



Berwickshire High School Parent Council Minutes of Meeting: 3rd February 2016

Present

Parent Council members:

Douglas Archibald, Rosemary Bain, Livvy Cawthorne, Sally Fleming, Audrey Gaston (Treasurer), Avril Hamilton (Chair), Kath Lothian, Katy Master (Secretary), Fiona Morris, Agnes Owtram-Temper, Ali Thomson, Jason Waghorn

Staff:

John Clarke (Headteacher), Peter Macklin (Depute Headteacher)

Apologies

Val Redpath, Diane Sinclair, Jane Taylor, Andy Tharme

1. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

Subject to a minor rewording under the Treasurer's Report, the minutes of the meeting on 2nd December were approved as a correct record.

Suitable sports kit for running will be available for parents to purchase from Border Embroideries: this information now needs to be communicated by the school to parents.

Work is on ongoing on the homework policy.

The SBC Senior Phase Strategy has been distributed to PC members present at the meeting on 3rd February.

The PC constitution has now been updated and circulated to all members of the Parent Forum for consultation. There were no objections to the changes, which therefore now stand.

Draft PC leaflets have been updated by John Clarke and were circulated to those present for comment. All comments to be passed to **Kath Lothian**, who will then collate, redraft and consult with John Clarke for final wording approval.

Following recent staff appointments, John Clarke has yet to identify which member of staff will liaise with the PC's sub-group on parental involvement. He will shortly do so such that a meeting of this new group can be held before the school breaks for the Easter holiday.

2. Chair's Report/Involvement and Communication with parents

Avril Hamilton reported that she had attended two SBC Parent Council Chairs' meetings since the December meeting. Issues discussed included:

- The SBC draft Integrated Children and Young People's Plan.
- Named Persons legislation.
- Resilient Schools.
- SBC Standards and Quality Report 2015.
- Developing Young Workforce progress.
- SBC review of the school estate: pre-consultation phase to start soon with information packs to all parents and information evenings to be held within each high school cluster. Formal consultations on any proposals to be held in the 2016/17 school year.

Avril also mentioned the news article that had appeared in the Berwickshire News before Christmas, which was quite alarmist in tone with regards to the maths department and which included reference to Parent Council concerns and actions. She expressed regret that the newspaper had been in touch neither with her nor John Clarke about this, especially since the maths issues had been resolved prior to publication (something which the article did reference albeit in little detail).

Some discussion was had about the relationship between the school and the local press and **John Clarke** resolved to speak to staff and pupils about a more proactive approach.

3. Treasurer's Report and fundraising

Audrey Gaston reported that the PC bank balance stands at £2,208.02.

Recent expenditure includes £400 for the storytelling project and a £151 donation to 'Borders Aid Syria', for which thanks have been received.

Recent credit to the account is the sum of £158.05 raised by the Swishing event.

The next fundraiser is a coffee afternoon on 24th March; details to be finalised by the fundraising sub-group.

John Clarke reported that a number of fundraising requests have been made by various departments in school. These were discussed and the following was agreed:

- £450 to be donated to the Science Department for a range of equipment to enable new practical learning in the classroom, which will enhance skill development across all science subjects.
- To fund barriers to enhance the queuing system in the canteen at lunchtime, once costs are identified and agreed.
- **Jason Waghorn** offered to source 12 chess sets for Mr Robertson to establish a Chess Club in school.

It was also agreed that Learning Centre staff be encouraged to make any funding requests they might have.

4. Pupils' Progress Reports

A discussion was held about the timeliness and usefulness of these reports, in particular the early October senior school reports, which cannot take into account any assessment results, as these are not available at that point in the school year.

John Clarke and Peter Macklin reassured parents that where there are concerns about students' progress, communication between the school and parents will always take place. It was suggested that, in addition to this reporting by exception, that the following reporting regime for senior school students would be appropriate and satisfactory to parents:

- A 'settling in' style report in October.
- A 'pre-Christmas' report which outlines the areas of learning students need to work on.
- A 'post preliminary examinations' report, which details results of those examinations, expected future examination grades and details of where work is now required to achieve the students' full potential

John Clarke and **Peter Macklin** to share this suggestion with staff.

5. Headteacher's Report

John Clarke reported the following news:

- Peter Macklin has been appointed to the vacant permanent Depute Headteacher post.
- The consequences of the appointment in terms of Peter Macklin's temporary depute role are still being discussed.
- There is still a vacancy within the English department, and efforts continue to fill it. Mrs Thomson will remain with the school for the foreseeable future whilst that post remains vacant.
- The PT (Languages) has returned to work full time.
- Mrs Kenworthy, Additional Needs Assistant, has left to take up a new post elsewhere but will continue to support the badminton and sailing clubs which run on a Friday afternoon. Additional Needs and Learning Support staffing allocations are currently under review across the region, so recruitment to that post is on hold until the review has been completed.
- Preliminary examinations have been held in school.
- The school's badminton team had great success at a recent competition.
- John Clarke attended the Duns Community Council meeting recently and hopes to continue doing so as a positive way of linking into the local community.
- Work has taken place with staff in school recently to define the core values of the school; an exercise that will be repeated with students and parents.
- Parent Pay will be introduced after the Easter break.

John Clarke also gave a presentation on the 'Getting It Right For Every Child' (GIRFEC) legislation, which outlined the key issues and explained the 'Named Persons' procedures.

6. Issues raised by parents

- a) **Careers Day.** This is in hand and communications will be forthcoming. 'Interview experience days' will be set up for senior students in the week beginning 22nd February.
- b) **Resilient Schools/School Transport cancellations.** John Clarke clarified that it is only when 'Resilient Schools' is put into effect that school transport students are not to attend school. If it is just that school transport is cancelled, parents are at liberty to bring their children into school. It was also confirmed that children who are able to walk to school, but are non-attenders when school transport is cancelled or Resilient Schools is actioned, will be marked as having an unauthorised absence. The issue of teaching standards in school on days when large numbers of students are absent was raised. John Clarke assured parents that his expectation is that learning should always be taking place, even if curriculum based learning has to be temporarily postponed, and that this message will be communicated to all staff.
- c) **S3 examinations.** It was confirmed that these will take place after the Easter break in some subjects as appropriate. The primary purpose of these examinations is to ensure that students have some experience of sitting examinations in an invigilated setting prior to sitting their preliminary examinations in S4. Subject choices for National Level 5 will be made during March and teachers, students and parents should have sufficient information about students' progress and abilities to advise and make sensible and appropriate choices.
- d) **Physical health awareness in Social Education.** A query was raised with regard to 'self-checking' for breast and testicular cancer in particular and the quality of information that students receive about how to do this and what they should be checking for. **Peter Macklin** to investigate how this is currently taught.
- e) **Preliminary examinations Jan/Feb2016.** A concern about the French Advanced Higher listening examination was raised. It was reported that the CD used had been faulty, resulting in students not having the obligatory two minutes silence to read through the questions before the listening comprehension began. It was suggested that all CDs used for examinations must be checked in advance to avoid such occurrences in future. It was also reported that there had been no CD player in place as the examination was due to start. Finally, a concern was raised about the quality of invigilation during the preliminary examinations, with some students distracted by invigilators using their mobile phones. **Peter Macklin** noted these concerns and assured parents that the school would take measures to address them.
- f) **E-cigarettes.** There have been reports of students using e-cigarettes in the school building. **John Clarke** to investigate.

7. DONM

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Notes

- *The item on Social Enterprise Academy Scheme was not discussed. Following the cancellation of the PC meeting in January, events had overtaken the need for this item to be on the agenda.*
- *The item 'School Student Leadership Team' was deferred until the next meeting.*
- *The update on the Maths Department by the PT (Mathematics) was deferred until the meeting on Tuesday March 29th.*

Minutes Approved by Parent Council on Wednesday 2nd March 2016

Avril Hamilton

Avril Hamilton, Chair, BHS Parent Council