



Email balernoehspsc@gmail.com

## **Minutes of Meeting of Balerno High School Parent Council**

**Monday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019, 6.30pm at Balerno High School**

### **Attendees**

PC members

#### ***Parents***

Andrea Brewster (AB) (Chair), Alastair MacLellan (AM) (Vice Chair), Jessica Bryce (JB), Mandy Irvine (MI), Christine Paterson (CP), Fiona McDougall (FM), Alison Robertson (AL), Elaine MacMaster (EM)

#### ***Co-opted community member***

Marion Milne (MM)

#### ***School staff***

Neil McCallum (NM) (Head Teacher), Lisa Coffey (Depute Head Teacher), Cara Prot (Curriculum Lead, Maths)

#### ***Senior pupils***

Apologies sent

#### ***Parents/Others attending***

Michelle Moore (Quality Improvement Officer), Fiona Rushworth (parent)

#### ***Councillors***

Sue Webber, Ricky Henderson, Graeme Bruce

#### ***Apologies***

Trish Lumsden, Nick Weir, Nanda Groenewald

Cllr Neil Gardiner

### **1. Introduction and Welcome**

### **2. Update on PC members**

No member of staff has volunteered to fill the staff rep role as yet. NM to contact staff again to invite expressions of interest.

### **3. Headteacher report**

See separate 'Headteacher report' on PC section of school website.

#### 4. **Senior Pupil Team Report**

No Senior Pupils were able to attend the meeting and there was no further information to report.

#### 5. **Presentation on Maths**

See separate copy of presentation on PC section of the school website.

A discussion followed around numeracy vs Maths and the numerous pathways to gain skills / qualifications in maths which are on offer in the maths department.

#### 6. **Finance update**

It was confirmed that the annual funding from Edinburgh Council towards running costs of the Parent Council was now in the bank account.

#### 7. **School Self Evaluation (SSE) feedback**

Michelle Moore (QI local education officer) gave feedback on the recent self evaluation exercise. She explained it was a useful exercise to undertake given that the senior leadership team had been in place for 3-4 years.

The evaluation included classroom experiences, focus groups etc and the school returned to the education officers their opinion on how well they are doing. This is different to an inspection as it is done more in conjunction with the school. It was a positive experience for Balerno, and the education officer was confident that the school is making the necessary improvements that are required. Some specific things which were mentioned:

The school is catering for all levels of skill achievement e.g. pathways in maths

The school signage was successful although it is noted that the values will continue to be further embedded.

It was noted that the teachers see themselves as leaders and the teachers are embracing opportunities for leadership and continued professional development.

Relationships (all types) are very strong at Balerno High school.

Pupils could be encouraged to attain more in their 50 min sessions - both challenge and pace.

Tracking and monitoring are very good at Balerno.

The school is committed to the wellbeing of the pupils.

There are great partnerships outside school – SDS (Skills Development Scotland), Hearts Football Club.

The education officers are impressed with the celebration of success that takes place at Balerno and are impressed that teachers develop pupil's leadership skills.

There is good understanding of different pathways pupils can take – not everyone learns in the same way.

A thank you was noted for the parents and partners of Balerno High school who came along to the focus groups.

Confidence in the school's ability to continue to progress.

Education officers agreed with the school improvement plan which shows that the improvement plan is relevant.

The digital infrastructure at Balerno HS doesn't facilitate moving forward to develop digital learning. Question asked about how Balerno compares to other schools for digital learning – the main consideration is for attainment and this is good for Balerno compared to other schools.

#### 8. **Transition – update and discussion**

Current p7 parents had raised the question of whether an S1 residential would happen next year.

Lisa Coffey explained some of the factors being considered when making the decision to make some changes around the residential:

- Timing is not ideal
  - It is difficult to get payment from families so soon in a new school year. Pupils can only be set up on ParentPay once they have started at school
  - Teachers have not had an opportunity to get to know pupils by this stage in the school year. In particular, there has been little time to get to know pupils with additional support needs.
- The size of the year group is increasing (questions oversize and suitability of any venue)
- The cost of the residential is increasing. The school wants to ensure affordability and the possibility for all pupils to attend any event.

A different time of year for going on residential is being considered.

Additionally, there are other events coming up in the school e.g. ceilidh / commonwealth games that the P7 transition pupils will be involved in.

#### 9. **BHS Health and Wellbeing Group - update**

A massive thank you to the Health and Wellbeing group for their efforts. Meetings are ongoing to make plans to install the first tranche of lockers in February 2020.

#### 10. **Senior Pupil access to WiFi**

This item was carried forward to the next meeting.

Nothing further to note at present.

#### 11. **Condition and suitability of Balerno HS – update from subgroup**

Trish/Elaine/Andrea/Nick have agreed to form a subgroup looking at the condition of the school and what the PC might do to work with the council to see improvements.

*Background: Wave 4 funding has been secured for Currie High School from the government funding scheme but Balerno HS currently has no funding. Edinburgh Council has produced a 10yr budget planning document (2020-2030) with money allocated to Balerno HS for improvements from 2025/26. The budget has to be ratified by the Finance Committee in February 2020.*

In the meantime, some ongoing works have been identified for Balerno HS from the most recent condition report. NM gave an update on some of these planned works to Balerno HS in 2020 (quotes are out for tender):

Update to kitchen in riverside café, windows (e.g. swimming pool), changing facilities, upgrading electrical circuit boards, pipes and services to be updated (after heating and lighting was done 2 yrs ago), update to fire alarm system.

A parent asked whether there was any update on the removal of the temporary huts by the car park. NM said there was no further information to date.

A discussion followed about the condition and suitability of the school.

- The planned improvement works were welcomed but it was noted that while they maintained the condition of the school, they did little to improve the teaching spaces.

- Ongoing concern was expressed over the practical teaching areas of the school, especially the changing rooms, workshop areas, HFT classrooms and the science labs.
- A date has been arranged in December for the subgroup to meet with Neil McCallum to walk around and visit the areas of concern to see first hand what they were like.
- Who is best to contact in Edinburgh Council to express concerns over the suitability of teaching areas? Is it the responsibility of the School Estate team or Asset Management?
- The Parent Council are keen to ensure that Balerno HS pupils have equity in the provision of learning and teaching experience, compared with other Edinburgh secondary schools. Given a lengthy period before there is likely to be substantial investment in Balerno HS, what else can the PC do to try and secure shorter term investment and improvement?

A suggestion was made to invite a council officer to a PC meeting in 2020 (either somebody from the School Estate team or from Asset Management). AB to discuss further with NM and local councillors after the sub group walk around to agree the best action.

#### 12. **Purpose of the Parent Council / parental engagement – discussion**

There was insufficient time to discuss this agenda item and it is carried forward until January 2020.

#### 13. **School improvement priorities for 2019-20 – review of ‘parent friendly’ version**

#### 14. **AOCB**

Councillor Graeme Bruce gave an update on current roadworks which will be filled in by the end of the week. Temporary traffic lights will go away for 2 weeks then connection of the pipes will start at the roundabout and continue to Somerville Road (Cala site) until end February 2020.

NM mentioned coordination of roadworks has had a major impact on attendance first thing in the morning for pupils who get bussed in to school.

Thurs 5<sup>th</sup> December – Christmas lights will be switched on in Balerno village.

Balerno Christmas Tree Festival is happening on 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> December.

#### 15. **Date of next meeting**

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020, 6.30pm at Balerno High School