**PEEBLES HIGH SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL**



**Parent Council Meeting**

**19 November 2020**

**Teams Meeting**

**Attendees**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Glenda Barton, Chair, Parent Council (PC) | 47 parents attended |
| Campbell Wilson, Head Teacher (CW)  Jeremy Lee (Depute Head)  Paul Fagan (Depute Head) |  |
|  |  |

**Minutes**

**Welcome, Apologies, Minutes & Lottery post confirmation Glenda Barton, Chair**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and reiterated that the meeting is a ‘safe space’ and should not be recorded by any attendees.

Apologies recorded: Muriel Foreman, Elodie Sellar. The previous meeting minutes were approved.

Congratulations were offered to Mr Wilson has been appointed Vice Chair of School Leaders Scotland. This is a new appointment over and above the Head position at PHS!

Rachel Beatton will become Lottery post holder – seconded by Vanessa Rice.

**Plea for parents to follow us** on Twitter and Facebook – there is a wealth of info posted regularly e.g., free tuition from Primary to Advanced Higher – also the school and department Twitter accounts

@PHSparents @PeeblesHigh

In addition, the PHS parents’ website ([phsparents.org.uk](https://phsparents.org.uk/)) shows a live stream from social media.

A survey has gone out on Groupcall to all parents to help shape the new Learning & Teaching Framework. **Please complete the survey and have your say**.

The Chair reminded all attendees of the **Parent Council Values** and requested that all debate be healthy and on topic, and not personal, with the values at heart.

We are a great school community – when we think to a year ago with the fire, and how far we’ve come. We should focus on what we have to be thankful for in spite of everything we are going through just now.

**Open Forum. Q & A C Wilson / All**

**Questions raised:**

**S4 Maths: in a recent test the children did not do as well as expected, I’m worried about impact on predicted grades. Will there be N5 prelims?**

CW: Mr Noon is taking forward these concerns with Mrs Sheridan – Mr Noon will communicate back to parents on this.

**What work is being done to address wellbeing given all the challenges of last year?**

CW: For over a year now we have had a Quarriers counsellor, for any child with mental health concerns. There is a backlog – pastoral staff are the first level of support for mental health. If you’re concerned about this, please contact your pastoral teacher. Mrs Jackson has been hosting assemblies on how people are doing – you can view these assembly presentations by going to the Year Group Team in MS Teams on the iPads.

**Can the minutes be emailed out please if you can’t access the website?**

Yes, Parent Council will do that. – **Action CB**.

**Are there plans to stream S1 maths in New Year? Will this require a test and will warning be given?**

CW: Yes, plan to do this in January . There may be Covid considerations, but we’ll wait and see. They do usually use an assessment to help them to stream and I’ll ask Mrs Sheridan to communicate this in good time. This was delayed due to lack of data due to disruptions in P7.

**What has been the parental pupil response to maintain the current curriculum?**

CW: I’ve received a fulsome communication from the parents who worked on the working group and that will require some thought as I just received this afternoon (see update later in these minutes) There’s been very little communication from parents – there were some negative responses.

The curriculum review survey results were presented at the last PC meeting – and are on the website [here](https://phsparents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Appendix-3-PHS-Curriculum-Review-Survey-PC-meeting.pdf).

**Supporting your child in the Senior Phase Jeremy Lee**

Mr Lee presented slides on [Supporting your young person in the senior phase](https://phsparents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Appendix-1-Supporting-your-young-person-in-the-senior-phase.pdf).

Normally parents would be invited into school to move around the subjects teachers and find out what supports you can put in place at home, what the needs are for assessment throughout the year, etc. Clearly that can’t happen this year. Instead, we are requesting PC assistance in scheduling a meeting on 10 Dec 6.30 – 7.30 for parents of Senior phase students.

**Action: PC to work with Mr Lee to arrange meeting**

**Questions raised:**

Parents will be invited to submit questions in advance of the meeting.

**Will this involve Dr Carvalho’s work on L&T Framework?**

It’s too early but it will cover how to revise, short/long term memory, study in school leading up to assessments

**Could short recordings of tips for study skills be available?**

Written advice will be available on Parent Zone on the school website and will be updated after 10 Dec.

**Parents Evenings Paul Fagan**

Mr Fagan presented slides on [Parental & Carer Communication 2020 – 2021 Update](https://phsparents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Appendix-2-Parents-Evening-Update-20-21-PC-19.11.20-For-Sharing.pdf)

We appreciate that communication has been less than normal due to the “two evil twins” of the fire and Covid e.g., S3 parents evening and comprehensive final report. We are keen to try and facilitate face to face - we can’t achieve that short term, but we have not lost hope.

Parents evenings are subject to national negotiations and agreements with teachers and PHS/Mr Wilson is not allowed to ‘just have’ these face to face.

There was a video pilot carried out and also a telephone test, neither of these methods were successful. The PHS infrastructure doesn’t allow more than 20 phone calls at one time. Therefore – we’ve increased the number of reports and the detail of these reports.

**Questions raised:**

**Re the recent report, S3 expected more details from this report given that that is the only report they’ve had since S1 because of the fire.**

PF: to address this the full report tends to come later in the year but we’ve made that come earlier. The number and detail of reports has been increased for all years groups. In addition to the tracking and monitoring reports all year groups will receive two full reports with comments on progress and next steps in learning for every young person. (Estimated dates were presented at the meeting but will be confirmed to parents and carers).

**How easy is it to contact teachers directly to ask questions or is there a different channel?**

PF: If you want to contact a subject teacher then the route is through your child’s pastoral teacher.

**Parent of S3: We haven’t heard anything in two years. Private schools are having online parents’ evenings**

PF: It’s not quite 2 years. There was a report in Sept 2019. Unfortunately, we don’t have the infrastructure to support online parents’ evenings, we wish we did but we don’t. We have looked at what we have, e.g., telephone pilot – we can’t do that . Video was trialled but the bandwidth can’t support it. The timing of parents’ evenings is a frustration, you need it be slick and go quickly. Our IT allows us to come together but what it doesn’t allow is short quick meetings. 100+ teachers talking to 200+ parents – it simply doesn’t allow for that. Newer build or private schools have internet linked phones – we don’t have the IT to support that. It certainly isn’t for the desire/want to be able to do it. But unless there is a relaxation of Covid measures we have to use reporting.

**Numerous young people had the same comments from the same teacher and comments were very limited.**

PF: We do have a quality assurance process to mitigate against that – all reports go to the Principal Teacher before they go out. I’m aware teachers make use of “comment banks”. A teacher could be teaching 8 classes of 30 – a comment bank is appropriate and commonplace – it allows you to communicate the message. It’s not ‘copy & paste’ though.

Please get in touch with your young person’s pastoral teacher if you have any concerns about this in first instance.

**It’s a challenge getting through to pastoral – what is the backup, the office?**

PF: yes, contact the school office

**S6 didn’t get predicted grades in her first report, why is that?**

PF: Please raise these concerns with pastoral and we will address them. You should have received predicted grades on that report.

**It takes a long time to hear back from pastoral . What is the expected turnaround time for a response?**

PF: We would ask parents to be understanding of the pressures staff are under. If you consider the turnaround time to be unreasonable direct this to Senior Management. Parents should use their own judgement and if they are not receiving the support, they feel they ought to please speak to Senior Management.

**Regarding comments - are the teachers allocated the same amount of time to do these reports as they would for parents’ night?**

PF: Yes, the reports which have been completed were using time that was allocated for parents’ evenings (it was only this month we discovered we couldn’t do parents evenings). I’m asking for a little bit of faith in what’s going to be coming. You will be receiving a detailed report: how is my young person attaining in class and how can they get better and you are going to get this not once, but twice. And this is new in response to the situation, we haven’t done this in recent years.

**Why can’t teachers do the calls over several evenings?**

PF: We have 20 lines in the school. In S4/5/6 parents’ evenings = 650 parental groups . The amount of time that would take is large e.g.: A 5 min call takes longer than 5 minutes and is not the same as a F2F conversation. We had originally allocated 10 mins for each appointment to make it manageable. This doubled the amount of time needed. To manage this with 20 lines is not a practical solution. This solution we have is clearly not perfect, but we can deliver it. We tried a pilot it didn’t work unfortunately, and it hasn’t worked in other large Borders schools.

**Going through pastoral creates a delay in getting to subject teachers as pastoral are so busy**

PF: That is the practice. To do it differently would require a policy change of the school.

**How can parents support the school to get that investment in IT infrastructure for the school? Is this because of the rebuild it can’t happen?**

PF: There is no plan to upgrade our telephony system any time soon. There is a plan to refresh the IT system – I don’t know the date. If all the desktops had cameras/mic/soundcards/internet we could have gone ahead.

**Could teachers use mobiles?**

PF: The school owns 2 mobiles. We certainly can’t as an employer expect teachers to use their own mobile phones. There are several reasons why that’s not appropriate.

**Some schools are using School Cloud on iPad?**

PF: iPad solutions were trialled and there was a problem with an app. Bandwidth of the school doesn’t support that. Wi-Fi based solutions are not solutions at the moment.

**Could teachers use a voice recording rather than typed comments?**

PF: it’s an interesting idea. The reporting process is quite established. I like the idea of hearing a teacher’s voice. Where is the quality assurance? Maybe that is possible, thank you for the comment. We will continue to how we look at how this will work for the school.

Action: PF to look at voice recordings idea, and SchoolCloud.

**Please send any other ideas to Parent Council** [**mailto:phspc@outlook.com**](mailto:phspc@outlook.com)

**Please go to the SQA website for more info re exam diet**

**Aspirations to University Ruth Doherty**

Alexander Corbishley, Ruth Doherty and Mairi Stark presented their slides on the aims of the group and progress to date and excellent progress made to date. [Please view the slides here.](https://phsparents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Appendix-3-uni_aspirations_workinggroup.pdf)

**We need more parent advisors, community & staff from broader backgrounds please, e.g., dentistry. Please get in touch** [**phspc@outlook.com**](mailto:phspc@outlook.com) **and we’ll pass on.**

**Questions raised:**

**How can we get more info?** Consult UCAS.com

**A list of careers was created by parents who led the organisation of the Career Events over the last few years, these were all locals/parents, and the group could approach them.**

**http://peebleshighschool.org.uk/pupil-zone/career-index/**

LinkedIn has a lot of info on interview skills, presentation skills etc

**ACTION: liaise with school for more help from teachers with this please – action working group**

**Eco- group update Susan Jarvis**

Slides [appendix 4](https://phsparents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Appendix-4-PHS-PC-Eco-group-update.pdf)

This Eco-group supports the school eco-committee led by Rhona Watterson.

Because of Covid, plastic bottles had to be reintroduced. SBC and eco-group well aligned in removing these – great news this will be gone again by 1st December!

If you’re interested in helping please get in touch, phspc@outlook.com

**Questions raised:**

Does the crisp packet recycling accept the big bags or just the wee ones?

**Action – SJ to check exactly what this recycling accepts**

**Charity update / fundraising Eric Nightingale**

[Slides appendix 5](https://phsparents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Appendix-5-Friends-of-PHS-Charity-Update.pdf)

A great deal or work has gone into the Charity setup and this was presented. Nb The funds in the charity are separate currently to the main fundraising account, which is considerably larger, in time hopefully most of our fundraising will go into the charity directly.

**Appeal to all parents to speak up if you can offer employee matching schemes**. Please watch out for announcements/request from the charity on social media etc.

Are there any local benefactors who may be willing to act as partners in the rebuild project?

**Head Teacher update and Q &A Campbell Wilson**

Tremendous sense of how hard our staff are working at the moment – I’d like to thank them – and thank parents for their work with the university aspirations – and the great success with charity status and fundraising – the eco group parents ensuring we’re plastic free again. I’m very grateful to everyone for this hard work.

**Covid:**

There was another case after the October break. Self-isolation is now over, all young people and staff are back and no further cases. We are being vigilant to keep it that way and we continue to work hard to keep the school Covid-free

**Staffing:**

New appointments:

James McMordie was successful at interview this week and is appointed to the post of permanent teacher of Modern Studies and politics. Mr McMordie has been with us on temporary contracts for the last two years and is leading on Pupil Voice, Pupil Parliament and United Nations School Project. He is keen to get involved with the PC in ‘participatory budgeting’ – perhaps a way of bringing student voice to deciding how to spend monies raised by PC?

Bethany Ellis joins as a teacher of Additional Needs on Monday 30th November after competitive interview to Jacqui Allan’s maternity leave cover

Gavin Harkness has joined as a maternity cover in the Chemistry department

**Adverts:**

Advert to cover Katie Walling’s maternity, PEF ( Pupil Equity Funding) responsibilities closes on Sunday.

Other than a couple of pending departures from our Pastoral Team, staffing is very settled at present. Long may it continue.

**School Improvement:**

Our Inset days last week were very useful in helping us to progress the SIP priorities

**Learning and Teaching:**

Since we last met, we have made progress in the following ways:

• A parent survey has been co-created between school and Parent Council. This went out to all parents on Wednesday. There have been 116 responses already. Justin has reported that there has been a positive engagement with the survey and the quality of the responses has been very good. He would also like to thank you again for your contributions.

• A pupil survey has been co-created between school and young people. This survey also went out to young people yesterday on the Microsoft Teams year group page. **Please encourage your children to complete the survey.** The voice of young people will absolutely be included in the framework ( which was heard during the curriculum decision!!).

• All staff engaged in quality in-service day on Friday. The day was about conveying the vision for L&T. It was also about professional learning through reading articles and research papers, watching video clips and engaging in professional dialogue in faculty teams. The outcome was quantitative feedback from all staff in the form of a survey and qualitative feedback in the form of capturing the rich discussions about what could and should feature in the 3 sections of the framework. Every teacher made a pledge as to what they plan to improve on over the coming months.

• The after-school session on the 26th will be used to continue the work on gathering views on the Peebles High School Features of Highly Effective Practice in Learning and Teaching Framework.

• The next steps for Justin and Kirstie is an analysis of the data, a review of the research evidence, a reflection on local and national policy, a review of practice to inform the first draft of the Peebles High School Features of Highly Effective Practice in Learning and Teaching Framework.

• The Parent Council has kindly offered £500 to support the creation of a professional reading library for staff and potentially the deluxe Iris package to support staff with lesson observations and feedback.

• Our teachers have been working very hard to ensure that young people continued to receive the best education possible through the fire and during lockdown. We are pleased that this has been recognised by our parents and the percentage of parents that are “satisfied with the quality of teaching” in Peebles High School rose from 58%, 50% respectively over the previous 2 years to 84% this year.

**Learning Lockdown Gap:**

Evening classes for S2/3 classes as deemed suitable by staff.

**Nurture:**

All staff were trained in the SBC Nurture training ( supporting young people) which was very high quality.

**Curriculum structure decision:**

Apologies: it was not my intention to come across as arrogant. I accept that there are several people who don’t share my decision, but it was made in good faith.

• There is a tension between the argument of social justice v performance in Highers

(I.e., winners and losers in this debate. )

• Achieving 5 Highers since CfE has risen from 17% to 40% in less than a decade.

• Reality is that around 70% of our young people go to University and we need to respond to their voice in our curriculum structure.

• If there are more than 6 N5s this comes at a cost of restricting choice.

( For information for parents who are unaware of this the PC write. ‘The format in columns means choice is made in categories ( columns) so e.g., choose from a Social Subject, then a Science, then an Expressive Art etc and can impact students getting the subjects they want. We have over 90% free choice now.

• When courses are taken over 1 year in 4th, 5th or 6th year it makes possible students in 5th and 6th years to do additional N5s and in 6th years they have the option of additional N5 ( they cannot do this if N5s are studied over 2 years) or Highers should they change career direction and need alternative qualifications.”

• Kind offer from the PC to help collate fuller responses to outstanding questions

• Scottish Government review of curriculum is pending so we need to await this report though this month the PISA report suggests Scottish education is performing well and is particularly positive about young people in Scotland.

**Questions raised:**

**If pupils could do more than 6 subjects at Nat 5, how long would it take from publishing a new policy to implementation in your experience?**

CW: up to 3 years, it couldn’t be instant.

**What about high achieving pupils who could take more N5s, why couldn’t they do more?**

CW: we are blessed with so many and for some it may be the right thing. This year there are 7 or 8 S4’s who are entered for 8 x N5s (some do Nat5 Maths and Applications of Maths, plus some outwith the structure in their own time) we allow them to do that and that hasn’t changed.

**What input has SBC made to the Scottish Govt review, because we want to have a parent voice in this?**

GB reported on a meeting with PC Chairs from across the region with Director of education of SBC present at this. They report they contributed to this review with HTs in the Borders area and whilst supporting traditional curriculum there is a need in the state sector here to also be looking at alternative pathways for learners who the traditional model may not serve. The Borders Guarantee is 5 qualifications on leaving school .

SJ: The parental review has been sent to the National Parent Forum and results of survey to Connect. Trying to make sure that the survey results are contributing to the national review, not just within PHS.

The meeting closed just after 9pm

**Next meeting Wednesday 16th December**

**Appendix 6 (not presented at meeting) – External Fundraising/Grants update**

At the start of November we submitted a funding application to the Community Climate Asset Fund for a total of £2407 to enhance and develop the school garden, for use by the school and local community. The aim is to promote education around climate change as well as producing plants to reduce greenhouse emissions. The outcome of the application will be known in December.  
Going forward, we will continue to search for relevant external funding opportunities and welcome ideas on areas to target for funding. These applications form a vital part of the ability to maximise funds available for school projects through our status as a charity.