

Banchory Academy Parent Council Meeting

Minutes

23 November 2023 6.30-9.00pm

Learning Plaza, Banchory Academy and Microsoft Teams

PC Member Attendees: Sofi Izatt (Chair); Sarah Little (Secretary); Ruth Hutchinson (Treasurer); Rebecca Glansbeek; Karen Alford; Louise Considine; Marion Fyfe; Fiona Melville; Jennifer Currie; Julia Fleming; Sophie Logue McLeod; Fiona Shanley

School representatives: Judith Wight (Rector); Gill Bruce (Depute Rector)

PC Member Apologies: Chigo Opara; Scott Newey; Kate Parton

Parent Forum Attendees: Angela Ollerhead; Jennie Morrison; Kelly Noble; Kirsty Lennox; Claire Stutter; Claire Bull; Sarah Muir; Maria Panagiotidou; Catriona McIntosh; Catriona Beverly; Kate Harle (online); Joanne Wisely (online); Erminia Townsend (online)

1. Approve minutes of last PC meeting

The minutes from the last meeting on 14 September 2023 were approved with no matters arising.

2. Chair's Report

The Rag Bag collection was cancelled due to insufficient donations. Any donations received will be stored until the next one.

The Uniform collection has been extended until Friday 24 November.

PC Chairs meeting with Aberdeenshire Council - Monday 9th October

Hosted by Laurence Findlay - Director of Education and Children's Services / Susan Smith - Head of Education and Chief Education Officer / Christine McLennan - Education Support Officer – Parental Engagement and Learner Participation with PC Reps from Banchory, Alford, Mearns, Mackie, Aboyne, HoB Primary, Cluny Primary.

- The role of the parent council should be focused on working in partnership with the head and SLT, parents and pupils on school improvement
- There's an ongoing review of the education/assessment reforms to move to a Scottish Diploma and move away from Nat 5s/exam-only qualifications
- There needs to be greater consistency across curriculum, leadership and assessments
- Recruitment in secondaries still very challenging, especially in rural areas
- Local councillors should be lobbied to ensure spending on education, especially in light of forthcoming council budget cuts
- We should be working together with other schools/PCs to share best practice
- Head teachers and SLT time being taken up in day-to-day operations and not leading the schools

- Ensure events PCs run give back to the community, not just fundraising (asking for money)
- Look at sharing a database of skill sets of parents with HoB and Banchory Primary for volunteering ops/enrichment/careers/skills

Secondary School Informal Parent Council meeting – Tuesday 21st November (online)

Hosted by Christine McLennan (Education Support Officer – Parental Engagement and Learner Participation, Aberdeenshire Council) and attended by PC representatives from Inverurie, Mackie, Fraserburgh and Banchory. There was no formal agenda but PCs shared best practice with regards:

- parent communications
- how they ran their meetings over the academic year
- working collaboratively with school senior leadership teams

Also discussed the teacher shortages across Aberdeenshire and the campaigning Claire Rennie from Fraserburgh is doing on this to get it in front of Scottish MPs. Chair has signed Claire's open letter to the Cabinet Secretary.

3. Treasurer's Report

Financial Statement for meeting held on 23/11/23

Opening balance

31/07/23

£2113.20

Outgoing: Payment to Sarah Little

£45.11

(expenses for Parents Welcome Evening)

Closing balance

30/09/23

£2068.09

Ruth is currently drafting an expense claim procedure.

Discussion around spending of the PC funds on subsidising extra curricular transport. Judith suggested asking the pupils what they would like to spend the money on. No decision reached.

4. Rector's Report

Staffing

- Mr Nat Coe PT ASL has taken up a new post at Aberdeen Grammar and will be leaving us at the end of this term. He is currently not in school with Mrs Lisa Rodger acting in his place.

- Mr Ryan Smith has been appointed as acting PTG. This is a new post created due to an increase in role. Pupils will be moved from all 4 classes into this new "house" until June 2025. Details will follow before he starts mid December.
- Mr Mark Adam PTG is leaving at the end of this term to take up a PE post at Robert Gordon's College. His post is currently being advertised.
- Mr Roddy Maclean Cluster Business Support manager has taken up a new role within the local authority. He is being replaced by Mrs Moyra Patience who is starting with us mid December. Her role is to oversee the non-teaching side of the school.
- We have welcomed Mrs Catherine Stuart to the Drama Department.
- Due to being unable to recruit a HE teacher, we have moved S1 for one period a week to Science. This has worked well.

Building update

The sports centre is currently shut due to new lighting going in.

Children In Need

We had a fantastic day supporting Children in Need last Wednesday. The theme was the 80's and everyone made a huge effort. Over £1800 was raised, a special mention to the Advanced Higher Maths class who ran a Pi route around Banchory and raised over £600.

Greenpower

Banchory Academy's Greenpower team rounded off the racing season at the International F24 Greenpower finals at Goodwood and came 21 st and 37 th out of 90 international racing teams. They were best in class from Scotland.

Advanced Higher Geography

The advanced higher geography class recently participated in a residential course to Millport and were joined by students from Inverurie Academy. This was to support their studies this year.

Technologies Day

We welcomed back our business partners for our annual technologies day in October. WM Donald, Bancon Homes, Deeside timberframe Ltd, Volvo were some of the companies that came along and provided many different experiences for our young people.

Advanced Higher English visit

8 of our Advanced Higher pupils participated in Aberdeenshire's Writefest Day at Aberdeen University earlier this month. They met visiting authors and journalists who all supported pieces of writing they are doing presently.

Sport

Our boys and girls football teams continue to do well in the many cups they are competing in.

The senior girls netball team were triumphant against Banff Academy recently winning 24-14. Congratulations to Ava Fettes who last week won silver at the DMT World Age Group Championships – fantastic achievement.

Remembrance Day

The whole school fell quiet on the 10th of November for our Remembrance Service. Pipers contributed to the event by playing Highland Cathedral just after 11am following a beautiful film that had been produced by pupils.

5. School improvement plan and PC support

The Parent Council Chair had requested a meeting with Judith to discuss the School Improvement Plan and it was noted if there was still more to discuss following the PC meeting, then they would meet.

The School Improvement Plan will be available on the School's website in due course as the website is currently undergoing some updates. Temporarily, the slides presented at the meeting are available to view [here](#)

The school self-evaluates based on the 'How Good Is Our School 4' (HGIOUS) document.

The Key Quality Indicators (QI) the school is inspected on are:

1.3 Leadership of Change

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

Judith explained that when Banchory Academy is next inspected, it could be a short inspection (2 days) focusing on 2 of the 4 QIs above (2.3 and 3.2), or a full inspection focusing on all 4 QIs.

Banchory Academy's Improvement Plan this academic year is based on 5 priorities which are referenced in the slides, and the school will be working with the Parent Forum on the Plan and its vision. The school has invited parents to be involved through working groups. Names were submitted last academic year and again in October this year, but parents have not heard back. **Action: Judith to follow up.**

6. Curriculum Changes from 2024

Again, please refer to the slides presented at the meeting [here](#)

The aim of the change in curriculum is to give pupils the opportunity to have more choice for their qualifications at the end of their secondary education. Pupils will be offered 7 qualifications in S4 (currently 6), 5 in S5 and 4 in S6. The spread of English and Maths across S3 and S4 will be more even with 4 periods each / week (currently 5 in S3 and 3 in S4).

Following consultation with Aberdeenshire Council, staff and transport companies, the new curriculum will be implemented from June 2024. Banchory Academy will then move to an asymmetric week (see [Slide 22](#))

To allow for the increase in courses there will be 32 periods of 50 minutes of teaching each week (currently there are 30 periods of 55 minutes) and an additional 10 minutes of US (Universal Support) time each morning where registration takes place. This means that the Academy will continue to deliver the statutory 1650 minutes per week of teacher contact time.

School will start at 8.40am every day and finish either 3.00pm (Tuesday, Thursday, Friday) or 3.50pm (Monday and Wednesday)

The changes will affect the course choices for current S3 and Mrs Bruce will look into and adjust where necessary, course choices for current S4 and S5.

Inverurie and Alford academies already follow an asymmetric week with positive results.

Additional note: A letter was sent to all parents via email on 27th November outlining the curriculum changes. [View the letter](#)

7. Update from PC Chairs meetings with Aberdeenshire Council

See Chair's report

8. National Parent Forum Scotland: survey (Education Reform)

Catriona Beverly is the Aberdeenshire representative on the National Parent Forum and informed the meeting the following.

There is a national discussion around Scottish Diploma of Achievement to replace focus on exam only assessments, including:

- Programmes of learning (exams)
- Personal pathway
- Project learning

NPFS launched a survey yesterday to follow up on their work as part of the discussions around Education Reform, to gain feedback from parents and carers on:

- Proposals for replacing the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
- The role of inspection in Scottish education
- The role of legislation in improving education in Scotland

You can read more about the Scottish Government's current consultation here:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/consultation-provisions-education-bill>

You can complete the survey here: <https://forms.gle/frR9wJDr9zKePQxj6> or read more about it on the NPFS website here: <https://www.npfs.org.uk/.../have-your-say-education.../>

9. Events

- A Uniform Exchange will take place on 25 November, 10am-12pm in the West Church. All donations welcome.

- The Parent Council had been planning a Social Media Information Evening for parents in conjunction with local Police. However, Aberdeenshire Council are currently compiling a social media toolkit for parent councils to deliver training to parents, so we are awaiting this, hopefully in early 2024.

10. Office Bearer role descriptions

Office bearer role descriptions were approved and will be uploaded to the school website along with the Parent Council Member role description.

A new role (not an Office Bearer) of a Social Media & Comms person has been drawn up and we are currently recruiting for this role. This can be shared by one or more people and will involve posting on the Parent Forum social media accounts (Facebook and Instagram) and monitoring comments/direct messages. There is also an opportunity to create the BAPC newsletter several times each year. Please contact Sofi if you'd like more information.

11. Issues arising from Parent Forum

- **Toilet vandalism:** There has been a recent spate of vandalism and the school will close toilets if deemed unsafe e.g. soap dispensers or toilet roll holders off wall; two doors have been damaged and it cost the school £500 to replace them. There are always toilets open in the school so pupils have other options. The school is working as a community to resolve poor behaviour.
- **Smoking/vaping:** SLT and teachers monitor the toilets and there have been very few instances found. It has decreased over the last few months. There are cameras outside all but one toilet block. Students can scan QR codes to report what's happening and there are 'I need help' cards in every PSE hut. We discussed using PC funds to install alarms/smoke detectors in the toilets. **Action: Sarah to investigate**
A letter to be written to parents to discourage vaping at school. **Action: PC to write**
- **Teacher shortages:** Banchory Academy couldn't recruit a 0.8FTE HE teacher after the previous one left so S1 pupils now have one period of HE and an additional period of Science. Also couldn't recruit a 0.6FTE Maths teacher so this is being covered by Support for Learning teachers.
- **Mobile phones in class:** Pupils have been made aware of the school's expectations in assemblies i.e. not using in class or if leaving the classroom. There is no requirement for pupils to have a mobile phone to access class learning. They are sometimes used for educational games e.g. Maths. The school has Chromebooks but simply not enough for the whole school. The vast majority of pupils follow the rules around mobile phones at school and the school wants to support sensible use of phones as an integral part of young people's lives.
- **Fizzy beverages in school canteen:** Now that evidence has been published regarding health risks of diet drinks, some parents wish for them to be removed from the school canteen. However, the school follows the Aberdeenshire Council policy which follows National Guidelines so the PC would need to write to them to

take it to the Scottish government. One parent understood that another academy had managed to ban fizzy drinks at school.

Action: Judith to follow up with the academy mentioned

Action: Catriona to take the issue to NPFS to discuss nationally

12. AOB

None

13. Proposed dates for next meetings

- 25th January
- 21st March
- 16th May
- 27th June - end of year social

14. The chair thanked everybody for coming and closed the meeting.