

Minutes of Parent Council Meeting Wednesday 15th November 2017

7pm Bucksburn Academy

Present: Dave Pottinger, Graham Blanche, Derek Thomson, Lynn Murray, Russell Ritchie, Malcolm Mackay, Lorraine Simpson, Frances Wood, Sarah Christie, Sheree Pottinger, Denise Poole, Susan Pirie

Apologies: Shelley MacKenzie (chair), Fraser McLachlan, Wendy Brechin, Adele Ashton

Minutes from previous PC meeting were approved by Sheree Pottinger and Russell Ritchie

1. Parent Council Roles

Dave thanked Denise for collating minutes from the last meeting. He highlighted that the PC were looking for a Secretary, and asked those in attendance to consider what assistance they could offer. The main issue is the collation and preparation of the minutes. A rota for minute takers was proposed. Dave read out an email from Shelley MacKenzie (Chair) which set out her apologies and her decision not to continue as Chair of the PC. Shelley has commitments that do not allow her the time to commit to the role of Chair. Dave explained that in order for the PC to operate they need people to support the functions of the PC. Dave has set out that he will do either Chair or Careers Fair Organiser, he cannot perform both roles, and the group were asked to think about what they can commit to and volunteers for the PC functions are being sought.

2. Head Teachers Report

Graham Blanche presented an overview of his time in post. It has been a really good experience for GB, he stated that he had gotten a good handle on the school. Since coming into post, the school has carried out a review of department results. The purpose was to establish the achievements of each department as well as identifying where improvements can be made in the learning and teaching within each department. The positive impacts of this review will be to identify where early intervention is needed, provide specific individual support to develop skills of young people. Some of the proposals are around structured courses, regular homework; banking assessment information early on and making better use of google classroom. There was a

further discussion around the changes to National 4 and National 5. GB explained that a National 5 D pass is a higher award than a National 4.

Scottish National Assessments (SNASSA) are happening just now within the school. These are assessments in Reading, Writing and Numeracy, they are undertaken by P1, P4, P7 and S3 pupils. This information gathering is primarily a validation of young peoples grades.

The ASG Group continues to me. These are keyworkers such as NHS, Education, Police and Social Work who work in partnership to engage young people who may not currently be engaging in education.

GB highlighted that the car park within the school will be reconfigured. This will remove the thoroughfare in front of the school. There have been near incidents with cars in this area and the children coming out of school. It will also improve the exit at the ASN wing as well.

Miss Marvin has been recognised for her 25 years long service award. There is a vacancy in Physics/Chemistry. The PE post has been filled. GB advised that the school had key staff in posts and overall Bucksburn was in a better position than other schools in the city in respect of staffing levels.. Elsewhere in the City there are staff shortages in English Maths and PE.

There will be a change to the format for 4th year Parent Evenings. This will be discussed further as an agenda item at the next meeting. Denise referred positively to the 'LIVE' report. Keeps parents informed on how learning and teaching has changed. It presents to parents the pupil experience and highlight the work they do and work they need to do.

3. ASN Wing Report

Derek stated that the attainment data had been reviewed and the ASN Wing were reporting fantastic results. They have doubled the overall number of national qualifications from 22 to 41. 94% long term targets were achieved. Pupils attained 43 SQA Personal Achievement and Personal Development Awards. 8 Pupils achieved their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award. They are looking to repeat this as well as working toward silver awards for some. There were 17 leavers from the ASN who all went on to positive destinations. There were also achievements with the Lifestyle Group who had there sailing trip in May, along with a successful win in Football.

4. Aberdeen Parent Council Forum Meeting

Susan Pirie provided an update from her attendance to the APCFM. Aberdeen City Council are considering introducing a common school week. This is in the very early stages. The premise behind it is to make best use of resources across schools, sharing teaching staff and offering a range of subjects for pupils to access. The council intends to speak with Head Teachers to determine how this could work. Maybe not all schools sharing a common timetable but schools in specific areas sharing timetables. The partnership between Bucksburn Academy and Dyce was given as an example of where this type of working together works well.

Susan gave an update on the actions Aberdeen City Council is carrying out to improve the staff shortage situation in Aberdeen Schools. This includes golden handshakes, providing accommodation and sending staff to other areas of the country to actively try to recruit staff. There was some discussion around whether this is happening in reality. Some PC members gave examples where they feel that the Council are not doing everything they can to secure and/or retain staff.

All other items are addressed within the PC agenda

5. Aberdeen City Council Re-Organisation

GB (Head Teacher) did a presentation on the the Councils re-organisation. Under the proposed operating model Education would no longer be a stand alone service but would come under Operations. The Chief Education Officer would sit beneath the Head of Service for Operations. A consultation will run for 3 weeks, following which on 11th December 2017 the Chief Executive would present a report to full council. Currently Schools Education takes a majority of the budget. There is a concern that if Education is included in a structure with services that are not education related that there will be challenges with budget allocation. Teaching staff were only made aware of this information the previous week and overall this proposal has not been well received by Educations. Gail Gorman has not taken up a permanent secondment with Northern Alliance

GB shared this information at PC as he felt it was appropriate as parents may want to engage directly with councillors regarding the proposals and the impact this could have on education.

This led to a discussion that it would be helpful to have a councillor representative at the PC.

It was agreed that the PC would make a joint representation of views surrounding the proposed changes. Russell agreed to draft a letter for distribution to Councillors, MP's and MSP's

6. Careers Fair Update

Dave updated PC. The first meeting was 15/11/17. It is proposed that the Careers Fair will take place on Tuesday 20 February 2018. The plan is to have a hybrid of the previous 2 years, having a mixture of stalls and talks. The aim is to have approx. 20 stalls at the event and extend the time from 6pm – 9pm, so it is not as rushed for the talks. Susan Pirie suggested having teaching as a career option, given the current staffing challenges for teaching in across Scotland. This has been a career option at previous fairs and will be considered for the coming year. As always volunteers are needed to help organise the even and also to help out on the night itself. PC Members were encouraged to participate.

7. Education Scotland Bill Consultation – Bucksburn PC Response

PC Members have access to this consultation documents. PC members were asked to provide feedback via the PC email address by Christmas so that a joint response to this consultation can be prepared..

8. ACC Parental Engagement Strategy

The purpose of the strategy is to improve and support increased engagement and involvement for all parents so they can be actively involved in their childrens learning in schools and their community. There are a number of themes within the strategy document. Communication, Supporting Parenting, Sharing Learning. Feedback on the consultation has to be submitted to Donna Cuthill by 17th November. PC members who have and feedback on the strategy document to submit this to PC for submission to Donna.

9. Parent Council Training Opportunity

Dave advised that there was a practical training session for all parents which would provide an opportunity to understand the roles of parent council committee member and how to be an effective member and run an organised meeting. The session would be held at Frederick Street on Wednesday 22 November from 7.00 – 9.00 pm. PC members were encouraged to attend

10. Poverty Proofing – Cost of School Day

APCF explained that the aim of this initiative is to reduce the cost of the school day to zero, allowing all pupils the same opportunities. At this time there are a number of costs such as school trips and paying for resources to participate in subjects. Graham Blance provided a wider explanation at PC. There is evidence that some pupils are attending the school having not eaten. The school is looking at providing snacks. Derek advised that the ASN wing ran a breakfast club, and the issue of children coming to school hungry is greater than we might have thought. The cost of school uniform can be challenging for some parents. The school appears to have got this right, they operate a swap shop/recycle clothing for uniforms. There are people in the school community who struggle financially and this is a great benefit to them. PC Members were not aware of this and some suggested that they would have uniform for donation. This can be handed into the school. There is also evidence of some pupils being unable to participate in a particular subject because it is cost prohibitive for example where additional equipment and resources are required. The school makes every effort to make classroom resources available, but there is work to do to identify accessible resources for out of school. Even things like fundraising within the school needs to be considered. Any fundraising must be set at a reasonable level so families can afford to make a contribution. There is a balance between offering opportunities for school trips and not excluding those that can't afford it. There is no doubt that school trips are rewarding and there was some suggestion that it would be a good idea to establish a Goodwill Fund to support this. Sheree suggested contacting large companies such as Prime 4, Apache, Premier and Lexon who have local connections to the area to secure some funding. It would be an idea to involve the fundraisers who have a track record of fund raising and already have connections with businesses.

This led on to a request for volunteers for the fundraiser group and a confirmation of the total raised (Around £5k), £3k of this was used as a contribution for the purchase of a mini bus. Funding requests for money from the fundraisers can be made. Staff and pupils can apply. This could offer some support to meet the Poverty Proofing initiative.

11. Treasurers Report

Denise provided an update. PC Accounts were approved. Funding of £370.65 has been received. This represents a large reduction from previous years and is directly linked to the budget restrictions on the council. In the previous year £702.20 was spent with £118 being allocated to the Careers Fair and £583 allocated for refreshments at the Awards Ceremony.

12. AOB

Dave revisited the issue of Office Bearers. Current roles for Secretary, Chair, Careers Fair Organiser are needed. The main roles for the secretary are collating the agenda, emailing the agenda and recording minutes of meetings. There is an option to pay someone to attend meetings to take minutes, but the option of operating a rota for minute taker was preferable. If there is a rota for Minute Takers. Denise would help out with sending out the minutes and agendas for meetings. Dave acknowledged that PC Members are committed elsewhere, but set out that there is a need for people to be involved in roles within the PC in order for it to operate effectively. Longer standing members children are looking to leave school soon and therefore they will no longer be PC Members.