

# BAPC

## Banchory Academy Parent Council

Newsletter 02  
May 2023

Welcome to the second edition of our newsletter. We are in the middle of exam time for our older pupils and we hope that things are going well for both students and their support crew at home. The S1-3s are preparing for their activities week and the P7s for their transition days. A busy time for all. A lot has also happened in the preceding few months, not least the announcement of the changes to the Nat 5 choices and the changes to come to the school day as a consequence of that.

Since our last newsletter, we have held two meetings of the Parent Council, the minutes of which can be found on the Parent area of the school website:

<https://banchoryacademy.aberdeenshire.sch.uk/parent-council/>

Topics raised at the meetings not covered in detail below included discussion around whether the school would provide any safe driving workshops in the near future, as has been done in the past? Additionally, several parents have reported their children having issues with the school toilets, involving intimidating behaviour, vaping and vandalism. The school is aware of the problems and implementing several strategies to try and address them. A reminder to all that vaping is not permitted anywhere within Aberdeenshire Council premises and it is against the

law for them to be purchased by anyone under the age of 18. Vapes will be confiscated and disciplinary action taken. Also discussed were the school menu, theft, exam study skills and homework policy. A parent raised a concern that parents are not sufficiently informed of upcoming sporting or other extracurricular events, to allow them to discuss this with their child. The approach of the school is to encourage children to become more self-sufficient and they are informed of anything upcoming via assemblies or their teachers. These are also often communicated to parents through the social media channels, in particular Instagram at: **banchoryacademy**, **banchoryacademyartanddesign**, **banchoryacademype** and **ba\_outdoor\_learning**.

We have been glad to recently welcome a few new members, but any parent/carer of a Banchory Academy pupil is still welcome to come along, whether you intend to join the PC or simply to see what goes on. We aim to circulate the agenda ahead of the meetings, so you can see if there is a particular area of concern that you might wish to contribute to. Alternatively, you can contact the PC anytime via email on: [chair.bapc@gmail.com](mailto:chair.bapc@gmail.com)

Trish Amundrud is stepping down as secretary and Sarah Little has taken up the post. Huge thanks to both. Alison Smart has resigned and we wish to extend heartfelt thanks for her input and support over the several years of her membership.

## Uniform Exchange

The next Uniform Exchange will be on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> July 10am-12pm, with collection taking place at the school Monday 26<sup>th</sup> to Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> June. Further details will be circulated nearer the time. Please hang onto any study books now finished with and we will gladly take them.

Offers of assistance with this would be gratefully received as it is now dependent on a very small number of individuals.

Along with current Rag Bag collection (9<sup>th</sup> May), proceeds will be used to support the school in providing extracurricular activities, such as team transport, author visits, community projects and so on.

A useful link for parents/carers of pupils who may be looking for work:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/children-the-law#article-top>



## Changes to the Curriculum and School Day

At our January meeting, DHT Gill Bruce presented to the PC the proposed changes to the curriculum at Nat 5 level (S4). At present, S3 pupils select four choices to take forward, plus mandatory English and Maths (as well as core PE and RMPS). When the current S2s come to make their choices for S4 in 2024, they will then be able to take a fifth subject, giving seven in total. The choice structure for Highers in S5 will remain the same. To accommodate an extra subject, a new timetable structure is being planned which will see changes to the timing of the school day. This will be discussed with parents next session in more detail. A huge amount of work has gone into planning these changes, including renegotiating contracts with the bus companies, and will hopefully result in a positive outcome for all involved.

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Email: [chair.bapc@gmail.com](mailto:chair.bapc@gmail.com) Website: <https://banchoryacademy.aberdeenshire.sch.uk/parent-council>

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Instagram: [banchory\\_academy\\_parent\\_forum](https://www.instagram.com/banchory_academy_parent_forum)

The PTA sadly folded in recent years and it was proposed that it might be time, now that life is returning to normal post-covid, to explore whether there was an appetite for restarting this. The PTA had previously organised several key fundraising events which were enjoyed by all. This idea will be explored further once the new S1s have settled in after the summer break.

## Family Learning – Understanding Teams

The school recently ran an information session aimed at helping parents understand how the school makes use of Microsoft Teams to facilitate learning, including for homework. The session was reported to be excellent but poorly attended and the school aims to run it again in the near future.

## School Library

Also at the meeting in January, we were delighted to welcome Lizzie Bird, the school librarian. The redeveloped library is proving to be a popular and well-used resource, where Mrs Bird aims to offer a safe space with reliable information, as an antidote to a high pressure world and the online environment, where there are few safety nets and it is hard to distinguish good information from misinformation. As well as a good range of books, clubs and activities are on offer, including chess, board games and jigsaws. The library contains over 8000 books, including high interest fiction and non-fiction, careers and exam books, study guides, current affairs magazines and dyslexia appropriate materials. There is even a stationery shop for pupils who might need a piece of equipment. Books can be borrowed from the University of Aberdeen and old

books are donated to Better World Books. Not only is the library a physical resource, it is also digital, with access through Teams and the Libby app. Libby is the digital bookshelf of the Aberdeenshire Libraries and has a wide selection of ebooks and audiobooks. Pupils can ask Mrs Bird for a PIN to use with the app.

Many books are still missing since Covid and the school would greatly appreciate any library books that you find at home being returned as soon as possible. Donations of study guides (Nat 5, Higher and Advanced Higher) are also appreciated as these are popular with senior students. The Parent Council was happy to be in a position to make a donation of £500 to the library, which will go towards books, author visits, community reading projects and so on.

## Drugs and Alcohol Parent Information Evening

7pm, Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> May, School Learning Plaza

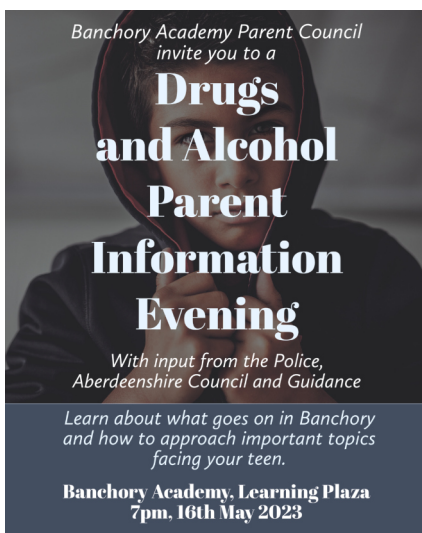
The Parent Council is hosting an information evening for parents/carers of pupils at Banchory Academy and current P7s. Speakers will include the Police, (local and Harm Reduction Unit), Health and Social Care – Aberdeenshire Council, and School Guidance Staff.

Issues addressed will include:

- What goes on in Banchory?
- How do I talk to my child about drug and alcohol abuse?
- What more can I do as a parent?
- Are all drugs equally dangerous?
- What actions do the school and police take when dealing with this issue?
- What do I do if my child is already using drugs/alcohol?

If you have any questions, please contact the PC on [chair.bapc@gmail.com](mailto:chair.bapc@gmail.com)

We look forward to seeing you there.



## Rector's Report

At each meeting Mrs Wight provides a report on current priorities facing the school.

In regard to filling staff vacancies, Banchory has the same challenges faced by schools across the Shire, but Mrs Wight was pleased to report that with recent recruitment, both Business Education and Physics are currently fully staffed. Other topics included: anti-social behaviour, SQA exam period and Activities Week, the S6 Prom and last school day, school uniform, the P7 parents information evening and the use of mobile phones in class. The full report can be found in the Minutes of the Meeting on the Parent Council section of the school website.

## How Can You Help?

- Become an ordinary member – attending meetings to ensure cross representation of the school when items are discussed
- Help at one of our Uniform Exchanges – usually a Saturday morning at the West Church, just a few times a year
- Working Groups
- Helping to organise upcoming Information or Social Events

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