

**PHS Parent Council**

**11 November 2022**

**In-person meeting – Peebles High School**

**Attendees**

Sarah Duncan, (Chair), Susan Jarvis (Co-Vice Chair), Ellie Johnstone (Co-Vice Chair), Claire Barrett (Secretary), Dee Hollingsbee (Events Coordinator), Elodie Sellar (Events Coordinator), Eric Nightingale (Friends of PHS SCIO representative), Max Volino (Taskforce Coordinator), Campbell Wilson (Headteacher), Morag Bramhall, Tristan Compton, Roz Cormack, Katherine Cotter, Laura Duncan, Angela Dobie, Alex Fairbairn, Noreen Fairbairn, David Flynn, Helen Garrison, Suzanne Gray, Dawn Johnstone, Joanna Lea, Viv Leckie, Stewart McCracken, Gillian Moran, Vicki Morrison, Suzi Morrow, Kirsty Peebles, Jo Robertson, Morag Stevenson, Anthony Thurlow and Elaine Watson

**Minutes**

**Welcome & Minutes Sarah Duncan**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologized that the minutes from the previous meeting were not yet available but would be by the next meeting. Parents asked for an update on when a presentation will be given on the 2022 exam results and Mr Wilson confirmed he was happy to offer a dedicated session on this.

*Action: Mr Wilson to schedule session to share exam results presentation*

**Chair’s Update Sarah Duncan**

The Chair updated on the following actions:

* PC Carsley stats on Anti-Social Behaviour – not yet provided, we will add to website when available.
* Toilets safety and condition – Mr Wilson confirmed that pupil feedback suggested things had improved but will be continuously monitored. The locks had been fixed in the girls’ portacabin toilets.
* Friends of PHS Charity – still looking for fundraising helpers – please contact if you’re interested. If anyone has experience with applying for external grants please get in touch as currently no experience on this.
* School Equalities group – started recently, update expected at next meeting in January.
* Careers Fair – taking place on 16 Nov from 6– 8pm, please come with your young people and parent helpers would be welcome to help serve refreshments.

Please get in touch around any of these issues at [phspc@outlook.com](mailto:phspc@outlook.com)

**Headteacher Update Campbell Wilson**

**Peebles High School Review**

At the last Parent Council, I informed parents of the review scheduled for the first week back after the October break. Thank you to those of you who gave up your time to meet with the review team and share your views. While we have not yet received the final written report of the inspection, verbal feedback was given to myself and our DHTs on the final day. I have summarised this feedback in a Newsletter that was published on the website on Friday of last week and issued via a link on a Group Call today. I shan’t waste any of our time this evening reading out a Newsletter to everyone that can be accessed by all on the website but I can summarise:

Raising Attainment and Achievement is the key strength of our school – we are performing well ahead of our Virtual Comparator Schools and 2022, despite the fire three years ago, and despite two years of Covid, was our best ever year of attainment in several key measures.

Learning & Teaching was highlighted for its consistent quality and the improvements brought about by our shared Learning Structure were also commended.

The two areas that were criticised most, and where immediate improvements are insisted upon, were Ensuring Wellbeing, Equity and Inclusion and Leadership.

There is no doubt that the narrative around young people feeling safe and community behaviour needs to be addressed and we are taking strong actions to immediately review our Positive Relationships Policy with young people and staff. I appeal this evening for the input to this group from one or two or three parents too.

The criticism of leadership was chiefly around communication and the current perception that the school is not moving forward with the same drive and strategic direction that it has in the past. You will not be surprised to hear that this feedback on Leadership was personally disappointing but I accept it and will strive to rectify it. One of our approaches to addressing concerns around Communication is the introduction of a fortnightly Newsletter, the first copy of which was published on Friday on the website (link sent to all today). In order to ensure that I can address all of the concerns outlined in our feedback, I will no longer be taking up the position of President of School Leaders Scotland next week as planned but will instead redouble my efforts to ensure the improvements you and the local authority expect are delivered. There is no doubt that restoring our community’s trust in the leadership of our school will be aided by the appointment of high quality leaders to the two DHT vacancies that we have been sorely missing in recent months.

**Staffing**

We were very busy in August recruiting and much of that hard work pays dividends over the next few weeks:

* Scott Renwick joins PE department from Hawick High School
* Emma Ferguson takes on her promoted role as PT Pastoral
* Sean Stuart takes on part time role as PT Pastoral
* Claudiu Patrascu joins us to cover Moira Irvine’s maternity in Chemistry
* Carol McCann the new Pupil Equity Fund teacher
* Eilidh Grieve – joining Social subjects team to cover Emma Ferguson’s promotion to Pastoral

**New DHTs**

Recruitment to the two vacancies in our Senior Leadership Team is almost concluded. Congratulations to Karen Mooney, who yesterday was appointed to the role of Deputy Head Teacher with responsibility for Learning & Teaching on a permanent basis having been in the acting post since Easter. The recruitment of our new DHT for Timetabling and Curriculum will conclude on Wednesday when we complete the third round of interviews. Sincerest thanks to the Parent Council for their support at both long leet and short leet interviews.

**IT Technician/study support supervisor**

Pleased to announce that Kevin Smith accepted the post of IT Technician and study support supervisor last week and will start as soon as PVG and Disclosure Scotland checks come through. We have opened up the LRC for all seniors with immediate effect. Seniors know that this space is for silent study only. Those who wish to work with a ‘study buddy’ can continue to use the canteen and/ or Atrium to study.

**Fire Alarms**

The recent spate of fire alarms has been most unwelcome and caused particular stress and disruption to learning. The last two were deliberately set off at break glass points and the perpetrator of the last one (Tuesday) identified and dealt with appropriately. Please reinforce at home the seriousness of false call outs and the potential harm they can cause. I shared a strongly worded message with all young people during Wednesday’s House Time and I am hopeful that, with no alarms yesterday or today, the ‘spate’ is over. I am particularly keen that tomorrow’s remembrance Assemblies are not interrupted as the Senior Student Council have prepared an excellent and poignant Assembly to remember the fallen and champion the life of Elsie Inglis.

*There were reports some doors were locked? Also will this spate make people complacent?*

We have been more particular about this since 2019. Have not had any issues with doors not opening. There was a delay in opening the gate to the 2G but no delay in exiting the building that I’m aware of. On complacency: malicious fire alarms is not new, there had been false alarms in the run up to the actual fire in 2019, but we evacuated in 2mins 30sec. *Since this meeting, an assembly has taken place with all students and communication has been sent home to parents too.*

**School Improvement**

With an increased focus on improving Communication, I want to highlight that the Group Call referenced earlier with the new Newsletter link embedded also explains how to set up parental access to Outlook Calendar and all Homework set for your child. This has been a contentious issue for well over a decade and various solutions (Show My Homework/ Satchel One/ Teams) have all been trialled. I am confident that this solution is the best and will aid parental engagement and communication around learning. Karen Mooney has written to you all with instructions on how to set it up. Please contact her should you have any issues with it.

*Action: Mrs Mooney to come to next PC meeting in January to talk about Showbie.*

*The problem before was lack of consistent approaches by teachers.*

Difference is this is a mergeable calendar. Teacher can post to calendar, young person can put it on themselves, parents can access.

*Will that include posting dates of tests?*

Yes, teachers have been instructed to put on test dates.

*And feedback on test results/homework?*

No, that would likely continue to be on Teams on iPad. We can’t get parental access to Teams

*Have you spoken to primary schools about their experience with Showbie?*

We’ve spoken to West Linton Primary School and aware that Priorsford didn’t fully adopt it. Our needs are different to primary schools and there is no requirement to use it in secondaries.

**Impact of increased school roll (including senior study space)**

Chair advised the meeting that the school is short one classroom therefore there was still a maths class taking up some of the LRC, leaving space for 28 pupils for quiet individual study. SBC view is that there is technically a class available in every period of the week, ie the teacher would be expected to move around classrooms as required. However the school is supporting the teacher to *not* have to move around, therefore LRC is the only option at the moment. Conversations are still taking place at SBC as there is just not enough space.

*Group study/buddy study is always being moved, not consistently respectful of the seniors. We have lost a lot of classrooms*

Mr Wilson: happy with buddy study, kids have been really responsible. I’ll remind staff again in tomorrow’s bulletin not to move seniors on from these areas. (Any details of when this is happening would be welcomed)

*There must be a classroom free every period for students to use? If they are trusted to study in the Atrium/Canteen then they should be trusted to work in the spare classrooms.*

Yes, I can give a timetable to Seniors to use but I can’t staff it.

*Action: Mr Wilson to look at providing timetable of empty classrooms to seniors to use for study*

*Librarian and library space has not been available for 2.5 yrs, we lose these spaces (assembly hall and LRC) when exams are happening and they will be getting colder soon (atrium). What is the timeframe for rectifying this? We were promised a solution by end October but that hasn’t materialised which is not good enough. None of these spaces are suitable in the long term, 2 or 3 more portacabins would solve it.*

Chair confirmed that SBC were continuing to work on solutions but had not found one yet and previous calls for more portacabins were refused. It was agreed for the PC to continue to express the urgency of the issue and ask SBC for a solution to be communicated within 2 weeks.

*ACTION: PC to press SBC for a solution to limitations of library and study space within 2 weeks.*

**Plans for the new school**

Steven Renwick (SR), SBC Project Manager, and Alan Garland (AG), Associate Director from Stallan Brand Architects, joined the meeting. SR opened with apologies for the consultation event at PHS on 20 October. Schools were advised that no Groupcall was required as SBC communications were handling marketing but we missed an opportunity there as communications were delayed and went out immediately before the school holiday. Gala had their consultation event in the same format the previous day and there were no issues. A less experienced architect attended the event at Peebles and had possibly not been well enough prepared but the team have learned from that event. It is clear that people were more interested in the inside space than the overall project which had not been anticipated. AG presented slides to address some of the issues raised at the consultation event on 20 October and there were lots of questions and comments from the parents in attendance, the discussion is summarised below.

**Design Principle**

Education brief is for the best learning environment for young people, thinking about what elements work and what could be better. Really dynamic ground floor spaces and we’ve asked teachers what type of education spaces do you need? The building can be adapted and changed over the next 50 years. Design has easier flow and shorter distances than at present and instead of one big atrium there will be a series of small courtyard spaces which provide natural light, ventilation and breakout spaces which should be a pleasant place to be. Some hubs are social spaces for pupils and some are themed by faculty but none are timetabled so they are provided over and above educational spaces.

**Budget and Timeline**

It was noted that the project budget was under considerable pressure due to the recent increases in inflation and demand on the construction market and significant changes to the design would further increase the cost of the project. It was also noted that the current timeline required the plans to be finalised fairly soon so that the contracting process can take place in the new year. It was noted that it had already been 3 years since the fire and it was already predicted to take 3 years to complete the project and there was no desire by either party to cause further delays.

**Capacity**

The full floor space is 10,500 square metres to meet school roll of 1400 which data suggests is the peak and it will decline. This is based on primary school rolls, births, housing supply and new developments. Parents asked for a copy of the data demonstrating the declining school roll as there is a perception that they will continue to increase. It was noted that the figures are held by education officials but they will be asked to provide them. It was noted that calculations will include assumptions and the Strategic Needs Assessment of 2012 may have been used and it’s out of date. Neighbouring regions such as Midlothian were experiencing unpredicted growth and may provide a better indication of future trends. It was also noted that the more successful our school is the more our school roll may increase as it will attract new families to the area and the new school will attract even more. One parent noted they were previously told it would peak at 1350 but was approaching 1400 this term.

*Action: SR committed to feeding back to education officials*

It was noted that pre-fire there were around 80 timetabled spaces and currently the school has around 60 spaces. The new school will have around 70 teaching spaces, not including the PE facilities. Earlston is closest in size to Peebles and runs at 72% efficiency with a third of spaces empty at one time. The current design will fit 1200 pupils just on the upper floor. It provides different classroom spaces, eg small enclosed classroom, breakout spaces, twin classrooms, tutorial spaces, semi-open tutorial space, enclosed reading room, larger open library space. It was noted that you need spare capacity to have a choice of space to use. The proposed blend allows education to be provided through different types of teaching, rather than traditional teaching. The ground floor has 12 science spaces, which has been scaled up due to the curriculum offer in this faculty. This model has been stress tested by taking the worst day from the current timetable model and this fits within the design.

**Open Plan**

There was concern from parents about the number of open spaces on the upper floor and whether teachers and pupils are happy with this design. Architects have spoken to teachers and they’re on a journey of discussion about how spaces can be used. It was confirmed that 17 of the 40 spaces upstairs are fully enclosed, traditional classroom spaces. It was noted that the double teaching bases can only be used at full capacity if they‘re timetabled for 2 classes on the same course and teachers are happy to ‘team teach’. There was concern from parents that many of the design principles are new ideas and there isn’t an example to share how it works to provide reassurance. AG noted they had been criticised for Jedburgh being experimental but they have learned from that process and adapted the design for Peebles. It was confirmed that 17 of the 40 spaces upstairs are fully enclosed, traditional classroom spaces. Options for adapting the current open plan spaces into more enclosed spaces were presented and well received. It was noted that more flexible spaces would be welcomed, however teachers should have the opportunity to express a preference for how many spaces were able to be flexibly used.

**Acoustics**

There was concern raised about the noise levels on the upper floor and whether teachers were happy with this aspect. AG confirmed that they were working with industry specialists and an acoustician to consider the best materials for each space, eg acoustic floor finishes and surface treatments. Examples of newly built secondaries with similar open plan designs include Bertha Park and West Calder High. There was particular concern about the soundproofing between the 2 drama studios, particularly if a band is using one for performance or practice while a class is being delivered in the other. AG confirmed that the partition wall will have an appropriate sound rating for a school environment and they could provide a product sheet once materials were confirmed. The design proposes an expanding wall that expands and seals to provide that dual function.

**Assembly/Performance Space**

There was considerable concern expressed during the meeting that the performance space is the heart of the school and the main opportunity for wider community engagement. The current hall was not a timetabled space meaning that it can be used for a range of purposes across the week and using the timetabled drama studios will not provide the level of flexibility required for this size of school. There was consensus in the meeting that this was a compromise too far and could not be supported.

The decision to not provide a dedicated assembly hall was made based on budget pressures and a need to be more creative with the plans to ensure the brief from education was delivered which requires the building to be as efficient as possible. The team challenged themselves throughout the process and believe the current design is the best option as education officials don’t believe a dedicated assembly space is required. It was noted that during the consultation event the architect said that the games hall could be used as overspill for meetings, assemblies etc, however parents noted that it has a sprung floor which has to have a floating floor added at a total cost of £7,000 per occasion so that can’t be used for overspill on a regular basis.

It was confirmed that it was proposed to provide 2 acoustically sealed drama studios that can be used in different configurations to create assembly spaces when required. Each studio would operate separately as timetabled spaces on a daily basis but one would be fitted with raked seating for 260 to be used for assemblies etc while a drama class takes place in the other studio. It was noted that the current hall accommodates up to 350, however the official H&S capacity was around 300. There was also the ability to fully open them up and create a larger performance space which could accommodate additional loose seating for around 20 at the front of the raked seating and space for a temporary stage or orchestras. Lighting and sound equipment would be installed in both sides. It was noted that parents evenings such as P7 transition require the full hall therefore wouldn’t be able to be accommodated in the new space. It was suggested that such events may need to be repeated to allow everyone to attend.

Parents expressed concern that the studios are single storey so not an auditorium appropriate for performances such as music concerts. It was also not equivalent to the provision seen at Jedburgh or believed to be available in all other schools in Scotland which all have a double height space for performance. It was confirmed that the ceiling height of the building was generous at 4.5m which was considerably more than a standard room and around 2/3 of the height of the lowest points in the current hall ceiling. There was dissatisfaction that a temporary stage would need to built each time a performance was planned and it was confirmed that Jedburgh and Kelso both have temporary staging.

**Exams**

There was concern around how exams would be accommodated in the new school without disrupting all learners. Mr Wilson confirmed that the new school may have a bigger challenge accommodating busier exams such as Nat 5 English and Maths but it will have better provision for supporting additional assessment arrangements which needs using smaller spaces.

**Dining Provision**

It was confirmed that the kitchen was in centre of the school on the ground floor with 2 separate serving hatches, one for hot food and one for cold food, to reduce congestion. There would also continue to be facilities for grab and go to be used to pre-order meals. There were 2 breakout spaces immediately next to this area that could accommodate up to 336 pupils seated on current school dining style tables. There were 3 additional spaces with flexible use that could also be used for informal dining and an open tiered seating area. It was noted that no school projects provide enough space for all pupils to dine at once and that less formal more café style seating was more common. Jedburgh have a smaller version of the tiered seating and it appeared to operate well. Concerns were raised about the challenge of cleaning food debris from informal and tiered seating areas. There were concerns around the use of packaging in school catering at present and it was confirmed that reusable crockery and cutlery would be available, recycling facilities would be provided and the council is keen to minimise packaging across its catering provision.

**Toilet provision**

All toilets will be a room with four walls and solid door, not cubicle, and individual wash basin. Management in terms of staff vs pupil and gender allocation is up to the school and how they want to approach that. It was noted that this configuration would require more cleaning resource due to individual sinks in each toilet and AG clarified that this is a statutory requirement.

**Construction Disruption**

There was considerable concern about the impact of construction noise with the building work taking place directly adjacent to the Millennium classrooms. It was noted that most current pupils will not benefit from the new school and should not be suffering for the next 3 years. It was noted that Langlee Primary was built closer to their old building and there was minimal disruption to learning. In tandem build situations the contractor works closely with the school to limit disruption as much as possible but it was accepted that some noise disruption was inevitable.

There was a suggestion that pupils be decanted from the millennium classrooms into portacabins for the construction phase and it was confirmed that this would take more money out of the budget which was already under significant pressure. It was noted that the insurance settlement was factored into the budget for the new school and therefore was not being made available for temporary accommodation. This decision was made by the Project Board. A parent offered to make an FOI request to determine the value of the insurance settlement and what was it spent on.

**Miscellaneous**

A parent asked how the design had learned from the pandemic and it was confirmed that air quality would be as good as we can get with ventilation specifically designed to maximise CO2 levels. It was noted that environmental factors such as energy use and insulation were all designed to meet SBC’s carbon reduction commitment and utilising modern construction methods and materials. It was noted that storage space had not yet been specified, however all teaching spaces had built in storage. It was confirmed that the expectation was for all new furniture to be provided.

**Consultation Process**

A written response from the recent consultation was requested that can be shared publicly to demonstrate that concerns had been noted and were being considered. It was noted that the presentation had left parents feeling more informed but there remained considerable concern that the proposed provision was not adequate and no commitment was being made to resolve the issues raised – namely expressive arts and performance space, dining space and impact on current pupils.

**Next Steps**

SR confirmed that he had listened to the feedback from the property group the previous week and during the meeting and the team would discuss and consider options for increasing the performance provision. The project team would also continue to talk with PHS staff, particularly on upper floor configuration, and there was an opportunity to go to Community Councils to deliver a similar presentation to the wider community. They offered to come back to Parent Council meetings as many times through the process as required and it was suggested that feeder primary schools would also appreciate presentations or consultation events.

*Action: Property Group to invite the project team to future meetings as required.*

Parents were encouraged by the chair to write to their local councillors and Community Councils to express their views. The PC would continue to liaise with Education officials and the project team throughout the process. The PC would collate feedback from parents and formally respond to the consultation. It was suggested that updated floorplans be shared on the SBC website for the wider community to view.

*ACTION: SR to share an electronic version of the updated plans with the Parent Council and refresh the plans on the project website and advise by w/c 14/11 when this will be added.*

**The planned agenda item of parent feedback on current school environment was postponed as the meeting overran.**

**The meeting closed at 9.45pm**

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**Helpful Info/Reminders**

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

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