



Berwickshire High School Parent Council Minutes of Meeting: 7th December 2016

Present

Parents:

Douglas Archibald, Rosemary Bain, Neil Bennett, Jane Boyce, Audrey Gaston (Treasurer), Avril Hamilton (Chair), Kath Lothian, Katy Master (Secretary), Morag Mazzoni, Joanne Moore, Agnes Owtram-Temper, Diane Sinclair, Jane Taylor, Ali Thomson, Neil White

Staff:

Scott Steele (Acting Headteacher), Peter Macklin (Depute Headteacher), Ian Bain (Librarian)

Apologies

Livvy Cawthorn, Fiona Morris, Diane Murray, Val Redpath, Jason Waghorn

1. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

Subject to a minor typographical correction, the minutes of the meeting on 2nd November were approved as a correct record.

Letters of thanks to the windfarm funding bodies are still to go out. Kath Lothian has met with Mr Steele to discuss the homework policy. Some possible changes have been discussed.

Jason Waghorn can provide more help with the technical side of any new website. It was agreed that the issue is now what the content of the website should be and that 'Heads Up' might provide a suitable vehicle for seeking parental opinion on this.

2. Chairperson's Report

Avril Hamilton reported that there are some dates coming up for SBCs recruitment training day, attendance at which is necessary for any parents wishing to take part in interviewing. Anyone interested should let Avril know. There was no news to report with regard to the headteacher situation.

3. Treasurer's Report and Fundraising

Audrey Gaston reported the current balance is £5,643.40; a balance which includes the £5k ringfenced gym equipment monies. Since the last meeting, there has been expenditure of £13 on upgrading PC insurance.

Mr Bain, the Librarian, gave a presentation on 'Story Quest', a project funded by Parent Council monies. The project was targeted at the S3 year group and focussed on promoting and encouraging story-writing and improving story-writing skills through author and writer workshops, online resources and dedicated story-writing sessions. Some of the sessions were delivered to the

entire year group, who were all invited to apply to be part of a smaller group on which the bulk of the project focussed. This group has worked on producing short stories which take a local landmark, Goblin Ha' as their starting point. Three of the stories will be chosen to be read out to children at BHS's feeder primaries at the end of January. It is hoped that all of the stories written will be published in a collection. Those taking part in the project appear to have learnt much from it and enjoyed it. It has been a positive experience for them. Three children dropped out, and for those that remained the project was definitely viewed as a fun 'extra' rather than as work. But overall, a successful project.

4. Parental Involvement sub-group

Katy Master reported that Ms Moghadam and Ms Stirling have requested that the Parent Council help identify a small group of parents that can help with Duke of Edinburgh expeditions. Preferably this would be parents who have First Aid and PVG certificates and have some map reading skills. A number of people were suggested for Katy to approach to see whether they would be willing to help.

Ali Thomson reported that there has been no progress yet with meeting with the PT Health and Well-being to discuss involvement in extracurricular sport.

Joanne Moore reported that she had met with Mrs Scott again. They had discussed the organisation of a 'World of Work' evening, as well as the possibility of parents helping to produce a series of 'A Day in the Life of a . . .' documents. Further work is needed here. Mrs Scott is going on maternity leave from Christmas, so this will be taken forward by a different member of staff next term.

5. Sixth Form Committee Update

Sarah Allan, William Derries, Xenia Garden and Rory Hamilton from the sixth year gave an informal presentation on the activities of this year's sixth year committees. They explained that there are a number of committees this year focussing on various activities:

Prom Committee – organising and fundraising for the end of year prom;

Social Committee – organising social events to help promote cohesion across the sixth year;

Sports Committee – organising matches and sporting fixtures between houses and within the junior and senior sections of the school;

Yearbook Committee – editing content and publishing the yearbook for the sixth year;

Expressive Arts Committee – promoting the Arts within the school, focussing last term on the senior production of 'Into the Woods' and trying to involve the whole school via competitions and promotions;

Charities Committee – fundraising for the two chosen charities, the Borders Childrens Charity and Refugee Action

Media Committee – managing the new 'BHS Buzz' feature

'End of Term' Committee (formerly the Trips Committee) – organising end of term activities for the whole school.

They also talked about some of the other activities that members of the sixth year have been up to, including:

- Organising a cross-border Heads Team meeting
- Helping with the windfarm appeal that members of the Parent Council worked on
- Taking part in Remembrance Day and giving a talk to S1/2 students on this
- Helping run Tutor Group activities.

Following questions from members of the Parent Council it was confirmed that all students in sixth year have to be on one of the committees mentioned above, that a sixth year 'bonding trip' would be a good thing to do, that the 'Tutor Group' session could be improved and that sixth year can be an expensive year. It was confirmed that there is a discretionary fund to support students with these costs (Christmas Dance, Yearbook, Prom, Jumper, Hoodie).

Avril Hamilton thanked the students for their time and their informative presentation.

6. Headteacher's Report

The acting headteacher, Mr Steele presented his report.

Staffing

We have re-advertised both Maths and Computing posts. We have got a very experienced and effective supply teacher coming into support Maths three days per week. Mrs Paulin continues to support in Maths.

C. Gracey and R. Drummond together are taking up the PGT post for Home House. C. Gracey will be with us 5 days per week as of January.

There are interviews for the temporary Depute's Post next Wednesday.

Parental Questionnaires (HMIE)

To establish a base line for further parental engagement we used HMIE questionnaires for both Senior Phase Parents' Evenings. The findings are as follows:

In S6 we had 114 responses stating that parents Strongly Agree or Agree with the thirteen statements. We had 10 Disagrees, 5 of which were about being kept informed of their child's progress, and 13 Don't Knows.

In S5 we had 192 responses stating that parents Strongly Agree or Agree with the thirteen statements. We had 22 Disagrees and 19 Don't Knows. Most of the Disagrees were around My Child benefits from school clubs...The school asks for my views...The school takes my views into account...

In S4 we had 178 responses stating that parents Strongly Agree or Agree with the thirteen statements. We had 22 Disagrees and 16 Don't Knows. The Disagrees were mostly around My Child benefits from school clubs...The school asks for my views...The school takes my views into account...

Supporting Home Learning Evening

We have organised our Supporting Home Learning Evening. This will take place on Tuesday 13th December, one week after the original date. The purpose of the evening is helping parents provide the best support for their children's learning at home. We are specifically targeting parents of the

middle 60% performing S4/5 students. We will share the Vision, Values and Aims of the school; we will share with parents study skills; and then provide specific advice and strategies in English, Maths, Glow, Social Subjects and Health & Well-being.

Recognising Wider Achievement

This is a further update on our recognising wider achievement pursuit. We had an online tutorial with Carl Lodge from webanywhere who took us through e-portfolios. The cost is approximately £3,000 for three years. I have contacted the authority to see if the centre would consider adopting this authority wide. We are waiting on a response.

Into The Woods - For three consecutive nights audiences were spellbound by the outstanding performance of Stephen Sondheim's Into the Woods by Berwickshire High School's dramatic society. For the first time this year a lot of the background work was done by the S6 Expressive Arts committee. The students designed and produced the evening's programme, took responsibility for a range of activities such as publicity, set design and production, costume design, sponsorship and even refreshments. It was astounding to see Cinderella's Birds come off the stage in Act 1 after a wonderful supporting performance only to be found seconds later serving drinks and snacks to an eager audience.

Validated Self-Evaluation - Validated self-evaluation (VSE) is a collaborative, evaluative process. It aims to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for learners by providing support and challenge to the work of educational professionals. The purpose of VSE is to support, extend and challenge the service's own self-evaluation, to affirm, or otherwise, our evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement, thereby improving outcomes for our learners. We have completed this process with Social Subjects, and are currently engaged with Expressive Arts. It involves looking at evidence in response to four key questions; pupil focus group findings and observed lessons.

S3 Exams - The S3 exams were held the week beginning the 21st November. C. Nichol, the school's Chief Invigilator thought that our pupils conducted themselves very well and that the experience will help them prepare better for their SQA exams next year. As a positive footnote over 70% of our Maths pupils achieved their National 4 Numeracy unit.

Vision, Values & Aims - Further progress has been made regarding our VVA. There was a second valuable meeting with Neil Bennet, who has agreed to do some further work on behalf of the school in promoting our VVA. We are very pleased about this development.

Berwickshire News - Please look out for the BHS Buzz which will be in the Berwickshire News on 15th December. This is the work of the Media Committee who have been well supported by Ms Steel and Mrs Morrison.

Duke of Edinburgh - There is an S3 assembly promoting Duke of Edinburgh to our S3 students, so they can start the process. A timeline has been created with the final excursion taking place before the summer holidays.

Mock Interviews - Mock interviews have taken place over the last month with our S6 students. This has been a more positive experience this time around; our students are better prepared and thanks to all parents who have supported this process.

Comments were made in response to the report:

- Getting information about children's learning can be difficult. There was some discussion about what information it is that parents need about their children's learning and how best to access it.
- Letters home about the Learning Support evening caused confusion and some upset. Mr Steele acknowledged that the data used to select students for targeted letters about performance was not timely, and was in fact quite old data. This resulted in some children being targeted whose performance more recently has been good. He said that lessons had been learned about the timings and communication.
- A query was raised about when the school might expect a HMIE inspection and it was confirmed that this should reasonably be expected within the next two years.

Mr Steele and Mr Macklin left the meeting after this agenda item.

7. Issues Raised by Parents

1. **Senior phase mixed-class teaching.** A query was raised about the success of mixing S4, 5 and 6 students in Nat 5/Higher/Advanced Higher classes and whether it is working. Generally, it is considered to be working well.
2. **Headteacher situation.** There was some discussion about the current senior management situation at the school and speculation as to when Mr Clarke might return to post. Disappointment was expressed that SBC had not been in communication with parents about this recently. Concerns were expressed that whilst the current senior managers are doing a good job, with Mrs Scott to go on maternity leave at Christmas, the remaining senior management team at Berwickshire High is in danger of becoming overloaded. It was agreed that Avril would contact senior managers at SBC to discuss this.

8. DONM

1st February 2017, 7pm

Items for future agendas:

Minutes Approved by Parent Council on Wednesday 1st February 2017

Avril Hamilton

Avril Hamilton, Chair, BHS Parent Council