

**PHS Parent Council**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2022**

**Microsoft Teams**

**Attendees**

Sarah Duncan, Chairperson (SD) c. 40 parents attended

Susan Jarvis, Co Vice Chair

Ellie Johnstone, Co Vice Chair

Claire Barrett, Secretary

Judith Ackerman, Communications Officer

Lorraine Murray, Equalities Lead

Dee Hollingsbee, Events Coordinator

Elodie Sellar, Events Coordinator

Eric Nightingale, Friends of PHS SCIO representative

Max Volino, Taskforce Coordinator (MV)

Campbell Wilson, Headteacher (CW)

Donna Moretta, Depute Head (DM)

**Welcome & Minutes Sarah Duncan**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and the minutes from 30 August were approved. Reminders were given about two easy ways to Fundraise for PHS:

EasyFundraising - Shop online with over 6,000 retailers and raise FREE donations to support the school. Visit our easyfundraising page to get started: <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/friendsofphs/>

Amazon Smile - You can pick a charity to support and then each purchase leads to a donation. Search for “Friends of Peebles High School SCIO” or follow the direct link to get started: <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/SC050256>

Attendees were also reminded of the Parent Council social media channels, and the [website](http://www.phsparents.org.uk), which shows dates of meetings, minutes and postholder info.

**Chair Update Sarah Duncan**

The Chair updated on the following items:

* Library - Technician post has been created, remit for supporting inspire learning and support in the library, hopefully in the coming weeks.
* Study Policy & Space - SBC does not have a formal policy, it is a school level decision. Conversations with SBC around teaching and study space are continuing and councillors are also involved. A plan for a solution is expected by end of October.
* Higher Application of Mathematics – the course is being added to curriculum in 2023/24
* New school [website](https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/sb/peebleshighschool/) accessibility - feedback provided to school in late June and changes made this term. Please feedback as it will be constantly reviewed. The new website can be updated much more easily by staff at school than the previous website.
* Vaping - Parental communications had issued with links to resources and SBC trading standards had carried out spot checks and were aware of a retailer believed to be selling to U18s and would continue to monitor.
* Support for Ukrainian pupils - CW carried out a review and is satisfied with support being provided, he added that the pupils are a positive addition to the school and there have been no known issues.
* Parent Council Meetings – it was proposed that most meetings continue to be held online as per preferences shared at previous meetings, however in November and March they would be in person and include activities to seek feedback on current issues. Suggestions for items to discuss at in person meetings would be welcome.
* School Catering - Request for a meeting has been sent to SBC Catering manager to discuss options.
* Mental Health & Wellbeing - Secondary Chairs’ group meeting with SBC and NHS scheduled for 24 October with the aim of campaigning to improve access to qualified support within schools.
* Uniform Review Group – met for first time today and will report on recommendations for any changes by May 2023 (2 staff, 3 parents, 4 pupils). Parent, staff & pupil surveys will be issued during process.
* New School –
  + New sports facilities starting this month, to open in April (3G pitch, extension to PE block, running track)
  + School building to start construction next Spring and be ready early 2025
  + Public consultation on Thursday 20 October in the school assembly hall from 2pm – 8pm
  + Property Group meeting with architects on Monday 24 October
* Supporting School Improvement –
  + Property group to continue (12 members)
  + DYW Steering Group to support development of skills framework and alternative pathways (2 parents);
  + PHS Equalities Group led by Mrs Moretta, to support activities around Wellbeing, Equality & Inclusion priority (3 parents)
  + Conversations to take place on how we will support activities around the family learning calendar and parental engagement framework

MV asked for an update on the school policy for study space. CW confirmed there was accepted practice but not a ‘written’ policy and confirmed he will look at this. He advised that there should always be somewhere quiet for S5/6 for every period.

MV asked for more action to be taken to increase space at the school as they were frustrated that little progress seemed to have been made. The Chair confirmed that SBC had been reminded about the current space constraints and the additional impact losing the PE classroom over the winter would have and they had responded with a commitment to find a solution by the end of October. The Parent Council had agreed to that timeline and were therefore awaiting that update before considering further action required.

**Headteacher Update Campbell Wilson**

**Staffing Changes**

P.E - Aat the last Parent Council, I unintentionally misled you regarding staffing of PE reporting that we were fully staffed. After concerns were raised at that meeting, I discovered there had been an issue with the rotation of one class that has been remedied and we are also recruiting for PE staff again with interviews tomorrow in what is an exceptionally competitive leet.

Support for Learning – Mel Haldane, PT of Enhanced Provision, and Kathryn Ramage, PT Support for Learning, start on 24th October. Both bring vast experience of supporting learners with a range of needs.

Technical - Unfortunately, there were no applicants for the Technical vacancy. This is a national problem but we will advertise again and cover with supply in the meantime.

Depute Head Teachers - Adverts for two permanent DHT posts are expected to appear on myjobscotland in October and be recruited in November with support from the Parent Council on the interview panel. Mrs Mooney will continue in her acting role until the new appointments are in post.

IT Technician/ study support supervisor - Our advert was with myjobscotland some time ago and we are confused as to why it has not been published especially given that other posts have been advertised that were sent at the same time. We will recruit as soon as possible.

**Senior Student Council**

The election for our new Head Team concludes this week and we will announce the Head Prefects and Deputies at the same time as the school motto tomorrow evening. Motto advice please; go with the motto with most votes or narrow the options? *A vote was held on the call – the one with the most votes was more popular than narrowing the options further.*

**School Budget**

I am really delighted with the new budget for this session. It represents a significant improvement on previous sessions and, with astute recruitment this session we should be in a stronger position than ever before moving in to next session. Thanks to PC who campaigned for more budget this session.

SJ wished to note this positive outcome was a result of parents collectively writing to SBC and there was quite a lot of parental activity in this area so nice to see that budgets have improved.

**School Improvement**

Parental Engagement - Our first two Parent events (Fresher’s Fair and Showcase/Open evening) were well attended in September. Positive feedback on both nights has been received and Mr Lee is going to issue a short survey to seek further feedback. We would also seek feedback on the idea of incorporating both of these evenings into one event next session. Perhaps Freshers’ Fair from 4pm until 6pm followed by our meet the teachers event 6pm – 8pm.

Parental access to Homework - Mrs Mooney has developed a new approach to setting and recording Homework tasks that will be implemented soon. All HW will be visible directly in outlook calendars. Staff will be shown how to do this on Monday 17 October and it will be our practice from that date. Mrs Mooney is preparing an online guide and will offer a Parent session in school for those who want to attend

Learning and Teaching - We continue to focus on best teaching practice and evidence suggests that young people are responding more positively to approaches being adopted in classrooms

Ongoing focus on improving communication and Standards - Based on feedback from previous parent surveys and our own self-evaluation, we are continuing to focus on raising standards of attendance, uniform and behaviour as well as improving the quality and timing of communication home. The new website and more interactive calendar is part of this but we are also aiming to be clearer and more relevant in all of our letters home. I hope the prose narrative on the School Improvement Plan was a welcome improvement.

**Peebles High School Review**

I was informed last week that senior education staff from Scottish Borders Council are going to conduct a review of our school to give us an inspection style engagement to test our self-evaluation ratings and help us to prepare for HMIe Inspection which is now overdue. I have been instructed to issue HMIe questionnaires to all parents, young people and staff in advance of their visit 18th – 20th October. Karen Mooney will write to all families this week with a link to the surveys. They will sit down with 2 groups of parents over 3 days – a form to register interest in attending was shared in the chat of the meeting and on the PHS Parents facebook page.

***How do we access the daily school bulletin?***

The bulletin can be accessed through Teams on your child’s iPad. Mrs Mooney is working on making this information easier to access and will provide information to parents when in place. It is not always possible to post on Teams as it’s a manual process for office staff and not a priority when staff are off.

***When will an update on this year’s exam results be provided?***

The Chair committed to reminding CW that he had made this commitment at the last meeting.

**Postholder Election Sarah Duncan**

The following appointments were made to the Parent council:

Vice Chair – Ellie Johnstone Proposed: Sarah Duncan; Seconded: Susan Jarvis

Equalities Lead – Lorraine Murray Proposed: Sarah Duncan; Seconded: Claire Barrett

Taskforce Coordinator – Max Volino Proposed: Sarah Duncan; Seconded: Eric Nightingale

**Funding Allocations Eric Nightingale**

Eric ran through recent funding allocations, which were approved:

* Duke of Edinburgh - Training for up to 6 volunteers to support expeditions Cost: £1,110
* Expressive Arts - speakers for music practice rooms and drama classroom Cost:
* Expressive Arts - 2 lockable aluminium noticeboards for drama corridor Cost: £ 774

Total: £1,884

Not recommended for funding: Computer chairs for BCT classrooms as awaiting response from SBC as they previously agreed to replace, Chair confirmed we have reminded SBC about this commitment.

As there were so few applications for funding received, it was likely that the bids process would reopen before the end of the year to allow more teachers the opportunity to apply for funding.

A discussion took place around what can be done to spruce up the school in the next 3 years, before the new school is built. It was noted that pre-Covid the Taskforce had coordinated parents to go in and do small jobs around the school, eg curtains for assembly hall, Hall of Heroes, etc. We’ve not been allowed in school since the fire but can now restart this support. There is a limit to how much can/should be spent and a balance has to be achieved when school will only be there for around 3 years. It was agreed that any member of staff should report issues with furniture etc to school Business Manager for replacement/action as furniture should not be funded by parents’ fundraising.

Parents made various suggestions on areas that require work and parents were reminded how to sign up to join the renewed Taskforce [through this link](https://forms.office.com/r/8u54NfrsQ1) to help with actions in the school. The Taskforce Coordinator and Chair agreed to meet with the Head Janitor to walk around the school and take a note of health and safety issues and cosmetic issues that require attention.

**SBC Nurture Approach Donna Moretta**

Mrs Moretta gave a thorough overview of the work going on in school on Wellbeing, Equality & Inclusion

All staff are trained in LGBT awareness and PHS is working towards the LGBT Youth Scotland Gold Charter Award. All staff are being trained in Equally Safe At School and plans were being made to restart the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme with senior pupils being trained to mentor younger pupils.

Mrs Moretta finished with a plea for compassion: Our young people and their families need our support. Acknowledge what they have been through and are still going through. We’re seeing the aftermath of Covid, the recession, mental health, addiction and substance misuse. Please move away from thinking about punitive punishments and making judgment – these young people are children and worthy of our compassion and support. Please support the school in our endeavours to support our young people and their families.

***Are there statistics of sanctions used?***

CW: We keep a close eye on demerits and merits and use weekly staff bulletins. I don’t have the figures to hand but exclusions are on public record. Exclusion is a last resort and we want to support young people in line with our values to avoid that outcome wherever possible. I recognise that in recent months there have been particular concerns and we are hoping to introduce a system where demerits/merits are communicated via text to home.

**Police Scotland PC Vivian Carsley**

PC Carsley was welcomed to the meeting.PC Carsley has been supporting PHS with the behaviour happening in the community, around policing procedures and how to deal with anti-social behaviour in young people as the Community Beat Officer for Peebles. She confirmed that officers are bound by Lord advocate guidelines around the age of criminal responsibility increasing from 8 to 12 years therefore you can’t be held criminally responsible for an offence when under 12. Dealing with anti-social behaviour in young people involves issuing warning letters, restorative justice visits from youth justice officer and early intervention referrals with partner agencies. These measures are very effective in the main, however when unsuccessful the young person is reported to the Procurator Fiscal and in the most serious cases can be sent to secure accommodation. PC Carsley confirmed that she is in regular contact with the school and shares information regarding youth behaviour in the community. Police Scotland were also in the process of recruiting a youth engagement officer to work with schools, youth clubs and extra-curricular groups. They are aware of recent problems in Peebles and are working hard with partner agencies and seeing results of that work. In August there were 120 calls related to anti-social incidents in Peebles and only 22% were youth related.

CW: There has been concern and online chat in the wider community recently and we do recognise an increase in anti-social behaviour in our community with some elements spilling into school life. However some things have been said that we didn’t recognise – eg weapons in school. We have not found any weapons in school for a long period and the Police did not have any complaints of weapons in the community.

PC Carsley: We strongly encourage anyony with concerns around someone carrying a weapon to call 999 at the time as it’s a risk to life. It is always much better to report at the time so that it can be investigated and appropriate action taken. There were reports involving the playground that were investigated.

SD: Attendees were also reminded that if you report an incident through 101 you should ask for an incident number to ensure it is been recorded.

***Are drug related crimes more severe in the area?***

PC Carsley: I don’t have those statistics available but will report back to the Chair. The Borders as a whole is an incredibly safe place to live. Resourcing is an issue but our resourcing is targeted to where incidents are happening and we’re not seeing a great increase in serious incidents.

Action: Drug related crime statistics to be shared with Parent Council (PC Carsley)

***There’s a police presence at the school dances this week, is this common practice?***

CW: Yes its been standard practice for all school dances since I became Headteacher over a decade ago.

**Open Q&A**

A parent objected to taking seniors out of class for any reason (eg assemblies) when they have exams to be studying for and suggested they could cover messages in morning House Time. CW agreed to ensure all use of time out of class had a positive impact on learning.

A parent noted that we have a better budget but the school roll has gone from 1200 to 1400 and PHS has a lot less space, having lost over 20 classrooms in the fire and only gained 6 portacabins. They stated that overcrowding could affect mental health and lack of study space and a functioning library were unacceptable. The Chair clarified that several additional classrooms had been created within the school after the fire and noted the earlier discussion and commitment to continue to work with SBC on developing a solution.

***As well as misogyny are you also addressing anti-male behaviours and how that may affect young men?***

Mrs Moretta: Yes, gender violence covers both genders. It’s about equalities, it’s not just misogyny - eg males belittling other males for not looking big and strong and also addressing unintentional discrimination such as use of language ‘right guys…’.

***How will the impact of the interventions be measured and reported back to us?***

The School Improvement Report at the end of the year will detail progress. We will survey young people at start and end of year and report back to parents.

***There is a growing culture of not being a grass/snitch***

We are doing bystander approach work in assemblies – it’s definitely a growing culture. Young people will take a sanction themselves rather than be seen as a grass. Behaviour can take a while to change so please can parents help with this. A request was made for a parent session on the bystander approach.

*Action: Mrs Moretta to arrange a parent session on the bystander approach.*

***Vaping in toilets: kids avoiding toilets all day because of this issue.***

CW: We recognise there has been an issue and we are working to get it fixed. Teachers are in the toilets several times every day and have caught some pupils over last 2 weeks. Hopefully word is out that you will be caught and these interventions will have an impact. There is a purple slip required to get out of class to go to the toilet or another reason which allows duty staff to know that pupils have permission to be out of class and this is also about fire safety. We are seeing a positive shift. Senior Students are doing their duties to make others feel safe, including checking toilets. Please speak to your kids, it’s having an impact, let’s all work together.

A discussion took place around **‘duty calls’** – this is where a Duty Head is called for support, so that the teacher can have a conversation with a child who is being disruptive or distracting the rest of the class. A parent asked for more space to be made available for the restorative conversations to take place with young people. CW confirmed the strategy has been effective and far better than simply removing the child from learning. Staff are able to have interaction with the child outwith the spotlight of others.

***The toilets are not in great state of repair?***

CW agreed that the Junior Boys toilets in the Atrium are in poor condition (the portacabin toilets are in a better state) but this is a difficult issue: what is the right approach for current school which will be bulldozed in 2 years time? It was that the Taskforce would look at cheap and quick solutions that parents can help with.

***A parent expressed concern that the purple slip policy was disrespectful to young people and would lead to a feeling of distrust in the school community***

CW: It works well as teachers record the slips and can therefore prove useful to identify who might be responsible for causing damage. I will take this to discuss with pupils in my next ‘5 a day sessions’ where we consult with 40 kids in focus groups and will report back.

*Action: CW to discuss purple slips and condition of toilets with pupils and report back at the next meeting.*

MV again raised the issue of space in the school and the Chair reiterated the earlier discussion and commitment to respond once SBC had provided a solution.

**The meeting closed at 9pm**

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**Helpful Info/Reminders**

**Parent Council Meeting Dates for 2022/23:**

Thursday 10 November 2022 – in person

Tuesday 17 January 2023 - virtual

Wednesday 1 March 2023 – in person

Thursday 27 April 2023 - virtual

Tuesday 6 June 2023 (AGM) – in person

**Post Holders**

Chair - Sarah Duncan

Vice Chairs - Susan Jarvis  & Ellie Johnstone

Secretary - Claire Barrett

Communications Officer - Judith Ackerman

Equalities Lead - Lorraine Murray

Event Coordinators - Dee Hollingsbee & Elodie Seller

Friends of Peebles High School SCIO representative - Eric Nightingale

Property Lead - Sarah Duncan

Taskforce Coordinator - Max Volino

We welcome interested parents & careers on the Parent Council as general members or working group members. We simply ask that you try to attend meetings regularly. If you would like to be an ordinary member or join a specific working group, please email your details to**:** [**phspc@outlook.com**](mailto:phspc@outlook.com)

Any parent or carer interested in supporting the Friends of PHS charity with running fundraising activities should get in touch at <mailto:FriendsofPHS@outlook.com>

**Website: phsparents.org.uk** (includes live feed for Twitter)

**Facebook: PHS Parents –** can contact us via Messenger

**Twitter:** @PHSparents @PeeblesHigh