

BANCHORY ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

Minute of the Meeting held on 12 March 2020

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

In attendance: Johan Arijs, Catriona Beverley, Cllr Rosemary Bruce, Claire Hesketh Crafts, Carol Doig (for item 2.1), Judith Wight (Rector) and Karen Williamson.

Apologies: Ruth Duddy, Cllr Eileen Durno, Kate Ellison, Rebecca Glansbeek, Jill Matthew, Cllr Anne Ross and Jeff Wallace.

SUMMARY OF KEY ITEMS DISCUSSED

Action

- Presentation from the School Librarian (*item 2.1*)
- Rector's Report, including: staffing; learning plaza; and parking (*item 5*)
- Covid-19 (*item 10*)

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies.

2. FOCUS TOPIC

2.1 Overview of the School Library

Carol Doig, Network Librarian since August 2019, spoke to the Committee about the school Library at Banchory Academy, highlighting the following:-

- The pupil-centred ethos; pupil participation in the service was actively encouraged through, for example, quizzes, contributing to stock selection, book 'speed-dating' where pupils shared what they were reading. A lot of effort was made to engage as many pupils as possible, even those that were initially resistant.
- Excitement around the new library space and the focus on supporting pupils whilst managing the move.
- The focus on embedding literacy across the whole school through joint projects, for example, a joint S3 History/English project based around a WWI escape room.
- Recognising achievements across the school.
- Maintaining an active Twitter account, including storytelling for pupils to listen to.
- Engagement with the local community in relation to *Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)*, the Scottish Government's Youth Employment strategy to better prepare young people for the world of work.
- The House Captains engagement in leading activity related to World Book Day.
- Supporting the primary to secondary transition process with the cluster schools.
- Community reading projects in November 2019 and March 2020 which saw pupils going out to read to children in nursery/primary and residents in a local care home. Those involved had received professional storyteller training.
- The extensive digital resources that pupils had access to, including books from across Aberdeenshire. It was queried whether these digital resources could be made available to the cluster schools and it was confirmed that this had been discussed.

Members thanked Ms Doig for coming along to provide an extremely engaging and enthusiastic overview of the school library service demonstrating a huge range of activity.

2.2 **Focus Topics for Future Meetings**

Members were encouraged to contact the Chair with any suggestions so that a list of topics could be collated. Refer item 13 below.

ALL

3. **MINUTE OF LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2020 were approved. There were no matters arising from the meeting not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

4. **CHAIR'S REPORT**

SN had no items to report that were not already covered on the agenda.

5. **RECTOR'S REPORT**

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

- **Staffing:** several updates were given:
 - o Mrs Gill Bruce was appointed Depute Rector at the beginning of the month, replacing Mr Scott Phimister. **LS** (Vice Chair) had sat on the interview panel.
 - o Dr Marten (RMPS) would be leaving after Easter.
 - o Mrs Heidi Jamieson was returning to the RMPS department from maternity leave.
 - o Mrs Lynn Middler, part of the PSA team, was leaving that day.
- **Learning Plaza:** a few snagging issues had to be completed before the official opening the following week; parents had been invited to tour the new facility on Wednesday 18th March.
- **Sporting achievements:** the school rugby team, part of Deeside Rugby, had reached the Scottish schools Quaich final to be held in Edinburgh on the 24th March.
- **Parking:** the police had been very supportive in helping the school target those that continued to park on double yellow lines, grass areas or areas that blocked buses getting through. The school was continuing to monitor this.
- **Communication:** the school website had moved to allow it to align with other Aberdeenshire Schools. This was in the transition stage and would continue to be populated. Various departmental Twitter feeds continued to be busy.
- **S6 Leavers Ceremony:** this year the school was holding its first S6 leavers ceremony at the West Church in Banchory; invitations had been issued that day. The guest speaker would be Mr Niall Ritchie, former PT Guidance.
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Evening:** huge thanks were extended to **LS** and **KD** for their efforts in delivering a very successful event. The evening event had been well attended and had received positive feedback.
- **Sportathon:** thanks were extended to PC members and parents who had supported this event by providing bakes and especially to those who had attended during the night to serve refreshments to staff and pupils. The event had raised approximately

LS/KD

£7k, 20% of which would be donate to Home-Start. It was anticipated that this event might be offered every 3 years.

6. WORKING GROUPS

The Numeracy group had not met yet and the Health and Wellbeing group was on hold.

6.1 Literacy

JC provided an update from the Group's meeting on 20 February:

- **Study skills:** consideration was being given to the timing of S4 induction sessions. Feedback on study skills sessions had been collated and would be discussed at the next Literacy meeting in April. Senior phase study skills lessons would be made available online and members were invited to offer any suggestions for this area of the website:

<https://banchoryacademy.aberdeenshire.sch.uk/senior-phase-study-skills/>

These sessions were specifically designed to support pupils entering the exam phase therefore they were not appropriate for younger years, although they may be adapted and extended to S3 pupils in future. It was agreed that a lot of good work had been undertaken in this area, including supporting different learning styles, and it would be useful to flag online resources more widely to parents.

- **Community Reading Project:** this would be entering its second phase soon; various activities were being considered.
- **Drop Everything and Read:** the S3 House Captains had been involved in promoting this activity.

ALL

JuW to
Clare
Burt

6.2 Careers

MH updated the group on upcoming careers talks which included civil and structural engineering (university and apprenticeship routes) and Aberdeen University admissions (Healthcare and Dentistry). It was also suggested that speakers engaged in the creative industries would be of interest and a number of leads were being followed up.

7. FINANCE REPORT

JR tabled the finance report. It was proposed that BAPC ask the school if they needed anything for the new Library area that was not provided for by the budget. This would be raised with the Literacy group / Librarian.

SN/JC

8. ISSUES ARISING FROM PARENT FORUM

No additional issues had been raised/submitted for consideration.

9. HEALTHY MINDS EVENING

This had taken place on 20 February 2020 and LS, who had been instrumental in organising the event, with support from KD extended thanks to all the staff who had contributed on the evening. The event had been well attended and positive feedback received. It would be important to ensure that all the useful links that had been gathered were shared. It was suggested that this event might be repeated annually although it was agreed that a variation in theme was probably ideal (e.g. an event targeted towards new parents). Suggestions for themes were always welcomed.

LS

10. **COVID-19**

SN had received enquiries from the parent forum asking for information about contingency planning in light of the COVID-19 outbreak. **JuW** confirmed this was a very difficult situation where the school was currently no better informed than parents. The developing situation was under constant review, including planning ahead for potential closure. Currently, there was no indication that SQA exams would be cancelled.

The school was preparing for the likelihood that teaching would have to move online; this was a huge task for staff and included ensuring that all staff moved to using Microsoft Teams, and ensuring all pupils had passwords and knew how to access this platform.

It was noted that upcoming foreign trips were at risk; the school was looking into the situation around reimbursement of monies paid to date etc. as guidance became clearer.

Staff were speaking to pupils about the importance of hand-washing and soap dispensers were being filled regularly to cope with increased usage. It was important that pupils were reassured as much as possible, both in school and at home, to help them to stay calm.

The Aberdeenshire Council web pages were a good source of information and advice.

ALL

11. **COMMUNICATIONS**

There was a concern that some pupils were missing out on information in 'pupil bulletins' passed on by registration teachers; a reminder would be passed to all registration teachers about the importance of this. The school was very much looking forward to the new learning plaza opening so that assemblies could resume; these were a key forum for passing on information to all pupils.

JuW

12. **CLUSTER SCHOOLS**

A meeting was scheduled for 2 April 2020; **JuW** would be happy to attend.

JuW

13. **FORUMS**

CB was the area rep for the National Parent Forum of Scotland (NFPS). The NPFS produced lots of useful resources, for example, factsheets and leaflets. PC chairs and office bearers could attend meetings if they wished to do so. It was also noted that Christine McLennan, the Council's Parental Engagement Officer, was excellent, and it might be worth considering inviting her to attend a future 'focus topic' slot.

**SN/
JuW**

14. **PTA UPDATE**

MH and **JuW** had met with Kate Diamond, the PTA Chair. The PTA had 4 remaining members and was going to have to disband. The potential for the PTA to join or become a sub-group of Parent Council was being reviewed.

JuW

15. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

4 June 2020 at 7.00pm.