

Prestwick Academy Parent Council

Minutes of 'Zoom' Annual General Meeting – Monday 8th November 2021

In attendance (virtually): Alastair McIntyre (Chair), Elaine Harrigan (Head Teacher), Dr Joanne Frew (Deputy Head Teacher), Jill Wright (Secretary), Fiona Baird (Treasurer), Jerry Ferguson, Councillor Hugh Hunter, Kaj Murchie (School Captaincy team), Zoe Pollock (School Captaincy team) Fiona Heron, Steven Fentie, Jillian McIntyre, Euan Terras, Euan Duncan, Gillian Maxwell, Christine Thomson, Pamela Paterson, Sharon Graham, Harry Boyce, Joan Brockie, Pauline Ferguson, Kathleen Terras.

1. Introduction

Alastair McIntyre welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Parent Council and explained the purpose is to discuss matters of general interest and any specific issues should be raised with the school.

2. Attendance and apologies

Those attending were noted. Apologies were noted from Councillor Toner .

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The draft Minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 13th of September 2021 had been circulated by email in advance. Their acceptance was proposed by Jerry Ferguson and seconded by Fiona Baird.

4. Report from Chair

Alastair reported that he had attended a meeting of the Parent Council Chairs on the 15th of September 2021. This was poorly attended with only 7 Parent Council Chair's represented.

The Covid -19 situation in schools was discussed. This was a fluid situation at the time of the meeting. Relaxation of some of the rules had been hoped for in October 2021 but no changes yet. Schools will continue as they are and the council will continue to monitor.

SQA exam diet for 2022 will go ahead as planned in the Spring although this is under on-going review.

There was no input from the Parent Forum representative at the meeting as they were unable to attend.

The next meeting will be held at the end of November 2021 and Alastair will cascade any updates to the Prestwick Academy Parent Council at the next meeting.

5. Head Teacher's Report

Ms Harrigan began by offering congratulations to Ms Joyce Carey who was recently appointed Deputy Head Teacher at Girvan Academy. It is expected Ms Carey will be with Prestwick Academy until around Christmas time and will return to her substantive post as Principal Teacher of English. Ms Harrigan thanked Ms Carey for her work in Prestwick Academy and also Ms McDonagh who has been acting PT English.

Ms Harrigan welcomed Dr Joanne Frew as Deputy Head Teacher.

In relation to other staffing matters, Ms Harrigan explained a 0.5 teacher of Computing post had been interviewed for and a preferred candidate selected, however, final checks from Edinburgh Council needed to be completed.

The Principal Teacher of English vacancy is currently advertised as well as a maternity post in the department.

It is proving difficult to staff the school due to staff absence and staff isolating. The school have had to be creative in order to support young people with their learning, classes have been combined and staff have delivered lessons from home.

In relation to Covid-19 there have been no changes in the school and mitigations continue. Some activities have returned. These included Erasmus in the Modern Languages department and S4-S6 Study Skills workshop after school on a Thursday. Geography are offering a Thursday lunchtime Movie Club and an Eco Club on a Monday lunchtime. There are a number of activities offered by the PE Department after school, these include Volleyball, Netball and badminton. It is hoped the Football and Netball S1 leagues will return soon. History are offering a History lunchtime club. Music are working under restrictions linked to sing, however, the String Orchestra is running on Wednesday after school. The Woodwind group meet Wednesday at lunchtime. The Digital Champions group for S1- S3 meet on Wednesday lunchtime. A safe space has been set up in the Wellbeing room during both lunchtimes by the guidance department.

Duke of Edinburgh Awards continue and some groups have been out on expedition.

Ms Harrigan hoped these activities would help bring a sense of normality back into school.

This years Prizegiving has been organised by Mr Ross and certificates have been distributed. Photos were taken and this will be collated into a presentation and available for parents and carers to view on the 9th of November. Named prizes were given out by Ms Harrigan and Mr Ross. Congratulations were given to Dux, Lucy Sikes and runner up Dux, Kirsty Williamson.

In relation to the SQA exams, Mrs Miller is the school SQA Co-ordinator and has been working on the prelim timetable, this should be published by the end of the week. National 5 exams and any agreed others will take place from Monday 6th of December until Monday 20th December. Higher and Advanced Highers would take place Monday 10th of January until Monday 24th of January. Exam locations will be classrooms and the hall. The SQA official calendar of exams is now available on their website. Ms Harrigan highlighted supported study is available to pupils with the formal timetable published on the 9th of November. Study Skills is available to S4-S6 on TEAMS to support preparation for assessments. There is also a digital parent/carers event which the school has the ZOOM contact details for. S1-S3 Study Skills support will be looked at.

Ms Harrigan stated there had been no great movement concerning Parents Evenings. These are planned to be face to face starting in January 2022 onwards, 17th January- S4, 1st February- S3, 21st February-S5&6, 15th March-S2, 25th April-S1. Dates are arranged around Option Choices and events and pupil reports. Should circumstances change due to Covid-19 parents evening would be delivered via ParentsBooking.com. Mrs Miller will lead on this regarding setting up of the system, training for staff and information sessions for parents and carers. Other schools in the authority have used the system successfully.

Flu immunisations went well this year with catch up appointments on the 24th and 25th of November.

Ms Harrigan informed the Parent Council Prestwick Academy would be having an Authority Self Improvement Visit from Douglas Hutchison on the 15th of November. This would involve discussing outcomes from last session and celebrating any successes. The visit would take place on-line. Ms Harrigan will attend the Ayr Academy Self Improvement Visit and the Head Teacher of Ayr Academy will attend the Prestwick Academy visit.

Ms Harrigan stated the school Promoting Positive Relationships Policy updates had stalled due to Covid. This will be treated as a priority. There have been some issues with low level behaviours particularly at social times and in corridors. Challenges have been raised in the community with regards to behaviour at lunchtime with some children not responding the way staff would expect.

It is planned the school captains will attend the Remembrance Service at Prestwick Cross on the 14th of November and there will be a two minute silence on the 11th of November.

Ms Harrigan and Mr Ross attended a Community Council meeting and are looking forward to working together with other community groups.

With regards to the planned Ski Trip, it is hoped this will go ahead and the organisers await Scottish and Italian Government guidance.

6. School Captain's Reports

Zoe and Kai presented their reports.

Zoe began by explaining her role relating to Safe and healthy part of HEART of Prestwick. This involves working closely with the ECO club and mental health ambassadors. The ECO club organise litter picks and spent a week of pupil support time ensuring staff and pupils were aware and understood what was happening at COP26.

The mental health ambassadors have set up a safe space where pupils can go if they feel stressed or anxious. There is always a teacher and mental health ambassador present.

From this week the captaincy team is conducting S1 PSE lessons to share information on the Out Right campaign this is linked to the Rights Respecting Gold Award.

Olivia is working closely with Ms Evans planning to achieve the UNISEF Gold Award. Olivia will take on the lead role at the Rights Respecting assembly.

Kai explained he works on the Included and Nurtured part of HEART. His work includes working alongside the History department to present Black History Month in October and raise awareness. November saw Kai and Sacha work together on the antibullying assembly. Kai is currently planning work around the Holocaust in January 2022.

Kai explained each house in Prestwick Academy will work with specific charities and they are finding it difficult to put on events due to Covid restrictions.

Kai explained Sacha works on Achievement and Responsibility. This involves organising house championships and the school championships. Sacha is also organising the school Prom and had responsibility for the Welcome Assembly in August.

Alastair thanked Zoe and Kai for their contributions.

7. Curriculum Pathways/Developing the Young Workforce – Dr Joanne Frew Deputy Head Teacher

Dr Frew delivered a presentation on Prestwick Academy's Curriculum Pathways and Developing the Young Workforce.

Dr Frew introduced herself and explained this was her first day in her new post at Prestwick.

It was explained pupils in S1 and S2 study 17 subjects narrowed down to 6 in S5 and S6 at various levels. Dr Frew stated if a young person's destination is university the classic curriculum works very well. This is not the pathway all young people will take. If a young person is aiming for college, courses studied in S4 do not always offer the opportunity to deepen learning. Dr Frew gave the example of Nat 5 cookery and no level 6 offered at Prestwick Academy.

Dr Frew stated more young people want to remain at school to experience S5 and S6 and schools have to offer quality pathways for all young people. Dr Frew explained it is possible for a young person to leave S6 with 18 qualifications, depending on the young person's career aspirations they exhaust their options by the end of S4. Some leave school with less than 10. NPA and Skills for Work courses do not have a high stakes exam at the end of the course, but on-going assessment with the opportunity to redraft and learn from feedback. Dr Frew highlighted some of these vocational courses currently running at Prestwick e.g. the nail bar and barista bar. These courses are not just about qualifications but allow young people to gain skills and prepare for the workplace.

Objectives for the coming year are to review the options process and ensure pupils are looking at a three-year plan and work with departments looking at what is on offer and consider increasing the NPA offer at level 6. The overall aim is to increase attainment and pathways for all young people.

Alastair thanked Dr Frew for her informative presentation.

8. AOB

A parent asked what the present situation is with regard to additional teaching to catch up if pupils have been absent for 10 days due to self-isolating. Ms Harrigan stated this learning should be supported through the department. The Covid recovery teachers based in the school work to close the gap within literacy and numeracy. The expectation is subject specific teacher would help pupils catch up on anything they have missed out on. The school is considering a Homework club for S1-S3 in relation to this. Alastair highlighted this could be an ongoing problem as we enter the winter months.

A parent suggested school report cards, S3 in this case, were very generic and didn't tell you a great deal about how your child was doing in school. Ms Harrigan explained the local Authority offers two interim reports and one full report. These reports have been in place for a number of years and explain how children are progressing within the level they are working. Ms Harrigan said she would pass on the comments at the next Head Teacher meeting and explained there is a working group tasked with Reporting.

A parent asked if the Promoting Positive Relationships Policy will be published on the school website. Ms Harrigan confirmed it would

9. Close

There being no further business Alastair thanked everyone for attending online. The next meeting will be on Monday 10th January 2022. The meeting closed at 8.10pm.

