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# Peebles High School

## Parent Council

**JANUARY 2020  
E-NEWSLETTER**



**Note from the chair / timeline**

**Learning subgroup**

**Building subgroup**

**Moving forward**

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# Note from the Parent Council Chair

Who could have predicted the enormous difficulties of the last 2 months?

An emotional and anxious time, but also a time for finding strength, coming together, finding solutions and above all looking forward.

Our grateful thanks to Mr Wilson for making himself available to us daily to answer all your enquiries. Thanks too to ALL the staff at the school and SBC for everything they have done for our families in this difficult time, working very long hours indeed.

It won't surprise anybody to hear it has been a challenging few weeks for Parent Council members, and we are just now starting to come up for air.

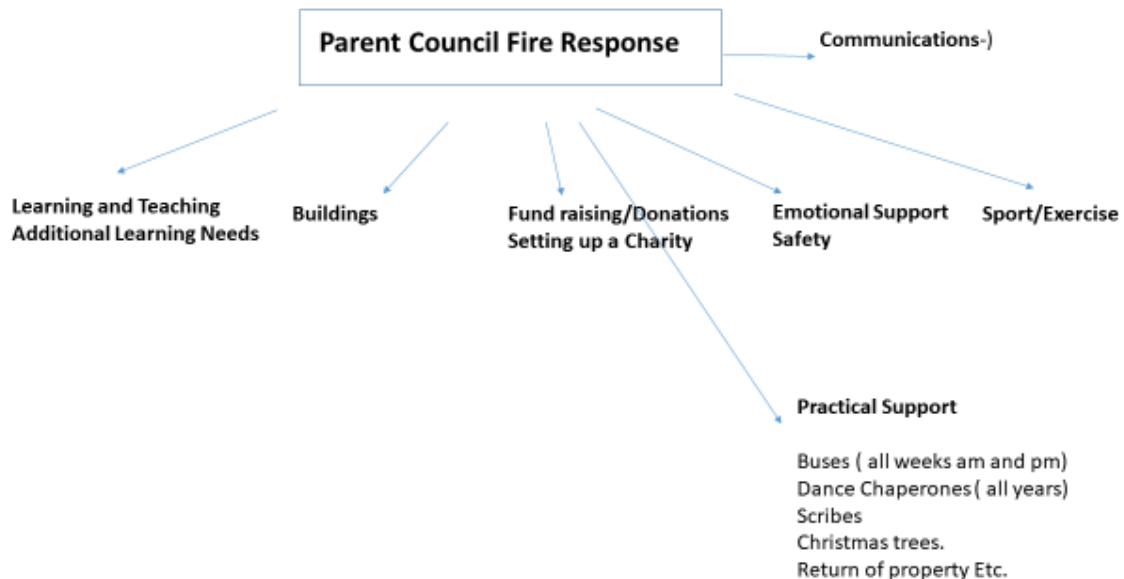
In the exceptional circumstances following the fire, the PC has had very focussed meetings with specific taskforces looking at the most important and urgent issues which were determined by your questions and feedback to us following the fire. This - temporarily - replaced all other interests and means we have very much operated outside our normal (and preferred) model. 4 key subgroups were created:

- **Dialogue with SBC** to highlight the urgency of getting all pupils back on site as soon as possible. We are ecstatic this has happened & and again thank you to the many SBC employees who have worked tirelessly to make this happen
- **Provision of quality learning for our children.** We have worked very closely with the school on this to act on feedback and concerns – more details in the following pages
- **Building subgroup.** It's incredibly early days and we anticipate a mountain of discussions to be had, but we wanted to get the ball rolling by creating a series of high level principles to guide those future conversations and you will find those on page 8
- **Physical and Financial Donations subgroup.** This group had the enormous role of responding immediately to a lack of learning resources required for teachers. We also set up and managed an appeal to bring financial resources to the school including setting ourselves up as a charity to ensure match funding going forward. (A report of this incredible working group can be found within our new website – details further on this document). As well as .of course, managing our normal PHS lottery!

We hope you have found our communication on Facebook (PHS Parents) and Twitter helpful, and that you have felt able to get in touch with questions, ideas and concerns, and feel supported by your Parent Council. This was a huge job, as we had so many enquiries, and thank you to the parents who supported our social media when we were without normal communication channels.

# Note from the PC Chair cont.

We had, additionally, parents looking into emotional wellbeing/ safety and sport. Furthermore, we received many physical requests for help (including the fabulous efforts from parents supporting the huge bus logistics in Peebles). This created a short term organisational structure:



I also want to seize this occasion to thank parents, and the community at large for the many offers of help, and incredible generosity. A particular thanks to all PC members who are all volunteers and have taken on extra duties on top of their already busy lives. Many have stepped up their involvement since the fire. Thank you so much, we would not have achieved as much without you all.

The purpose of this newsletter is to take a moment to reflect on the journey so far, and ensure every parent and carer feels informed and supported, and that essentially you know what the Parent Council know. You might be exceptionally well informed already or have a few gaps and questions - this is a chance to explore those. Please get in touch if there is anything you would like to discuss. Ways to get in touch are detailed on the last page

**SEE YOU AT THE NEXT PARENT COUNCIL MEETING!**

# Timeline

28/11

Fire at PHS. PC relays emergency messages on FB, helps organise food and blankets for the students (alongside many others in the community)

5/12

First exceptional PC meeting. Taking stock of parental questions from social media, comparing notes, agreeing our roles, what is needed most, decide vision and how we are going to move forward

6/12

Chair's first meeting with SBC. Focus on stating the wish of the Parents community for all students to be back in Peebles as soon as possible. Asking for meetings for parents, offering our physical support. First of what we hoped to be a truly collaborative process

11/12

Senior Parents evening at Cardrona. PC in hand to take questions and record the main wishes and concerns from parents. This informed our key issues and where we would put our energies.

12/12

Second exceptional meeting and formation of our subgroups – Learning and Building. Co-opting of Catriona Bhatia on the back of her school building expertise as councillor to lead the Building subgroup

18/12

Chair's second meeting with SBC – with Catriona Bhatia. Focus on progress made so far and next steps

7/01

Third exceptional meeting - and the first with Mr Wilson – to progress the 2 subgroups

24/01

Fourth – and hopefully final - exceptional meeting – to debrief on subgroup progress before they are shared widely with parents. SLT on hand to answer further questions / fill in the blanks

Throughout

Responds to parents' individual queries, ensure SBC messages and updates land, set up a Crowdfunding, coordinated donations

# Learning Subgroup update

## Update on the Learning and teaching Provision since the fire.

The below is a summary of the meeting between Jeremy Lee (Senior Leadership Team) and the leader of the sub group of the Parent Council.

Firstly, the Parent Council would like to express our grateful thanks to all teachers and staff for the incredible work in coping so admirably with the most trying of circumstances following the fire on behalf of our families.

The following notes hopefully gives parents and carers an understanding of the rationale behind the urgent decisions made immediately after the fire and the ongoing changes being made to improve the learning provision.

## Period Immediately after the fire.

1. In this first week, staff acknowledged that a **high priority had to be placed on the S4-6 provision**, arranging timetables, teaching space, staffing, transport etc. This was in light of imminent exams impacting university and college applications etc. and ultimately future career opportunities.
  - The students would be located in Galashiels Academy (extension) and Langlee College with a more structured but reduced timetable (to account for travelling times). It wasn't possible to facilitate practical classes (e.g. science, music, CDT etc.) in this location but students had access to curricular teachers (although not always their usual one).
2. This was followed quickly by the need to **identify sites and relocate 600 S1-S3 school pupils as soon as possible**.
  - As with seniors, all students spent their first week at home after the fire. Using the online homework tool (Show My Homework), teachers quickly generated some "home learning" - allowing communication with all students and allocating work to progress their learning as much as possible.
  - There is a recognition from staff that this first week was difficult for both parents and staff as marking was not able to happen at the usual pace and level that staff had hoped they would achieve under normal circumstances. (eg 120 essays landed in one teacher's inbox in 5 days for example.)
  - Students were located in 7 sites throughout Peebles, remaining in their locations all day, as teachers moved around the town by car during the day.

# Learning Subgroup update cont.

- For class locations, strong consideration was given to wellbeing - especially support networks from friendship groups. So it was agreed that all S1 students would stay together (at the Drill Hall or Burgh) as they were the least well placed for friendship continuation. In contrast, it was felt that the S3 were most able to cope with the distribution around the town.

## The period from the fire up to Christmas Break.

Managing the timetable given the locations and reduced staffing (due to staff being in Galashiels) was challenging during this time.

- S1-3 were provided with a varied timetable covering English, Maths, Science and PE and then a variety of other subjects to maintain their core provision (as these were seen as the most important subjects to continue) in the immediate timetable.

## The period of Study Leave (from January 13<sup>th</sup>)

This created an opportunity to re set the timetable as seniors were not receiving lessons.

	Eng and RMPS	Maths	Science	Social	Mod Lang	Exp Arts	HLS	Bus and ICT	Tech	PSE
1C1+1C2	3	3	3	3	1	2	2+1	1	1	
1C3+1D3	3	3	3	3	1	2	2+1	1	1	
1D1+1D2	3	3	3	3	1	2	2+1	1	1	
1M2+1M3	3	3	3	3	1	2	2+1	1	1	
2C1+2C2	1+3	3	3	3	1	2	2	1	1	
2C3+2D3	1+3	3	3	3	1	2	2	1	1	
2D1+2D2	1+3	3	3	3	1	2	2	1	1	
2M1 +3M3	1+3	3	3	3	1	2	2	1	1	
2M2+2M3	1+3	3	3	3	1	2	2	1	1	
3C1+3C2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2		1	1
3D1+3C3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2		1	1
3D2+3D3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2		1	1
3M1+3M2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2		1	1
					1			1		

So S1-3 were allocated the following number of periods each week: 3 English, 3 Maths, 3 Science, 3 Social subjects, 1 Modern languages, 1 hospitality/ woodwork and then 2 periods as determined by staffing availability.

# Learning Subgroup update cont.

## Week Commencing Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January

Another alteration was made to improve the timetable. S3 now have a period of ICT each week as part of these last 2 periods. Mr Lee's & Noon's grid plan for these lessons (and considering the distribution of staff) has meant that the provision is consistent across all teaching sites.

Bus trips designed to enhance learning experiences started w/c 20<sup>th</sup> January. We have had many offers for these but the number of students involved has meant that some have been more suitable than others.

## What impact does this difficult situation have on the learning of S1-S3?

Whilst far from ideal, there is optimism. The National Framework for S1-3 and the fact that learning experiences and outcomes in these years are *not* directed by SQA which places the students in a different situation compared to seniors.

Teachers also have the flexibility in their learning plans to alter lessons content to ensure that a variety of skills are gained in preparation for S4.

This means that, once on site again, the teachers can change their planning as appropriate. This might mean they could miss a particular topic out this session without detriment e.g. one part of geography for example knowing that is not part of the S4 prescribed content for the SQA exam.

The exception to this is Maths and English. However, staff feel that, with the extra number of periods they have each week at PHS compared to other schools in Scotland, they will be able to step up to the challenge of completing the requirements for each lower school year group.

## What happens when we move to the new timetable in June?

**All year groups will be ready and able to start their new year in June** as is normally the case.

Please note – the school are very keen to reassure parents that **S3 are not behind in their learning** as they have not yet started their National 4/5 pathway.

## Preparing for and returning to the main site in February.

From Monday 20<sup>th</sup> staff have had another timetable.

This includes teaching and non-teaching time. In some non-teaching time, teachers are in their allocated classrooms on the main site, preparing the classrooms for returning pupils two weeks later.

# Learning Subgroup update cont.

This will help to ease the transition back onto site but there may be a few gaps in resources. Hopefully these are going to be minimal. For example, the science technicians have been in to get fridges and freezers ready for the delivery of items to go into them for Science class work e.g. hearts/lungs etc. This process will be replicated across the school from Monday. Canteen staff will also be on site preparing for the return of pupils and their lunchtime needs.

## Ongoing Homework

**Homework will be re-established towards the end of week 1 back on site**, as teachers will need a few days to get classes back in, settled, ready to learn again etc.

Homework has been identified as something that needs to be picked up on and set as targeted work for the S3 to increase study skills in anticipation of S4 in June and with general homework, as before the fire, for S1-2.

## Attendance

While this might be of concern to parents, **the attendance levels have been very good**. The final week before Christmas dropped off as is often the case but at the beginning of term, this has not continued to be the case. It has not been formally assessed and won't be in the foreseeable future, but will be looked at when we are back on site and there is time to do so.

## SQA.

Meetings take place weekly between Mr Fagan and the SQA to explore the circumstances and exceptions, so that our children are not unfairly penalised in their exam achievements as a result of the fire.

## Additional Needs information.

A plan for Additional Needs students is being developed separately and will be communicated in the first week back on site.

## Easter Revision School

The ambition is to have revision classes for seniors over the 2 Easter weeks; plans for this will be looked into over the next few weeks.



# Building Subgroup update

## SHORT TERM

Our **top priority** is to ensure all pupils are able to return to the Peebles High School Site in the shortest possible timescale so that their educational needs can be fully met, and their health and well-being are supported.

We were re-assured by the works underway by SBC to make this happen and the following actions have been taken with the stated aim that all pupils (except complex needs pupils) will return to the PHS site week commencing 3<sup>rd</sup> February.

1. Work is continuing to clear up and make safe the “green” area school buildings. A detailed analysis has been made of how this area can be maximised through timetabling so that all pupils can return to site in the shortest possible timescale.
2. New accesses are being put in from Craigerne Lane and to the sports facilities to facilitate safe access.
3. Portacabins and Toilet units which are required to accommodate all pupils returning to the site are now in situ. These comprise of 3 double classroom units and 7 toilet units.

→ The Property Sub-group will continue to monitor the progress of the temporary arrangements both before and after the pupils return to the site. In particular we want to ensure there is sufficient support for pupils with Additional Needs, quiet study space and social spaces for Senior students, and access to PE, Sports and Art.

## LONG TERM

With a view to the future of Peebles High School, the Council agreed at its meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> December to allocate £100,000 for a feasibility study, to assess options available, and a team of officers are being assembled, with an experienced project manager taking the lead.

Following the timeline for the feasibility study, a formal bid for funding will be made to the Scottish Government in June. As part of the feasibility study, there will be consultations with Parents (including Parents with Primary school aged children), pupils, teachers and the wider Tweeddale Community, including local Community Councils and elected SBC Councillors.

The property sub-group would also propose to have regular meetings with SBC during the feasibility study and the subsequent build.

# Building Subgroup update

The property sub-group have looked at the Scottish Future Trust (SFT) model which **all** new schools are based on, as well as a recent review into this model.

- We reflected on some of the issues which had arisen during the consultation 2 years ago, as well as the reality of the situation that the school is now in.
- We met with senior officials from SBC including the Chief Executive and Director of Property and Assets and fed back on those meetings to the wider sub-group.
- We are arranging to visit some recently completed High Schools in the Borders, West Lothian, Perthshire and East Lothian to identify best practice as well as “things to avoid!”

We feel it would be helpful to **set out a vision which is ambitious but realistic** and offers enough flexibility for creativity whilst being mindful of the urgency to find a permanent solution.

Moving forward, we wish to work with SBC and other stakeholders with shared **Values** of:

- Honesty
- Transparency
- Open communications
- Partnership working with mutual respect

# Building Subgroup update cont.

In that spirit we are recommending that that the Parent body adopt the following **Vision** principles, so that we can work constructively in partnership with SBC and other stakeholders to deliver the best possible new Peebles High School for current and future generations:

## PEEBLES HIGH SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL VALUES AND VISION FOR A NEW PEEBLES HIGH SCHOOL

1. The replacement/new building should be **no less than would have been** provided for Peebles High in the Council's school building strategy.
2. **The interests of the current cohort of 1300 pupils**, who will now remain on the constrained site and adjacent to building works for a significant part of their education, **must be protected** and continuously monitored to ensure that they receive the learning and social experience that will support them to achieve their full potential.
3. [ For speed and because portacabins cannot be more than a temporary option for the current pupils], **only the existing site** should be considered and there should be **a tandem build of a New School** which may include the Millennium Wing and Sports centre. The new school and the wider school site should also give scope for additional community facilities and any specific needs for Peebles High e.g. links with Further & Higher Education providers, learning support facilities and STEAM specific opportunities.( ie STEM plus Art)
4. **Full SFT model Sports Facilities must be included** in the new build and the early purchase of additional land should be made to accommodate this if necessary.
5. It should **not be an "incremental" build** except for improved pitches as access to these has been and will be further compromised during the re-build process.
6. The **future projected increase in the school roll MUST be factored in** to the new build. This should include figures from the forthcoming Local Development Plan 2021-2026.

# Moving Forward

## INTRODUCING OUR BRAND NEW WEBSITE

Fresh start, Fresh website!!

- PC members are aware that not every parent and carer is on social media, so we thought now would be a good time to launch a new website specifically dedicated to PHS Parents and Carers, alongside our Social Media accounts.
- So far, it contains updates and news around the fire, but also some learning resources and a feed from Facebook. We expect it will grow further in the coming weeks
- Take a moment to visit and let us know what you think / what else you would like to see!
- Thank you very much to Chris Knight for taking this on!

[phsparents.org.uk/](https://phsparents.org.uk/)

## FOR YOUR DIARIES

- We are truly DESPERATE to get back to normal (whatever that might mean) and hold meetings that are fully open to the Parent and Carer Community.
- We have confidence this will be the case in March as we gain back access to the New Sports Hall (as per the date in the school calendar - 11th)
- We are also trying to find a suitable extra date in February. With many other parents meetings and events in the pipeline, this might not be possible - watch out for news on Facebook, Twitter and our new website.

## STAY IN TOUCH

### CONNECT WITH US



PHS Parents



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[phsparents.org.uk](https://phsparents.org.uk)



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