

Prestwick Academy Parent Council

Minutes of 'Zoom' Meeting – Monday 13th September 2021

In attendance (virtually):

Elaine Harrigan (Head Teacher) Alastair McIntyre (Chair) Jerry Ferguson (Vice Chair) Fiona Baird (Treasurer) Tom McCrorie, Euan Terras, Pauline Ferguson, Jill Wright, Sharon Graham, Christine Thomson, Harry Boyce, Andrea Hammond, Councillor Hugh Hunter, Steven Fentie, Jillian McIntyre, Karen Menzies, Monique Morrison and Euan Duncan. Sacha & Oliva (School Captains) Mr McCabe (History & Modern Studies)

1. Introduction

Alastair McIntyre welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Parent Council.

2. Attendance and apologies

Those attending were noted. Apologies were noted from Fiona Heron and Councillor Tonner.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The draft Minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 14th June had been circulated by email in advance. Their acceptance was proposed by Christine Thompson and seconded by Euan Terras.

4. Report from Chair

Alastair reported that there will be a meeting of the Parent Council Chairs on Wednesday 15th. Alastair and Jill Wright were on the panel for the position of Deputy Head Teacher on Friday 10th September. The Deputy Head Teacher was offered to Dr Joanne Frew.

5. Treasures Report

We are in the process of changing the names on the bank account as the names on the account are not current members of the Parent Council. There hasn't been any money put in the account for three years. A small credit balance remains in the account.

6. Head Teacher's Report

Ms Harrigan was pleased to be attending her first Parent Council Meeting as Head Teacher after Mr Bones retirement.

STAFFING

The school roll was 1254 young people at the time of the census. Prestwick Academy is now the largest secondary school in South Ayrshire. With this comes challenges around staffing. On Friday Dr Joanne Frew was offered the appointment of DHT subject to recruitment checks. We had 12 strong applicants and 6 were interviewed. Interviewed on 13th September for the post of Teacher of Geography 0.6 FTE and I am

awaiting the outcome of that panel. We are also interviewing seven people on the 14th September for the post of PT Chemistry, a replacement for Ben Robinson who leaves us to move to the DHT post at Girvan Academy. We also have a teacher of PE post, we are interviewing six people and this will take place on Thursday 16th September. We have some outstanding posts, teacher of English 0.6 FTE as well as a teacher of Maths. The Maths post replaces a member of staff who moved to Kyle Academy. We also have teacher of Computing 0.5 FTE post which is being covered internally by another member of staff doing additional hours. There are challenges in filling part time posts, these are the post that have been advertised. Hopefully these post will be filled by October holidays.

COVID UPDATE

We have a couple of staff that are self-isolating. We are in the position that Covid has not made too big an impact.

This month we await a further update. Young people are wearing their masks and this has improved as the weeks have gone on. We hand out and distribute mask to our young people, who are doing well keeping their face coverings on. As the weather has been very warm it can be quite stuffy with face coverings so there is plenty of ventilation in Classrooms and corridors for young people and staff. The split intervals and lunchtimes continue and the feedback from young people is they do like this process. This also helps limit the numbers of young people in the community at these times. We are continuing with the mitigation that were put in place before the summer holidays. We are awaiting on the next announcement.

PRIZE GIVING

Unfortunately, we are unable to have the prize giving we would normally have. Mr Ross is gathering the information and is planning a virtual event for parents and prize winners. It has been a difficult year for young people and we look forward to this positive event.

SQA

Proposal are for exams to go ahead, we are planning for Prelims and Assessments. Should things change, the Departments and Principal Teachers will look at cumulative evidence gathering throughout the year.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Mr Bone had been working on this prior to the holidays, I am picking up on the school improvements that Mr Bone had identified and this was linked into the previous inspection. This will include consistency and approach for Learning and Teaching, hopefully shifting from Good to Very Good to Excellent. This will be the key drivers within the Improvement plan. We are also looking at how we support our young people coming back into the school building and the assessment procedures in place. Identifying whole school support or targeted support.

We are looking at Pathways on how to open the curriculum and broadening that out for our young people. We have the traditional curriculum 5 or 6 Highers/5 or 6 National 5. We are looking at other equivalent qualifications, National Progression Awards, SCQF Level 5/6 awards for our young people. Pathway plans at S3 looking forward for the next 3 years all the way through to S6. This would link in with our curriculum and timetable, curriculum is also something that we will look at authority level.

PARENTS EVENING

It looks unlikely that Parents evenings in their usual format will be able to be held before Christmas. We are looking at alternative approaches, I have discussed with principal teachers what the proposals were post summer and what we can develop in the coming months. Tracking reports are due out soon which will give some information regarding young people performance. The timetable changed a bit later so that evidence gathering is a continuation of evidence as we progress. I will get back to you in due course regarding the plans for Parent Evening.

COMMUNITY ISSUES

A number of community issues have been brought to my attention. The amount of Litter within the school and local community, I am keen to work with the community for a joined-up approach. Our Eco committee have been working on how to respect the community and the wider area. PC Stewart (Campus Police Officer) will also be involved. I will be learning more about the community and hope to build connections and links with local groups. I hopefully will be able to join local council meetings and will speak to local councillors about this.

Parent Question: Staffing Issues

Issues where a teacher is taking a subject that is not relating to their subject, eg: PE teacher taking Maths. How does this work?

Ms Harrigan replied - From a school point of view for short term absences the Principal Teachers organise the cover material that is used. As teachers we do our best to deliver the content that has been left. For longer staff absences we look to get supply staff who are in the subject area. We are balancing the risk from covid and have different strategies to address this. The priority is S1-S6 however our senior phase young people are heading into exams so we may alternate were the cover goes. Staff absences are challenging, covid has not had a huge impact just now. We may have to bring classes together in a safe covid environment or alternate teaching staff so young people have access to a qualified teacher. We would look at alternative approaches if a young person is having 5 periods of cover.

Parent Question: Carers Day

Initial contact with Mr Ross to see if Prestwick Academy could hold a Carers Day next spring. Can a meeting be set up in school to discuss?

Ms Harrigan replied – Yes, we can by appointment following appropriate covid mitigations.

Parent Question: Extra Time in Exams

Due to the lack of reports over the last 18 months and my son having Dyslexia is he entitled to extra time in the ongoing assessments?

MS Harrigan replied – Yes, he is entitled to extra time in all assessments. He can have a controlled assessment without extra time, and then additional assessment with extra time to allow the school to judge the additional time required. Ms Harrigan will speak to pupil support to find out what has been agreed and what is appropriate. The parent will contact her son's guidance teacher.

Parent Question: Clarity on communication between Teachers and Parents

Ms Harrigan replied - There should be 3 reports per year, 2 interim reports and a full report.

Further point from parent: Should there have been video calls?

Ms Harrigan replied – South Ayrshire Council are leaving this up to the schools. When I took over in August the conversation that had been had with Mr Bone was around looking at telephone calls from individual teachers or a teacher dealing with a group of young people around the report or subjects. I am waiting to hear back from South Ayrshire Council for the next steps to improvements for the future. It is a huge challenge around telephone calls at secondary level.

Parent commented that not much communication last year and did not think covid could be used as a reason for not having communications. Ms Harrigan will be looking at structures and processes to replace parents evening. Parent suggested video calls.

7. SCHOOL CAPTAINS REPORT

Alastair welcomed Sacha and Olivia to their first meetings as School Captains and congratulated them on their appointments.

Olivia - My area in HEART is Active and Respected and I work with Miss Evans in Modern Languages. Focusing on Right Respected School, LGBT, Holocaust Month and get messages out for Assemblies. Vice Captains focus on Nurtured, Eco and Black History which links into Anti-Bullying. Our main goals are to get the message across at our assemblies.

Sacha – My area is achievement as part of the HEART values within the school, House points and Merit system which is currently on hold due to covid. We have been voting to choose our Charities within the school. We have also been looking at helping Afghan families who are arriving in South Ayrshire, we have had lots of donations.

8. PRESENTATION – THE HEART GROUP

Mr McCabe – History and Modern Studies

Mr McCabe showed a power point presentation of the Heart Group. Historically staff and pupils worked on different projects. The HEART Group was to bring all the initiatives together. Every year we have a student experience survey, the statistics between 2019/2020 saw an increase in students who feel included in the school. The statistics for 2021 were gathered after the second lockdown and the majority of students felt included. We also measure students confidence and prejudice behaviour in school. The HEART Group is split into 4 areas using the SHANARI wellbeing indicators making sure we are “Getting it Right For Every Child”. Heart is broken into 4 areas Safe & Healthy, Included & Nurtured, Active & Respected, Achievement & Responsibility. Within these we group various initiatives eg: Safe & Healthy we work with the Mental Health ambassadors. School Captains create an assembly on key issues. Mr McCabe worked with the Captains running a vote on which Charities would be nominated this year. Fundraising this year will be pulled into one pot for the 9 key charities chosen by pupils and staff. We will also be supporting Teen Cancer Trust. The HEART group is in the early stages, but the staff and students are very much enthusiastic about getting things right. The library is at the heart of our learning community, and they drive the initiatives in all these areas.

Parent Question: School Survey

Was a specific group of people that was asked to fill in the questionnaires when there are over 1000 people in school?

Mr McCabe replied – The student experience survey varies from year to year, however roughly 10% students replied this year.

Ms Harrigan added that the Heart group had made good progress and Mr McCabe and the young people involved had carried out an amazing amount of work. Young people are also making an impact on the wider community.

Parent Question: Bereavement

Is there a school plan to support pupils with bereavement?

Ms Harrigan replied – We have staff trained in “Season of Growth” programme, a wait time of 6 months following a bereavement is advised before the programme would commence. Young people would initially work with their guidance teacher or a member of staff they work well with. Ms Harrigan is very open to take direction from the professionals, resources and input for staff training.

9. ELECTION OF BEARERS

Chair – Alastair McIntyre Nominated by Jerry Ferguson, Seconded by Euan Terras

Vice Chair – Jerry Ferguson Nominated by Alastair McIntyre, Seconded by Monique Morrison.

Treasurer – Fiona Baird Nominated by Tom McCrorie, Seconded by Andrea Hammond

Secretary – Jill Wright Nominated by Alastair McIntyre, Seconded by Christine Thompson

10. PLAN FOR YEAR AHEAD/MEETING SCHEDULE 2020-21

The next meeting would be on 8th November 2021

10 January 2022

14 March 2022

9 May 2022

13 June 2022

11. AOCB

Question: School Clubs

When can we resume to normal school life and are we getting back to Clubs, Shows, Choirs and Trips is that the aspiration?

Ms Harrigan replied – Very much the plan when given the green light. Some clubs are already starting up within the school day.

Additional question: Who would give the green light and when will we know?

Ms Harrigan replied: At the end of this month there will be an update, normally this would trigger an update to the Risk Assessment which help inform what we can and cannot do. South Ayrshire Council Education are keen to help.

Alastair added - If there are any questions that should be referred to the Council. Alastair can raise these at the Parent Council Chair meeting on Wednesday.

Ms Harrigan replied: School can contact South Ayrshire Council Covid officers to allow the school to assess the risks so certain things can go ahead, however the bigger events eg: School Show, SAC are looking for all schools to follow at the same time.

Question: Careers

Are there any plans to re-introduce Career Fairs, STEM events, mock interviews at the start of the calendar year to keep the connections with local industry? Could it be a virtual event?

Ms Harrigan replied: We have appointed a member of staff in the relation to DYW. Part of their role is to look at how we move this forward, it might be virtual or we visit employers or employers come in.

Question: Work Experience

Are the plans for work experience to go ahead this year and when?

Ms Harrigan replied: Some employers unfortunately are not willing to take young people on placements. Ms Harrigan will follow this up.

Question: If it doesn't go ahead how would the timetabled slots be filled if pupils are not able to go out and do work experience?

Ms Harrigan replied: Will need to find out what routes to go down, maybe some virtual events. Ms Harrigan will find out about work placements, some young people are involved in peer mentoring and in class support. Ms Harrigan will follow this up and look at the space on the timetable and how this would be filled.

Comment: A lot of businesses in the Prestwick area who don't necessary employ staff but may inspire young people to go into a different route and open other options.

Alastair: Ms Harrigan is trying to find out about Prestwick and the community what small businesses the school could work with.

Alastair thanked everyone for attending online meeting. The next meeting will be on 8 November 2021. The meeting closed at 8.15 pm.