**PEEBLES HIGH SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL**



**Parent Council Meeting**

**27 October 2020**

**Teams Meeting**

**Attendees**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Glenda Barton, Chair, Parent Council (PC) | c. 50 parents attended |
| Campbell Wilson, Head Teacher (CW)  Paul Fagan, Deputy Head Teacher (PF)  Justin Noon  Dr Kirstie Carvalho  Catriona Bhatia (SBC liaison) |  |
|  |  |

**Minutes**

**S4-S6 Recent SQA changes to exams and courses Mr. Fagan**

Paul Fagan presented slides on the recent changes – please see [**Appendix 1**](https://phsparents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Appendix-1-SQA-Update-20-21-Parent-Council-27.10.20.pdf).

**Questions raised:**

**Will S4 have prelims of any sort to give them a flavour of exams?**

We are looking at assessments in a ‘large hall’ exam type scenario to give that experience. We have a rule of 50 in halls, but we are intending that exams are sat in the usual style come April/May.

Prelims 2021/22 would be conducted this way.

**What happens to students who are self-isolating at exam time?**

That will be met on a case-by-case basis. In the past if someone can’t make an exam the exceptional circumstance process kicks in and supporting evidence is pulled together. I assume it would be a similar process.

**If maths has less options taught at Higher, will that not leave students behind at Adv H, ditto for practicals in Science? Building blocks to learning**

Yes, but we’ll make sure those pivotal skills are taught. The teachers are aware of which skills these are, and they will find ways of developing those skills.

**This change means there is a greater weighting on the one-off day when young people sit the final exam – in the past the weighting for assignments allowed in-school course work to be part of the final grade – how does this change help students?**

Continual assessment works better for some students and exams work better for others. They will not be at a disadvantage with this changed system.

**How will we know that all schools meet the same standards?**

We are expecting the SQA will produce a national document for the verification process.

**Surely this flexibility will need to continue into the following year to account for this and not put pupils at a disadvantage?**

We just don’t know at the moment what 2021/2022 will be like.

**What happens with study leave if a young person is doing a mix of Nat5 and Highers?**

They will get study leave.

**Is there still stronger ongoing assessment for S5/Highers in case exams don’t go ahead? If so, are there details of what such ongoing assessment looks like?**

Yes. Each dept has already started to look at what key assessments will be. Further detail from teachers will be coming based on assessments in class. Teachers now have more time to do that in each subject.

**If we go from Tier 2 to 3, or 4 - blended learning to remote learning, what will happen to assessments?**

We have met those challenges of having less learning time in the past so we can do it again.

**While it’s wonderful they are trying to build capacity by taking away assignments/exams etc. but teachers are also going to try and teach these skills - is that not back to the original problem of not enough time to cover the course?**

No, previously the courses were tight for time, but taking away significant components has created space. Teachers are confident they can deliver high attainment. We can achieve both.

The Chair thanked Mr Fagan for this update and answering parent’s questions.

**Main Meeting**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Head Prefects Abbie Sorrell and Euan Macrae . They and all members of the Head Team, Senior student Council and prefects were congratulated on their appointments. Students are very welcome to join any of the PC meetings with anything they want to bring to our attention from the student body.

The Chair thanked the clerk and reminded everyone how these meetings are run, and that actions are logged on a tracker. The tracker and minutes are posted on the Parent Council website: [www.phsparents.org.uk](http://www.phsparents.org.uk). The Chair thanked Vanessa Rice for coordinating these meetings.

NB Please remember these meetings are a safe place to speak freely and not to be recorded without permission please.

The Chair showed the following slide regarding representation of parents at Parent Council meetings:



Postcodes were asked for from parents during registration to understand how our audience is representative of all demographics within our school population . The slide clearly shows that we are not representing the whole parent body. We have a responsibility to find ways to engage with all parents and our working groups are asked to look for ways to increase engagement at all levels. We would ask all parents to please encourage friends to attend PC meetings.

E-bulletin – The chair reported a tremendous amount of work has been ongoing in the working groups and our plan is to report on this in our next newsletter to the Parent Forum. Our thanks to all who have got involved and some groups will be reporting on this

The Chair congratulated Susan Jarvis & Sarah Duncan who have been appointed Co-Vice Chairs of the Parent Council.

The previous meeting minutes were approved.

**Open Forum All**

**Regarding the new policy on being outside at lunchtime – pupils are to eat outside whatever the weather. Some are eating in the toilets of the portacabins, this is unacceptable. It’s Scotland, in winter, even with Covid, the children are cold and wet and going into classes like that. Can we review this policy please?**

Mr. Wilson: it’s true that we are being encouraged by Government and the Local Authority for young people to be outside wherever possible. On Monday there was a downpour and we allowed them to stay in at interval, we do have that provision to make decisions on any given day depending on the weather, I’m equally concerned to hear about eating in the portacabins, clearly, we don’t want that. Regarding being wet & cold in class – I sent out communication regarding relaxing the uniform policy. We do have some flexibility around this and we will use that flexibility going forward.

**Issue of parents nights – there is confusion -there isn’t a S1 parents night?**

It has been agreed that parents’ evenings **will go ahead,** and they will be telephone based. (Video meetings were piloted but there were too many problems). We’ll get dates to you as soon as we can. Every year group will have a parents evening, by telephone. S3 will get a written report on Tuesday.

**Buildings Group Update Sarah Duncan & Guest Catriona Bhatia (SBC liaison)**

Sarah Duncan presented the following update :

Meeting with Councillors

Members of the subgroup met with the Leader of the Council, Executive Member for finance and Executive Member for Education to discuss the political and financial commitment to the rebuild project and share the Parent Council vision for the school.

Cllr Haslam invited Director of Education Lesley Munro and Director of Assets John Curry to join us therefore PHS Liaison Officer Catriona Bhatia also attended.

The meeting resulted in a renewed financial commitment of at least £30m being made and it was also confirmed that in the region of £2m had been spent from this allocation to date.

We were reassured that additional work could be carried out to ensure the best provision possible for current pupils, however we accepted that it was not value for money to undertake significant work on a building with a shelf life of less than 5 years.

We were advised that the timeline for the project expected a planning phase up to 2022 and build phase 2022-2025. We asked for clarity around the timeline and were advised that the new building is expected to complete Summer 2024 and current buildings being retained to be refurbished by Summer 2025.

We had previously understood the expected duration to be 3-4yrs therefore asked if delays were due to the pandemic. We were advised that it was a very complex project due to various site constraints and a desire to minimise disruption to current pupils as much as possible.

We did not suggest we were content with the revised timeline; in fact, we challenged the information provided and were informed that it had not changed.

Due to the extended attendance we also discussed the current accommodation. Our concerns about enhanced provision not being back on site, reduced facilities for other departments and overall concerns that capacity was tight were noted. We were advised that the school management had no concerns around the capacity and were confident about being able to deliver a full timetable in the medium term.

SBC Capital Plan

In early October, SBC approved plans to proceed with projects to replace secondary provision at Peebles, Gala and Hawick under their revised capital plan. The proposal was agreed and an application for funding has been submitted to Scottish Government.

These plans detail the Peebles project as requiring total funding of £40m. This additional financial commitment is very welcome news and feels more realistic.

Meeting with School Rebuild Lead

A meeting was then held with John Butcher, who is leading the School Build Programme across SBC, and Catriona Bhatia.

Options for improving the enhanced provision offer are being considered, however any repurposing of space on site would require significant investment.

There is a commitment to provide further improvements to the art department with potential to create an additional practical space and additional storage.

Work is also underway to improve outdoor spaces. This is supported by a successful funding application by a member of the group, Tristan Compton, with support from staff and pupils for £20k from an Covid Outdoor Provision fund. Potential plans include an outdoor classroom, additional sheltered seating areas and work in the atrium garden.

Next Steps

Project Team (including architects) to attend the January Parent Council meeting to share initial design concept and plans for formal consultation process.

See [**Appendix 2**](https://phsparents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Appendix-2-PHS-Parent-Council-Vision-of-the-Schools-Future-October-2020.pdf) for the Updated Vision Document

**Questions raised:**

**What is the timeline for the outdoor shelter?**

No specific date but it is progressing as quickly as possible and we’ll update when we do have dates.

**Lunchtime outside issue – are there other options?**

I’ve heard Gala have identified spaces that can be used?

CW: I’m not aware of Gala having a different approach. Following our positive Covid case, we were told to do more to separate year groups at lunchtimes.

But there is flexibility and we will allow them to stay in when the worse weather comes (see answer in Open Forum section)

**Is it possible for them to have lunch in classrooms?**

This is not possible as they must be supervised and teachers are entitled by law to a break. There would also be issues with getting lunch to the young people in classrooms.

**Action - There was a lot of discussion/questions and ideas and the Parent Council will collate these and send them to Mr. Wilson for review.**

**Re 40M budget/funding – how does this work?**

CB: SBC will put in the full amount but will try and find funding from other sources. Within the budget they may show that they’re hoping to get £x amount from Sports Scotland, for example. But that would be taken off the budget, not in additional to. The only additional budget you could get would be private contributions e.g. individuals who may wish to sponsor a part of the school, but charity grants and public money come within the 40M budget. This is just an indicative figure and could well change – they don’t like to go over budget but it’s not an impossibility. The capital budget is agreed in Feb and will be clearer then.

**The capacity of the school should drive the budget - the current roll is 1300, and they are looking at 1400/1500. Is this enough capacity for the future?**

After the meeting the following was added to the minutes by the Chair. Representatives of the PC met with elected members, the Leader of Scottish Borders Council since the last meeting and was also attended by Lesley Munro Service Director of Children and Young People, who reassured the PC that they were very aware of the need to do much more analysis on future populations for

Peebles High. They would not want to build a school that was too small.

**Is the new build Covid-proof?**

Architects will absolutely be considering this.

**Outdoor spaces** – we have been awarded £20,000 funding for this and we will need parental help with this project. If you’re interested in getting involved, an appeal will go out for this help – please get in touch: <mailto:phspc@outlook.com>

**Will there be a 4G pitch that might also be available for community use?**

SBC have committed to a 3G pitch, available for community use. It will be run in the same way as the current 2G pitch. It will be formulated in consultation with the local sports clubs.

**Any thoughts to current provisions of new ventilation/air cleaning systems being developed for schools?**

That’s a local authority /national level decision for all schools, not just for us.

The Chair thanked everyone involved in the Buildings Group and for all their work for the rebuild and current site.

**Admissions Working Group Update Ruth Docherty**

Ruth updated the PC on the Admissions Working Group.

The aim of this working group is to increase the proportion of PHS pupils accessing competitive Higher Education destinations.  This is to support pupils during the admissions process to produce personal statements that demonstrate how their personal attributes and experience make them competitive applicants and provide pupils with guidance to prepare for exams and interviews and the opportunity to practice interview techniques.

She wanted to thank the parents Alex and Mairi for all their support and will share more details at our next meeting.

**Action** - **Next agenda to have a session on Admissions.**

**Curriculum Survey Update Susan Jarvis/SLT**

Susan Jarvis presented the findings of the curriculum survey ([**see Appendix 3**](https://phsparents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Appendix-3-PHS-Curriculum-Review-Survey-PC-meeting.pdf)) for full slides.

Summary

Overall the parents who responded had children in a wide range of years within the school.  
  
It was clear that the parents felt that S1 was NOT the correct First Choice point.  S1 choice point in comparator schools is rare  
  
There was also a clear preference for a greater number of subjects to be studied than at present – so 7 or 8.  Greater than 6 subjects studied in 72% of comparator schools.  
  
The most preferred curriculum structure from the options presented being 2+2 with 8 subjects.

Mr. Wilson thanked the subgroup for carrying out this piece of work as it has provided excellent data for parental opinion which we did not have last time the curriculum was restructured in 2012. He reflected that it was a pity we hadn’t had the chance to ensure, as with the data on deprivation index information seen earlier in the meeting, to be sure our consultation had been as inclusive but of course this is with hindsight. There is also consultation going on with teaching staff around this where the Senior leadership team and ELT (Extended leadership team) - Principle teachers and faculty heads had conducted a focus group which took up their entire professional development meeting this month. In addition, within Covid restrictions, Mr. Wilson has also been consulting students of various year groups. This is to be added to the information from their survey too. He is continuing to listen to all opinions and a decision on the future of the curriculum structure should be forthcoming in November.

**Action – Mr. Wilson to communicate new curriculum structure.**

**Questions raised:**

**Need for choice – what are the issues/challenges with offering as much choice as possible?**

CW: we offer a free choice system and ask students to write down what your choices are – we may have to return to choosing from each column, rather than a free choice, so that would mean more subjects to choose from but not necessarily a greater combination of subjects. E.g. 3 sciences

**If there is to be change, how do we manage that transition to suit every child?**

Transition is very challenging – timing is important. If we go for a change, we would want to implement it as soon as possible but I’m not going to state any further just now.

**Please keep your questions coming in on this and we will feed back to the school.**

[**mailto:phspc@outlook.com**](mailto:phspc@outlook.com)

**Learning and Teaching update Mr. Noon / Dr Carvalho**

Mr. Noon opened this session reminding us that we want to improve the quality of learning & teaching (L&T) in our classrooms and Dr Kirstie Carvalho has been appointed to carry out this work.

Dr Carvalho shared her vision and updated on the work done so far – [see **appendix 4**](https://phsparents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Appendix-4-P-Council-LT-Framework-27_10_20-2.pdf).

**Questions raised:**

**What is the idea behind a L&T newsletter?**

KC: The idea of the newsletter is to have better communications between school & parents. We could focus on different elements each newsletter, for example homework – looking at current research on homework and embedding this research in practice.

**What gets in the way of delivering the framework and what needs to be preempted to make sure it can be delivered?**

Biggest barrier is always time and competing demands that are placed on school. I can put all my energy into delivering this framework as I’ve been put into this post so freed up from teaching to have time to do this.

**Sharing best practice – how is it done at moment – do the Ipads/new technology make this easier?**

Couple of things we’re doing monthly “teach meet” where we share ideas, things that are working well in the classroom. Also, a professional reading group where we meet once a month for discussion.

**The latest survey asks for names – why is that and would it not be better to be anonymous?**

CW: we’ve had discussion about this. It’s a trial – previous surveys have been anonymous. The survey is designed by HMIE (her majesty’s inspectorate of education)– we only changed it to ask for a name. In the past where parents have raised a specific issue, we haven’t been able to get back to them and address that concern because we didn’t know who it was from, so we asked for names this time. However, a lot of opinion is saying it would be better being anonymous so we will review that and see what the uptake is. Clearly a big reduction in completion rates is not good so we may take out the name request next time or make it optional.

There was lots of interest in this topic and the Chair thanked Dr Carvalho & Mr. Noon for their update.

**Head Teacher update & questions Mr. Wilson**

Mr. Wilson shared the following update and advised that a new Chemistry Teacher will be starting on 12 November.

Covid:

We have remained mercifully Covid free since September. I want to reassure parents that we are, in no way, lowering our guard – every week I set out for us to be safer and more rigorous than the week before.

Fire-safety:

Yesterday Scottish Fire and Rescue Service carried out a full review of the Fire Safety Audit that took place after the Fire. It provided a welcome opportunity to scrutinise the improvements we have implemented, and I feel we are a safer school than we have ever been with our Fire Safety. A full fire drill to fully test our new procedures will happen as soon as it is deemed safe to do so.

Staffing:

New starts:

Caroline McKaig has replaced Celia Wilson in the Technical department. A former pupil, Caroline lives in Peebles and is delighted to be teaching in our school.

Jen Ness has replaced Margaret Kinahan in the English Department. Jen is a Peebles High School Parent of an S5 boy and has joined on a permanent contract from Biggar High School – is also thrilled to be here.

Neil Hattie and Paul Regan are both with us on temporary contracts to Christmas but there may be the opportunity to extend contracts given pending maternities in the faculty.

Adverts:

PT PEF Post:

internal advert for maternity cover.

Advert for Permanent Modern Studies to replace Simon Foster who has recently left the school.

Pupil Support – short life working group on attendance means that there will be a significant tightening on attendance procedures led by Mr. Fagan. We are aiming to run some pilots on attendance over the course of the session.

PS assistants:

Will be advertising soon for X3 Pupil Support assistants to triage guidance issues and work with families around attendance.

Mrs Moretta will attend a future Parent Council meeting to provide a full update on this as well as Nurture (SBC improvement priority)

Attendance:

We are monitoring the impact of more robust attendance procedures and I am thrilled with our attendance statistics this session. Understandably attendance dipped slightly in late September with the Covid case and subsequent self-isolating for a number of pupils and staff but was above 90% again before the October break and has remained there.

Xpressions App:

Please use this app for receiving communications from the school. It is not perfect but does provide a single vehicle for communication and therefore more clarity.

Curriculum Review:

I want to express my thanks to all parents who have been involved in co-creating and administering our review of Curriculum Structure. That work is almost concluded and I will be announcing my decision on the future of our curriculum model very soon – not by Friday as previously indicated as I am still conducting some very small covid limited focus group conversations with Pupils. As soon as I have reached a final decision I will communicate it in a detailed communication to all parents.

**Questions raised:**

**How are ipads affecting learning? Children now taking fewer notes, not using jotters, etc. Do they know how to take notes when in lessons?**

I think the potential of the iPads to enhance learning & teaching is phenomenal – we don’t have it ‘nailed’ yet, and we need to address that. But the potential is huge and as lead in L&T Dr Carvalho will be working with staff to make the most of this.

**S4 is a bigger cohort than other years and by the time they have queued for hot food there is little time to eat it before being back in class. (There were some general comments about not enough time to get food for other years too.)**

Mr. Wilson agreed to talk to Mr. Lee about this.

**Action – Mr. Lee to look at queueing for hot food/times for specific year groups**

**School rebuild timeline – 2025 for new school - is this not unacceptable?** **Pupils in school now will not see the new school**

Sarah Duncan: We did challenge this but we now believe it is robust. We did have a commitment from the project team that if they can speed anything up, they will do so but it is a realistic timeline in order that there is as little disruption as possible for pupils whilst on site.

Campbell thanked the parents involved in getting the successful bid for the shelters

**Action – PC to find out what the timeline is on the shelters for outdoor spaces.**

**Calendar Update Claire Barrett**

Claire showed everyone the calendar of Peebles landscapes which is now available for sale for £6 at The Gift Shop and Whities or by emailing [phspc@outlook.com](mailto:phspc@outlook.com) . Target is £900 if all 200 are sold. (We can print more but don’t want any surplus). Parents are encouraged to purchase a calendar and tell their friends!

Claire asked if pupils could purchase from the school office and Mr. Wilson agreed if this could be managed in a ‘Covid-friendly’ way that would be possible.

**Action – Claire to speak to office to arrange**

The meeting came to a close at 9.10pm

Next meeting is 19 November

**Appendices**

1. [SQA Update](https://phsparents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Appendix-1-SQA-Update-20-21-Parent-Council-27.10.20.pdf) (Paul Fagan)
2. [Property Subgroup - Updated Vision Document](https://phsparents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Appendix-2-PHS-Parent-Council-Vision-of-the-Schools-Future-October-2020.pdf)
3. [Curriculum Review Survey – Parental Review](https://phsparents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Appendix-3-PHS-Curriculum-Review-Survey-PC-meeting.pdf) (Susan Jarvis)
4. [Learning & Teaching Update](https://phsparents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Appendix-4-P-Council-LT-Framework-27_10_20-2.pdf) (Kirstie Carvalho)
5. Treasurer’s Report (Eric Nightingale) (Not covered at the meeting)

**Appendix 5 - TREASURER’s REPORT FOR PARENT COUNCIL MEETING**

**TUESDAY 27th OCTOBER 2020**

**Current Bank Balances**:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Bank Account | At 27/10/2020 | At 21/09/2020 | Movement |
|  | £ | £ | £ |
| PC Main A/C | 10,055.20 | 9,805.20 | 250.00 |
| PHS Lottery A/C | 4,005.11 | 4,410.11 | (405.00) |
| Total | 14,060.31 | 14,215.31 | (155.00) |

The PC Main account balance has increased by £250.00 reflecting the receipt of the SBC Parent Council Grant to cover secretarial costs for 2020/2021.

The £155 Lottery account decrease represents £500 donated to PHS to cover the cost of new refreshment equipment damaged by the fire, as approved at the previous PC meeting; less additional lottery ticket sales of £95 received in advance of the next draw, scheduled to occur on 14 December 2020.

**Friends of Peebles High School Charity Update:**

Bank Account

Since our last meeting, Royal Bank of Scotland has now approved digital banking access and this is now fully operational.

The balance on the account at 27/10/2020 is £487.40 and reflects the income from 2021 Peebles calendar sales, promoted by Claire Barrett.

HMRC

Registration of the Charity with HMRC to enable Gift Aid eligibility was submitted four weeks ago. Their response is expected within the next two weeks, which should enable positive confirmation at the next PC meeting.

Meeting of Trustees

We are planning to hold a meeting of Trustees during November 2020, to discuss amongst other things, fund raising opportunities.

Eric Nightingale

27st October 2020