

BAPC

Banchory Academy Parent Council

Newsletter 03
February 2024

Next Meeting

21st March at 6:30pm

Further details will be circulated nearer the time, but please contact the Chair if there is anything that you would like to discuss in advance.

Firstly, apologies for length of time since the last issue of this newsletter; as ever, there has been lots going on behind the scenes. Prelims have just finished for our senior students and half term is upon us. Pupils in S3, S4 and S5 are making their choices for the following academic year while S6s may be looking to life beyond Academy. As you will be aware, 2024 will see the implementation of a change to the school day, a big change for everyone involved but facilitating an extra subject choice in S4. Information on this has been circulated to all parents/carers and further detail can be found in the presentation linked in the article below.

Since our last newsletter, the Parent Council have met twice (Nov and Jan), the minutes of which can be found on the Parent area of the school website:

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

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 to any of the meetings or request to join in via MS Teams. Details are circulated via Groupcall and our social media channels ahead of upcoming meetings. Alternatively, you can contact the PC anytime via email on: chair.bapc@gmail.com

Rector's Report

At each meeting Mrs Wight provides a report on current priorities facing the school. The full report can be found in the Minutes of the Meeting on the Parent Council section of the school website.

As well as updating the PC on staff changes, sporting achievements and special school events, Mrs Wight discussed recent decision-making around school closures, partial closures and delayed openings due to weather concerns. The school has a very strong working relationship with school transport, but ultimately transport is not under the control of the school. They will work together to come to the best arrangements for each situation and inform parents in as timely a manner as possible. Use is made of Groupcall, the Aberdeenshire website and the Aberdeenshire App; all are updated as rapidly and regularly as possible.

NOTE: Can parents and carers please ensure that the school has correct and up to date contact information. This is really important and so if in doubt about whether yours are correct, please contact the school office with current email/phone details.

Topics For Future Meetings

In order to ensure that the PC contributes to the school in a productive and strategic manner, a range of topics for future meetings have been suggested. These include: presentations by the Working Groups, looking at DYW and Skills Development Scotland, how our kids do in their exams, tracking-monitoring-reporting, career pathways involving apprenticeships and colleges, reports and how to read them. This list is not exhaustive and to suggest any additional strategic topics, please email us on chair.bapc@gmail.com

National Parent Forum Scotland

The National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFS) is a volunteer-led organisation that works to ensure that parents play a full and equal role in education. It was established in 2009 to give Parent Councils and parents an opportunity to discuss and raise educational issues of mutual interest or concerns at a national level. Following them on social media is a good way to keep abreast of current priorities but they also have a very comprehensive website.

Their 'Nutshell Series' is a really useful resource, with bitesize guides on topics ranging from Home or Blended Learning to STEM to CfE, and a Nutshell on all of the main subjects available to our young people under the SQA.

<https://www.npfs.org.uk/downloads/>

They also regularly run surveys such as the recent "Have your say: education reform (national bodies: qualifications & assessment)".

Catriona Beverley has been a representative for Aberdeenshire on the NPFS for some time now and is able to provide a really useful and informative direct link between our own PC and issues being discussed at national level. She fed back to the meeting just how different the challenges that schools face can be across different localities and under different Local Authorities.

Website: <https://www.npfs.org.uk>
@ParentForumScot on Twitter
@ParentForumScotland on Facebook

Banchory Academy Parent Council

Email: chair.bapc@gmail.com Website: <https://banchoryacademy.aberdeenshire.sch.uk/parent-council>
Facebook: Banchory Academy Parent Forum Instagram: [banchory_academy_parent_forum](https://www.instagram.com/banchory_academy_parent_forum)

At the November meeting, Mrs Wight gave a presentation to the Parent Council on the School Improvement Plan, a comprehensive document which provides an opportunity for the school to reflect on what it is currently doing well, what they would like to improve and where to go from here. The presentation slides can be found here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-PPcMd9tvJ-2GCIHHfs3r5G222FTXxqt/edit>

'How Good is our School 4' (HGIOUS) is the document that schools use to support self-evaluation. The significant relationship between effective self-evaluation and school improvement can be seen as an 'inwards, outwards and forwards approach'. The school asks itself the following questions:

- How are we doing?
- How do we know?
- What are we going to do now?

The key Quality Indicators that schools are 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

Working Groups

In school, there are several active Working Groups, looking at particular topics. Having a parent representative sit on each group is a way for the Parent Forum to support and be involved in the school improvement plan.

Currently the groups are:

- Learning – Teaching – Assessment (LTA)
- Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)
- Health and Wellbeing
- Digital Literacy
- Family Learning
- Curriculum Structure
- Literacy and Numeracy
- Positive Relationships

The PC heard from two members who had each attended a working group; LTA and DYW. Both members spoke highly of what was being achieved by these groups and appreciated the opportunity to be involved. Meetings tend to be held at lunch times and we are exploring options for parents/carers to support them even if they cannot attend in person due to other commitments. If you would like further information about getting involved please email Sofi on chair.bapc@gmail.com

Uniform Exchange and Rag Bag

Last November, BAPC organised a joint clothing collection for a Uniform Exchange and a RAG Bag collection. Thank you so much to everyone who supported this by donating items and coming along to the exchange. Our quietest one to date, we raised £34 from the exchange (after making a donation to the church for use of the hall) with a further £84 being raised from the Rag Bag.

It is intended that we will hold another Uniform Exchange June/July, and another Rag Bag collection is booked for **1st May**.

Banchory Academy's Improvement Plan this academic year is based on five priorities (in no particular order):

- Priority 1: To develop our school ethos through promoting positive relationships and our vision, aims and values
- Priority 2: To develop and improve the curriculum offer and embed DYW (Developing the Young Workforce) skills.
- Priority 3: To improve our approach to Learning, Teaching and Assessment.
- Priority 4: To improve wellbeing through ethos of inclusion, equity and equality.
- Priority 5: To improve approaches to raising attainment through Teaching, Monitoring and Reporting.

One of the areas for improvement that the school identified was to offer seven subjects in S4 (Nat 4/5 level), rather than the current six. To facilitate this, as well improve efficiency in the timetable and offer more Maths and English in S4 than currently, the school week has been restructured to increase the number of lesson periods available. Information on this has now been circulated to the whole Parent Forum via Groupcall and information evenings are currently being held for parents/carers of pupils in the process of making subject choices.

To support students and parents with subject choices, and to give information on potential future pathways, the school has created a Pathways website to provide information and options.

<https://sites.google.com/as.glow.scot/banchory-academy-pathways/home>

Chair's Report

In October and November last year, BAPC was represented at various meetings with Aberdeenshire Council, where several important topics were raised. Prominent among these was the teacher shortage and difficulties of recruitment, felt particularly severely here in the North East. It is hoped that the Cabinet Secretary will meet with Aberdeenshire PC Chairs in the near future to discuss this issue. We are currently fortunate at Banchory to be well staffed but the situation is a precarious one. Also discussed was the ongoing review of education education/assessment reforms to move to a Scottish Diploma and move away from Nat 5s/exam-only qualifications, with an identified need for there to be greater consistency across curriculum, leadership and assessments.

Communications from BAPC Can you help?

BAPC work hard to ensure that we do is transparent and open and we are currently seeking someone (current or new member) to assist with our communications. The tasks are not onerous and centre around managing our two social media channels (Facebook and Instagram). We also aim to produce a twice yearly newsletter, but how this is produced can be discussed. Currently, the treasurer and secretary are attempting to keep these means of communications open, but the channels would benefit from a little more TLC than they currently receive. If you think this is something you can assist with, please drop us a line at chair.bapc@gmail.com