

BANCHORY ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

Minute of the Meeting held on 30 January 2020

Present (members): Trish Amundrud, Jacqueline Conroy, Ruth Duddy, Vikki Duncan, Rebecca Glansbeek, Andrea Hale, Megan Hare, Colin MacLeod, Scott Newey (Chair), Jeanne Ritchie (Treasurer), Alison Smart (Secretary) and Linda Stromberg (Vice Chair).

In attendance: Clare Barr, Cheryl Gibb, Claire Hesketh Crafts, Laura Myles, Cllr Anne Ross, Islay Stewart (for item 2.1) and Judith Wight (Rector).

Apologies: Cllr Rosemary Bruce, Katie Davies, Cllr Eileen Durno, Kate Ellison, Jill Matthew and Jeff Wallace.

SUMMARY OF KEY ITEMS DISCUSSED

Action

- The role of the guidance teacher at Banchory Academy (*item 2.1*)
- Rector's Report, including: staffing; pupil achievements; and building update (*item 5*)
- Literacy Working Group update (*item 6.1*)
- Tracking Reports (*item 11*)

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies.

2. FOCUS TOPIC

2.1 The Role of the Guidance Teacher at Banchory Academy

Islay Stewart (acting PGT) spoke to the Committee about the role of the guidance teacher at Banchory Academy, highlighting the following:-

- Each Guidance Teacher (GT) looked after around 200 students; they saw them every week in PSE classes where a broad variety of topics were discussed with the aim of helping pupils to make good choices and decisions e.g. health and wellbeing, subject choices, careers/world of work, alcohol, drugs, sexual health etc.
- GTs supported different pupils in different ways, this often included meeting with parents, this depended very much on the needs of individual pupils in terms of their needs, for example family, friendship issues etc.
- A range of meetings were regularly held with different groups, for example, daily briefings with staff, with more in-depth discussions on a weekly basis, meetings with pupils, House and School Captains, Support for Learning teachers etc. Other, often external, contacts related to community learning and development, educational psychologists, social work, non-standard curriculum options, work experience opportunities; GTs across the authority (sharing practice) etc.
- Other activities included:
 - o Organising the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) which offered an opportunity to bid for £3k;
 - o Safe Drive Stay Alive campaign;
 - o Doctors at Work programme;
 - o Promoting House identities;

- Talent competitions;
 - Working groups – pupil voice, mental health;
 - Attendance monitoring;
 - Supporting pupils out of school e.g. sending work to pupils in hospital;
 - Target setting with pupils;
 - Co-ordinating with primary schools on transition to secondary school;
 - Organising external speakers;
 - Supporting whole school events (prom, concerts etc).
- As indicated above, a large part of the GT role was communication. This included maintaining a range of paperwork e.g. minutes of meetings, confidential files. A lot of information and opportunities were disseminated to pupils.
- In terms of wellbeing, reference was made to the Shanaari Wheel and the Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) approach to supporting young people. The basis of this was to ensure that every young person was:
- Safe
 - Healthy
 - Achieving
 - Nurtured
 - Active
 - Respected
 - Responsible
 - Included
- A *Pupil Wellbeing Information* sheet, using these wellbeing indicators was used by staff to help discuss how pupils were doing and to identify any support needs or areas of concern. The school was helping all staff to become familiar with the language used and providing feedback using these principles. It was confirmed that this approach was designed to support all pupils, across all abilities, to achieve to the best of their ability.

In response to a query it was noted that staff with Mental Health First Aid Training wore green lanyards and sign-posting for pupils was provided. Two members of staff were training to become trainers for staff at other schools in Aberdeenshire.

Members thanked Ms Stewart for coming along to provide an extremely interesting and helpful overview of the guidance role at Banchory. Parent Council was keen to offer support and Ms Stewart agreed she would take this back to staff to think about.

IS

2.2 ***Focus Topics for Future Meetings***

Following on from feedback from the Literacy Group (refer item 6.1 below) it was suggested that parents might be interested in a talk from the school librarian, Carol Doig. Carol was extremely enthusiastic with lots of good ideas, including the community engagement described below. Members were also encouraged to contact the Chair with any further suggestions so that a list of topics could be collated.

ALL

3. MINUTE OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2019 were approved. There was one minor error to correct and no matters arising from the meeting not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

AS

4. CHAIR'S REPORT

SN had no additional items to report.

5. RECTOR'S REPORT

JuW gave an oral update on the following key issues:-

- **Staffing:** several updates were given:

- o RMPS - Mr Edwin Cameron started at the start of December.
- o Technology, Business & Enterprise - Mr Tamas Ratkos, Teacher of Technical, had been appointed to a fixed term contract. Thanks were extended to supply teachers Mrs Reekie (Business) and Mrs Wilson (Technical) who had supported the Faculty over the Session.
- o Mrs Elaine Findlay left her post in December. She had played a pivotal role with the school website and the school was very grateful for all that she had done. Her hours had been picked up by Mrs Linda Gibb, who was already part of the office staff, and Mrs Susan Strachan.

- **School website:** this would be changing to a template provided by Aberdeenshire Council. A new member of staff was interested in taking on site maintenance. Parents would be advised of the new web address in due course. It was noted that the Council was actively discouraging the use of photos on the pages.

- **Building Update:** The school had met with Bancon Contractors and an early March completion date was now anticipated. There would be a period of transition for the catering staff and once that was complete the area would open. The move from the current library to the new one would also take time. The school intended to hold an open evening for parents to visit the new area. Photos might also be provided, once lighting and painting was completed.

JuW

- **Prelims:** These had taken place over the last two weeks and would finish on Friday. A big thank you was extended to Marjory Masson, the school's chief invigilator, and all the other invigilators who had supported the exams. Thanks were also extended to Mrs Moira Paterson, DHT who had co-ordinated the exams with the support of Mrs Angie Walker, PT ASL.

- **Ski Trip:** The ski trip returned on Sunday after a very successful week. Pupils completed different levels of certification and the snow conditions were very good. She had received an email this week from a gentleman who was on the flight back to Edinburgh with the group. He felt it was important to let the school know how well-mannered the pupils had been and how helpful and supportive the staff were.

- **Pupil News:** several achievements, including former pupils, were noted:

- o Neil Simpson (5M) and his older brother Andrew (former pupil) had been successful with two podium wins in the World Cup Para alpine races in Slovenia. On their

- second Giant Slalom race day they came in 3rd, and two days later, on their first Slalom race this season, they came first.
- Alyria Reece, former pupil, came first in the Scottish Indoor Athletics competition and also broke the Scottish record.
 - S1 Poetry of Science had taken place that week and the work produced was of a very high standard.
 - Sportathon – 120 pupils had signed up for the Sportathon event on Wednesday 12th February; thanks were extended to the parents helping with the food and on the night.
 - The Vex Robotics team had come 3rd the previous day and were through to the National Championships in Telford.
 - Yasmin Sheils and Josie McGarvey (both S6) did very well on Tuesday evening to progress to the semi-final of the Donald Dewar Debate (down to 16 Scottish Schools).
- **Parking:** parking at the end of the school day was still an issue. The safety of pupils was the main focus; cars parked on yellow lines obstructed buses and made it difficult for pupils to move through the car park. Parents were gently reminded to use the parking spaces available or park outwith the front carpark. A communication would be issued to the wider parent forum. It was also suggested that Twitter, Facebook etc. be used to highlight the issue. If the problem persisted it might be necessary to seek advice from the local Police.

ALL

6. WORKING GROUPS

6.1 Literacy

JC provided an update; the Group had met on 23 January and was attended by the new librarian, Carol Doig. The following issues had been discussed:

- **Study skills evaluation:** this consisted of 5 challenge questions under the theme of 'how good is our school'. The aim was to evaluate how the school knew that changes made had improved outcomes for pupils, and to plan the next steps.
- **Community Reading Project and Scottish School Library Improvement Fund:** as part of the project, the subject of a successful funding application, S3s had visited local primaries, nurseries and care homes in November to deliver story sessions; an interim report would include feedback from both staff involved and those visited. The visits had been hugely appreciated and one nursery was keen to have weekly visits. An evaluation, after the next round of visits in March, would include pupil feedback. These visits would consist of inviting local childminders to the library for storytelling sessions. The Group had discussed whether pupil involvement could link to the DofE award; this was a bit of a grey area given the activity was undertaken in school and may not be viewed as 'voluntary'.
- **Literacy Jotter:** the school had visited all cluster primaries to issue literacy jotters and ask P7 teachers what they wanted. The visits had been a success and it was hoped to timetable these in more regularly to encourage greater liaison and strengthen links.

6.2 Numeracy

The group had not met yet. In the meantime it was queried whether there were similar opportunities for links with the wider community, as reported by the Literacy group above.

6.3 **Health and Wellbeing**

The school continued to work towards the Health and Wellbeing Award.

6.4 **Careers**

MH updated the group. There were 5 potential slots for careers talks and options for speakers would be researched by **MH** and **RG**, including pupils who had recently left school and entrepreneurs in the community. These were likely to run on a fortnightly basis from w/c 3 March 2020 to fit with the school timetable. Liaison was ongoing with Gill Bruce, Acting DHT, in respect of Developing the Young Workforce (DYW). It was noted that on the next in service day (18 February), approximately 14 members of teaching staff were going out on work experience.

MH/RG

7. **FINANCE REPORT**

JR confirmed there had been no expenditure since the Careers Fair.

8. **ISSUES ARISING FROM PARENT FORUM**

No issues had been raised/submitted for consideration.

9. **HEALTHY MINDS EVENINNG**

This was scheduled for 20 February 2020 and **LS** confirmed that everything was on track for the night with 38 confirmed attendees so far. It was queried whether it would be possible to make any materials (e.g. slides, links etc.) available to parents who were unable to attend. This would be reviewed after the event.

LS

10. **CLUSTER SCHOOLS**

TA and **MH** hoped to meet to discuss ongoing cluster school liaison – the key purpose was to maintain contact with the cluster schools and pass on any useful information. Encouraging new parents to think about joining the PTA might also be helpful. **CHC** and **CG** also expressed an interest in this activity. **JuW** indicated she would be keen to go along to meetings with the cluster schools. There were specific times when parents needed extra support and consideration might be given to opportunities for new parents to be welcomed to the academy, for example, open days.

TA/MH

CHC/
CG

JuW

11. **FORUMS**

LS highlighted the school's very active Twitter account which several departments, including the Library, were using to share information. This would also be shared on Facebook where possible. **TA** extended thanks to the PE department for a very well run and informative Instagram account.

LS advised that the Scottish Government was running a public consultation on their guidance on the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act which they were looking to refresh; they were actively seeking views and feedback from parents. The draft guidance and an online questionnaire to gather views on the guidance can be found at:

<https://consult.gov.scot/learning.../parental-involvement-act/>

12. FUTURE OF THE PTA

MH and **JuW** had yet to meet with the PTA Chair. The PTA had 4 remaining members. Consideration was given to potential fundraising options, including ways to boost fundraising for the upcoming Sportathon (e.g. a Just Giving page for all parents to donate through). **JuW** indicated the school intended to hold a sponsored walk in May.

Banchory Academy PE department was currently one of the projects that Tesco shoppers could vote for with blue tokens. The more tokens donated the higher the grant received by the winners. **LS** would publicise this on the BAPC Facebook page. A reminder would also go out about [Easyfundraising](#).

ALL
LS

13. MAKEOVER OF THE AREA OUTSIDE THE SCIENCE CORRIDOR

LS asked if the PC would be interesting in offering to help the school upgrade the area outside the science corridor to make it a bit nicer e.g. provide a bench, plants etc. She would contact Mr Skellern to gauge interest.

LS

14. AOB

Banchory Museum and Library: **Cllr AR** updated members on the £500k improvement project to develop Banchory Museum and Library into a culture and visitor centre. The work was due to go ahead during the summer; key aspects included the installation of a lift and exhibition and workspace areas. There would be a public drop-in event on Tuesday, 11 February, from 2.30pm-6.30pm in the library and museum, when the plans would be unveiled.

Lack of large space in school: the learning plaza would provide a lot more space but concerns were noted with regard to the lack of space for the school orchestra to play. It was noted that the sports centre was still being used by the community and could not therefore be re-purposed by the school.

Swimming: the school was still unable to use the new Banchory swimming pool because of the time involved in getting pupils to and from the facility. It was not yet clear if a resolution to this would be possible. It was generally accepted that the key time for pushing school swimming lessons was in primary school.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12 March 2020 at 7.00pm.

16. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

There were no confidential items to discuss.