

BANCHORY ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

Minute of the Meeting held on 2 December 2021: Virtual Meeting via MS Teams

Present (members): Trish Amundrud, Jacqueline Conroy, Ruth Duddy, Rebecca Glansbeek (Treasurer), Claire Hesketh Crafts (Vice Chair), Scott Newey, Alison Smart (Secretary) and Linda Stromberg (Chair).

In attendance: Catriona Beverley, Cllr Rosemary Bruce, Sheryl Collitor, Alan Crozier, Tegan Jaffray (House Captain), Hannah Jaypalan (House Captain), Eleanor McIlraith (item 1), Bridget Rhodes, Michelle Skellern (item 1), Lynne Street, Judith Wight (Rector), Anita Wlodarz.

Apologies: Louise Considine, Cllr Eileen Durno, Kate Ellison, Andrea Hale, Sofi Izaat, Colin MacLeod and Cllr Anne Ross.

1. FOCUS TOPIC – SUPPORTING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Mrs Eleanor McIlraith, Principal Teacher of Guidance (PTG) and Mrs Michelle Skellern, Depute Rector, who had been invited to deliver a focus topic session to brief Parent Council on the support that was provided in school in respect of supporting emotional wellbeing. The following key points were covered:

Universal and Targeted Support: both types of support had always been available with the latter falling to staff from Additional Support for Learning (ASL) and the PTGs, with support from CLD (?), School Nurse, First Aider and Pupil Support Workers (PSWs). Where required, additional support was targeted to individual needs and circumstances and designed to overcome barriers to learning. Targeted support could be provided for: specific learning difficulties; disability; social, emotional, and behavioural issues; bereavement / trauma; family issues; planning for the future beyond school. Approx. 147 pupils had needed targeted support during lockdown, resulting in a need for increased resources, including funding.

Staff Team: increasing demand for support had resulted in a review of the previous model and the development of a Targeted Support Team, which included the PSWs, a trainee counsellor, and Michelle Corsar (PSA). Mrs McIlraith's role had now changed to have a full-time focus on leading the targeted support team, (up from 2 days per week since January 2021). The team worked closely with the PTGs and ASL, and with each other, to provide support where needed.

A new 'Wellbeing Hub' was being established and staff were looking to decorate this to create a 'home from home' for pupils who needed this type of safe space, particularly at the start and end of the school day. They were seeking a table to seat approximately 8 people if anyone could help.

Interventions: Interventions would last as long as necessary and could be short or long term. Decisions on who needed to be referred to the Targeted Support Team were made in consultation with PTGs, Senior Leadership, and ASL, and kept under ongoing review. Parents / carers would always be involved in these discussions.

ALL

There were many different types of targeted support interventions (some described in more detail below) focusing on a range of aspects, such as transition groups (P7 – S1) focused on building self-esteem and confidence, wellbeing, building positive relationships, communications, friendship groups etc.

'Nurture' was a new targeted intervention (and a UK-wide initiative) consisting of one period every day, covered by 2 members of staff, focusing on wellbeing and relationships.

'LIAM' was an early intervention, low intensity anxiety management programme. It was an NHS-led CBT type intervention delivered both 1-1 and in groups. Teachers were coached and supervised by a CAMHS psychologist and had access to various toolkits to support delivery.

'Seasons for Growth' was an 8-week programme aimed at family bereavement, loss, change etc. delivered by a trained Pupil Support Worker.

More pupils had required support during the pandemic; they were identified in a variety of ways, often by their guidance teacher but also through self-referral, parents/carers raising issues, and sometimes friends referred their friends. There was an 'I need help' form that pupils could complete. Support was also advertised via posters, website and on MS Teams, with a QR code that pupils could use to ask for help and also indicate who they wanted to see or speak to. Support could also be sought anonymously.

A range of other types of support were offered, for example, through outdoor learning, peer listening, LGBT group, young carers group, school counsellor, mental health first aid, breakfast / after school support, lunch time drop ins, wellness activities, enterprise activities.

It was noted that the staff supporting emotional wellbeing worked closely with staff involved in providing more traditional academic learning support. This also helped to ensure that the range of support available could be targeted as appropriately as possible.

The Chair thanked both teachers for attending to provide an extremely helpful overview of the extensive range of support initiatives being delivered by the school.

EMcl/
MS

2. **MINUTE OF LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2021 were approved.

3. **CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular the two School Captains, Hannah and Tegan, who were attending for the first time. The following issues were highlighted:

Treasurer: Rebecca Glansbeek was taking over the role of Treasurer and a handover would be arranged shortly.

RG

Uniform Exchange: this had run again in mid-November and had included Banchory Primary. The next one would be in March 2022. Donations raised had been made to the school and to the church, for the use of the hall. Thanks were extended to those who had helped to run the exchange (**KE, RG, and Vicki Duncan**).

Presentation to parents: on 25 November **LS** had delivered an online talk to interested parents to introduce Parent Council and to encourage more parents to come along, particularly new parents who had missed out on this type of introduction as a result of the pandemic.

4. **RECTOR'S REPORT**

JuW gave an oral update on the following key issues, many of which were issues that had been raised with school in recent weeks:-

Storm Update: Thanks were extended to all parents for their help and understanding following the early closure of the school on Friday 26th Nov. The evacuation process went smoothly, however, parents were asked to not park in the school car park when an incident like this occurred as there was a need to spread buses out to ensure everyone's safety and allow them to depart as quickly as possible. Parents were also reminded that parking in the school car park was not allowed at the moment, and it would be very much appreciated if this request was accommodated. Congratulations were extended to all young people who had helped within the local community over the last 5 days in the aftermath of Storm Arwen, for example, delivering provisions and checking on neighbours.

Cllr RB echoed this message, acknowledging the level of community spirit in evidence and passing on her thanks to the pupils concerned. Communication was a huge factor in these circumstances and future resilience plans would be considered. It was also noted by a parent member that some children had been sent home from schools, that had heat and light, to homes that were without power, and in some cases no water. It was suggested that a school might have been used as a refuge/hub of sorts where people could access heat as well as information. Although it was appreciated that the full closure of schools had not been taken lightly, this was something to be aware of should this happen again in future.

Pupil Achievements: Congratulations were extended to Matthew Mair (S5) who won best speaker this week at the St Andrews Day debate with St Andrews University.

Staffing:

- Mrs Shelly Lawson Business Education, had left to take up a new post. Mrs Rhona Sivewright, a former teacher at the school, was working in the Department 3 days a week while the post was advertised.
- Recruitment was currently very difficult with a particular shortage in the STEM subjects. The school was fortunate to have supply staff and long-term staff working with it. Extra Covid recovery money had enabled the school to employ Mrs Lindsey Leaf (Music) one day a week and Mrs Shona Cammack had joined the Science Department for 2 days a week.
- Mr Mark Adam had started two days a week in the Guidance Department job sharing with Ms McIlraith. He would be moving to full time in January when Ms McIlraith led the targeted intervention programme.

All
Parents

Cllrs

Rights Respecting Schools: the school was recently awarded the Bronze Award; well done to all staff and pupils involved in this. The school was currently developing knowledge of the UNCRC with staff, pupils and the wider community, and embarking on work toward the silver award.

Covid Government Guidelines: Pupils and staff were still required to wear face coverings in class and in the corridors until further notice (unless exempt). School was currently having to issue 80-100 masks some days and parents were asked for support in ensuring that their child had a mask with them each day. Guidelines also meant that windows had to remain open slightly for ventilation, pupils would be able to wear jackets in class at the teacher's discretion. Staff had noticed many pupils not dressed for the weather and would ask that parents check they had warm clothing when they left in the morning.

Lunchtime clubs: guidelines had prevented some extra-curricular clubs starting up again, although the string orchestra could now resume. In addition, pupils were meeting for debating club, sports events were growing, pupils had access to chess in the school library at lunchtimes and S1 Science Club. Some disappointment was expressed by members that there was no art club, or work experience for S4s on offer.

Activities Week: Due to the uncertainty of trips next year, the decision was made to cancel for next May and June. School would not be covered by insurance and establishments required commitments at this time of the year. It was hoped that some form of activities week would be reintroduced in session 2022-2023 but how this would look was difficult to say at this point.

Parents' Evening: the school had undertaken the first virtual meeting for S1's and had S5/6 on the 9th followed by S4 on 14th. Parental slots had always been 5 minutes, which allowed the school to maximise the number of appointments available. School could only offer one per year which was the entitlement due to the Working Time agreement that employees work under.

PE changing: the school had re-introduced PE changing which was new for many year groups but had always been the protocol pre Covid 19. Alternative arrangements had been put in place for those pupils that the school was aware were anxious about this.

Reports: these were being issued this week. The template that was used was an Aberdeenshire one and not specific to Banchory Academy. Pupils all received one full report and a tracking report stating current working level and target grades.

Access to Teams for parents: Show my Homework allowed parents to access their child's work enabling them to support their learning. Teams did not have this facility so parents would have to ask their child to view any work that had been posted.

Uniform Exchange: Thanks were extended to the parent council for the uniform exchange and the resulting funds that had been given to the school.

5. **WORKING GROUPS**

Details had yet to be confirmed.

6. **FINANCE REPORT**

There was nothing to note, other than the proposed handover of the position of Treasurer to **RG**.

7. **PARENT COUNCIL CONSTITUTION REVIEW**

This would be progressed outwith BAPC at some point.

8. **REVIEW OF PARENTAL SURVEY / PARENT COUNCIL AIMS**

The Chair had issued a short survey to parents which was primarily designed to reach out to parents who might be unfamiliar with Parent Council and encourage them to engage. A further survey had been issued asking for questions parents might have for Parent Council. This had worked well and had also helped the Rector to tailor her report to cover some of the issues raised. This format might be used again in the future, in advance of meetings.

The former survey had generated approximately 100 responses and feedback included:

- Some parents did not believe that PC represented parents' views.
- Many parents indicated they did not follow PC social media accounts.
- Several indicated they didn't feel welcome when it came to attending meetings.
- In terms of communications from school, most preferred Groupcall or a newsletter.

It was queried whether the meeting link could be issued to all parents as the process of registering an interest with the Chair in order to receive the meeting link was believed to be off-putting for some.

JuW

It was agreed that it would be helpful to reinstate a BAPC web page on the school's website and if one member could take responsibility for liaising with school in this respect, they could follow this up with the appropriate member of staff (Scott Lieper). It was suggested that a Groupcall message could be sent when anything significant was posted/added/ In addition, a newsletter with photos highlighting the work and contributions of PC was suggested.

LS/CHC

It was suggested it might be useful to have a meeting dedicated to considering communication with the parent forum.

LS

9. **AOB**

There were discussions around a number of more sensitive topics, including:

- Rape culture / revenge porn / online pornography
- A ScotGov questionnaire, recently issued to local authorities for issue to pupils (S4-S6), which contained questions about their sexual experiences, including anal sex. Aberdeenshire Council had taken a decision, as had several other councils, not to distribute

this in light of concerns raised about the content. Several parents were aware of the questionnaire and expressed relief about this not being issued to their children.

A parent member highlighted a documentary released by social media influencer Zara McDermott - 'Uncovering Rape Culture' (available on BBC iPlayer) – which focussed on the culture within schools. It was suggested that this might prove a useful tool to generate conversation with teenage boys and girls given that these was an issue that had been raised as a concern at national level. It was acknowledged that these were difficult conversations for teenagers (especially boys) to have with their parents and with each other. The school was aware of these issues and related discussions were had in some PSE class. It was agreed that parents would welcome information on the types of issues that were being addressed in school.

JuW

Pornography was also known to be a huge issue on social media and parents would like to see action being taken at council level to address the impact this was having on young people, with parental involvement where appropriate.

10. **FOCUS TOPICS/SESSIONS**

No other issues had been raised in advance of the meeting.

11. **ISSUES ARISING FROM THE PARENT FORUM NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE**

No other issues had been raised in advance of the meeting.

12. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Dates for future meetings:

- 27 January 2022
- 10 March 2022
- 2 June 2022