along with identified qualities suggested by Parent Council members at the recruitment evening, based on informal feedback from Parent Forum members over the last five years.

Parents/Carers were asked to assess how important these qualities were to them in a four point scale. For the purpose of this report we highlight the 'absolute musts' in order (**Full table – appendix i**)

1) Good Communication (89.68%)
2) Supports academic achievement (79.37%)
3) Fairness (78.57%)
4) Inspirational Leader (65.87%)
5) Positive Approach to Behaviour Management (63.49%)
6) Ability to know the pupils (61.90%)
7) Can plan and implement curricular policy (57.14%)
8) Authority (53.97%)
9) Supports extracurricular activity (42.86%)
10) Works well with the local authority (32.54%)
11) Engages with the community (30.95%)
12) Experience of being a HeadTeacher (19.05%)

PRIORITIES

The next question was open ended asking what priorities are required for improving the school.

116 answered the question with a number of comments.

The full responses can be read in the appendix (**Appendix ii**). In order priorities are;

1) Communication & engagement 35 comments
2) High Quality Education 27 comments
3) Staff retention, motivation and action 24 comments
4) Discipline, Drug & Alcohol abuse 21 comments
5) Extra Curricular activity, school trips, sport – 18 comments
6) Increase subject choice & work with partners 17 comments
7) Learning & emotional support – 9 comments
8) Pupil retention & engagement (particularly in S6 year) – 9 comments
9) Leadership & motivation – 9 comments
10) Refurbishment & update equipment – 8 comments
11) Support outwith academic route – 6 comments
12) Equality of feeder primaries – 4 comments
13) Maintaining uniform policy – 4 comments
14) Stop mobile use in class – 2 comments
15) Storage in school for pupils – 3 comments
16) Develop school 'brand' – 2 comment

OTHER SKILLS AND QUALITIES

A second open ended question was asked for further skills, qualities and comments. Responses covered fairness/engagement (26 comments), leadership (19 comments), academic success (8 comments), good communication (8 comments), well being on campus (5 comments), support needs (2 comments) and general comments (7, edited for naming individuals).

Fairness/Engagement – 26 comments

- Open to the views of others
- Someone who can be authoritative when required but can lead the school through having / earning the respect of the pupils and teachers rather than bullying or being heavy handed.
- Be approachable to all. Care about the children. Have a much more visual presence around the school. S1 to have lunch in the school.
- A fair head teacher who respects all pupils. Basis decisions/changes by involving everyone, with evidence to back this. Acknowledges and support under achievers in the subjects that they are better at
- Let's hope this one doesn't come in and change the uniform YET again at great expense !! We are not all millionaires in Balerno some of us are born and bred here!
- Friendly and fair. Organised and efficient.
- -open minded -'child friendly ' rather than for their own career promotion - consistent -team player and motivator
- Approachable by parents and pupils.
- Head teacher should be a role model to children. Friendly and approachable, taking an interest in pupils goals. HT should have a good rapport with pupils, encouraging attainment at all levels and looking at ways to best support learning.
- Kindness and getting to know every pupil better.
- An ability to relate to pupils at all levels but especially senior pupils - respect is a two way thing. Excellent people skills. A focused plan for the educational future of Balerno high school.
- Must be a good manager of staff, able to lead a staff team with authority, fairness and approachability. Someone who is flexible and listens to alternative points of view but then is able to make a reasoned and authoritative decision.
- Potential is just as important to me as experience in a head role.
- Higher visibility to pupils within school - e.g. visiting classes
- Approachable by both the pupils and staff.
- To be firm but fair HT and be visible to all pupils and parents. To be an excellent speaker and keep promises to pupils.
- I feel a head teacher should be open to approach not only from The pupils but parents too u
- A good role model for teachers and pupils . Who engages well with staff and pupils
- It can be extremely difficult but the Head Teacher needs to gain respect from their pupils. Perhaps working with pupils on a fair set of school rules would make this possible. The pupils need to feel more involved
- Approachable.
- A fresh perspective.
- Open and engaging but focussed on the best for all pupils.
- As parent-friendly as possible
- Ability to engage with parents, pupils and staff to develop a shared understanding of the constraints the school works withing, encourage innovation and share best practice

- Someone who values the input from children from ALL the feeder primaries, as there has been an unfair focus on children from Dean Park e.g. In school performance opportunities outwith transition activities. The ability to recognise the maturity and the forthcoming independent lives that S6 children will be embracing by giving them more responsibility to manage their time and freedom of movement within the school day
- The new HeadTeacher must adopt an open and consultative approach to engagement with parents so that parents feel they have the opportunity to influence the curriculum and future direction of the school. Pupils needs must always be at the forefront of the school's decision making

Leadership – 19 comments

- Positive leader and accomplished people manager with the positivity filtering through to all staff.
- Enthusiastic, dynamic presence within the school, who can relate to pupils and parents.
- An inspirational, motivating Leader. Someone who's prepared to try doing things that little bit differently to achieve the best for the school and the pupils.
- The headteacher should have a vision for the school and the abilities and skills to implement that vision while listening to the stakeholders and making adjustments or compromises where necessary.
- I would like someone who has genuine management and leadership skills, who could encourage both staff and pupils in their school life
- To care about the school and to want to school to flourish under new leadership.
- Ability to lead a team well.
- Good management skills: people, budgets, implementation of curriculum and policy.
- I believe BHS needs an experience headteacher with a proven track record of inspiring staff and motivating children to learn. Someone who is able to lead the school with confidence and wisdom. Someone with integrity and compassion. Someone who does not have a relationship with current staff so that they can be objective in the way forward
- Good staff manager, well experienced at leading other schools through National exams. Keen to improve the school and be an experienced secondary school teacher in the past.
- Proven leadership skills and evidence of positive management of change
- Must be a good listener Open to suggestions
- I would like to see a headteacher who has God-given leadership abilities,who builds staff morale and development .Also, has to have a good rapport with pupils,eliciting a mutual respect.
- Someone with a vision for making the school outstanding, who can build on existing strengths and develop new areas of excellence.
- someone who motivates staff to give of their best to the students
- Openness in dealing with deficiencies within the school is a key quality for the new Head. Avoiding putting issues on the record in order to preserve the reputation of the school in the short term is a strategy which is unacceptable and must stop.
- Confident leader. Motivated to improving results & general enjoyment of the school for teachers & pupils.
- Dedication to making the school the best it can be-in terms of exam results, discipline and pupil engagement
- Great leadership skills. Dynamic. Enthusiastic and motivate to drive and promote Balerno High School

Academic Success – 8 comments

- Obviously the HT should support academic success, we have that at the top end. Must improve for results for average ability kids and strengthen wider achievement.
- -new headteacher needs to be inspirational and supported by vast majority teachers/staff
Individual
- Strong and able to make bold decisions for the benefit of the whole school despite resistance. An absolute determination to make every pupil succeed regardless of ability but to ensure that the brightest are invested in and not left to manage.
- Planning having ability to manage curriculum on 5 year plan so flow through of option choices . Openness and honesty. I would like the head teacher to be accountable to their service users i.e. the parent and put BHS at centre of its community .
- Juggling funds to the benefit of pupils; ensuring consistency in teaching standards & fairness in merit systems; engaging with pupils; encouraging
- She/he has to support academic achievement and working to positive onward destinations for all pupils. She/he has to support the ethos that all children should do their best and achieve what they can. I would ,like the new HT to be supportive of sport including competitive sport
- Holding teachers accountable for their ability to teach and encourage pupils to learn subjects and not hind behind National 4 qualifications.
- The development of a growth mindset culture improves young people's ability to take on challenge in their future lives so would be good to see a head teacher who would try to embed Growth Mindset in the school. Enthusiasm for sport and desire to encourage higher levels of participation but also encourage inter school competition.

Good Communication – 8 comments

- Communications is key - the current SMT in the school is poor at best at public speaking and effective communication. We need a strong leader and fresh blood.
- We so many great opportunities with the school - good staff, great community and an untapped willingness of people to help. The head teacher should be someone who can work with that enthusiasm (which can sometimes be misplaced and critical) and help our children achieve the potential that this place offers. It strikes me that our last head teacher had many good policies to implement but a lack of engagement and communication meant they failed leading to a feeling of discouragement at management, teaching and community level. That has manifested itself to how some of the children feel which is where it critically counts - they need to feel engaged, valued and committed to their learning and that the school is able and willing to help them. A desire to get to know the pupils and the ability to communicate with them is must.
- Good/influential public speaker
- Ability to engage with parents, pupils and staff to develop a shared understanding of the constraints the school works withing, encourage innovation and share best practice
- An individual who has good communication skills with staff and pupils. Someone who is keen to improve the academic teaching but also makes non academic pupils feel equally valued and an important part of the school
- Willingness to communicate through all mediums to staff, pupils and patents,be visible and approachable. Take on board new ideas and promote inclusivity. Promote learning and opportunity for all regardless of accademic ability culture or social demographic. Thank you for consulting.
- Improve communication in all areas Enforce school uniform for all Clarify and enforce a clear discipline policy and make clear AND follow through with consequences Reinstate a more academic curriculum Stop the few remaining experienced teachers leaving

- Communication is so important and regular contact with a parent body essential. If not parents will discuss issues that either don't exist or have a very unrealistic view of what is actually happening at school. More information about what is happening in school would also help, to show the great work that is bound to be happening.

Well being on campus – 5 comments

- needs to have enough authority to keep drugs off school grounds
- There is a widespread loss of confidence in the school because of the ongoing classroom disruption that is preventing many pupils from doing their best in class. This needs to be dealt with as a priority. The lack of course choices in 5th year is also of concern - it is shocking that many able pupils cannot sit 5 Highers due to the limited options available.
- A positive, progressive and fair but firm approach to discipline on disruptive behaviour stopping learning or causing psychological or physical harm to fellow students. Education is a right, but education at a school like Balerno CHS should be conditional on enabling other students to benefit from your participation. Students who insist on damaging everyone else's efforts should ultimately be sent to an institution better able to address their behaviour issues.
- The ability to deal with issues such as smoking, drugs ... In the school grounds
- Zero tolerance on discipline
- Zero tolerance in bullying, up to date with current issues affecting young people, particularly girls

Support needs – 2 comments

- Ensuring the whole school well-being, while still acting positively and pro-actively to support pupils' individual needs
- Being flexible with individual needs of the pupils . Being approachable by the pupils.

General comments – 7 (some removed as mention individuals)

- School and has given tremendous help to my son. I also feel that (such) contributions can often be overlooked.
- we are loosing teachers can he fix this?
- I truly wish you all the very best of luck in getting someone who can return this once amazing school back to its former glory, with well rounded, well educated, well supported and well led students. The students, teachers and parents deserve so much better.
- A head teacher who puts the pupils first and stands up to the nonsense CEC might throw their way. Rather like Boroughmuir, Broughton, James Gillespies, etc. He or she should benchmark Balerno High against top performing Edinburgh schools. Skilled motivational,pastoral skills. Encouraging school trips... Very few trips offered to pupils for several years. These are valuable despite most families going away on holiday. Many state schools do offer trips abroad to each year group. Social values led from the top... My daughter helped establish BHS as fair trade school, but nothing about these issues... Opening opportunities for learning beyond 'just what you need to pass exams' I appreciate the incredibly tight spending constraints on schools now, more than ever. But all the more reason to ensure staff are extremely well supported, motivated and encouraged. I also appreciate CofE has its own problems. These have all impacted on my sons' school experience. I hope you find a best person for the challenging task ahead.
- Positive attitude to community engagement. Looking for opportunities to support community groups in the school and where possible, interaction with pupils e.g. volunteering as part of Duke of Edinburgh Award or the Princes Trust. Connecting with local charities who may be able to develop volunteering involvement. As examples: Harmeny School, RDA, NTS Malleny House, Mill Cafe, Youth Vision, BVT, Tennis Club etc

SUMMARY FINDINGS

17 people have applied for the role of Head Teacher at Balerno High School, which has been actively promoted via social media by the Parent Council as well as by the usual Edinburgh City Council channels.

QUALITIES AND SKILLS IN A NEW HEAD TEACHER

In a new Head Teacher the Parent Council should be looking for a good communicator, able to maintain and motivate pupils, staff and parents/carers with fair and inspirational leadership skills. An ability to know the pupils well and have a positive approach to behaviour management would be an advantage.

COMMUNICATION

Although there is no overwhelming issue with the school the timely and two way communication to all stakeholders is extremely poor and needs to be addressed immediately by the new Headteacher. This may improve engagement at all levels, better inform everyone of the school challenges/successes and potentially avoid the Senior Management Team 'firefighting', providing more time for academic and extracurricular activity. The lack of information for parents/carers on the school website nor use of any other social media communication channels by the school, which together informed 35% of respondents to this survey, is noticeable.

INSPIRATION, MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT

There is a perception (true or not) that staff retention, motivation and lack of support for subjects across the board is an issue that is being passed on to pupils. However improved exam results cannot be ignored and perhaps academic change can be difficult. A sea shift in engaging and motivating leadership, support and mentoring for teachers may be required. Again, communication may be the issue here. Positive promotion of current school success, curricular and extracurricular activity to all feeder areas may improve the school roll and therefore number of teachers/courses available.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

There are a number of concerns about class discipline, school discipline, alcohol and drug abuse on campus and support for pupils in these areas. This may be a small minority but it is enough to cause considerable concern and question support structures in theory and practice. School uniform is supported but a rebrand is not required.

MOVING FORWARD

Generally there is a feeling there is something to build on throughout the whole school community with a willingness to engage and support. The new Head Teacher should have grounded experience with the potential to lead, communicate, motivate and engage to achieve that objective.

It is suggested the Parent Council ensure this report is passed on to the new Head Teacher for a sense check with staff and pupils, providing objectives we can all support together as part of the school improvement and development plans.

Tony Foster

Chair, Balerno High School Parent Council

May 2016