

PEEBLES HIGH SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL/PTA



Parent Council Meeting
Monday, 27th March 2017 at 7.00pm
In the new Sports Facility

MINUTES

Present:

Campbell Wilson, Margaret Hogg, Glenda Barton, Tommy Davidson, Gareth Easton, Eleanor Fairbairn, Lisa Houston, Gail Jackson, Susan Jarvis, Margaret Kinahan, Vivienne Leckie, Donna Moretta, Eric Nightingale, Michael Pryor, Vanessa Rice, Monica Shaw, Lorraine Sykes, Kirsty Worsley and Mirren McLeod

Welcome by Margaret Hogg. Everyone introduced themselves.

Apologies: Laura Robertson

Minutes of Last Meeting:

Minutes accepted.

Matters Arising:

Update on Flexible Pathways. The school have started surveying S5 and S6 students. They have two weeks to get the S6s to complete the survey before they leave school.

School dinners – Lorraine Sykes and Campbell Wilson haven't yet met. In the meantime Campbell Wilson gave the following update - they are coming up to the easiest month for school dinners because of exams. Today there were challenges in the lunch queues as the only computers working in the school were the teachers', no admin computers were working. The impact on dinner queues was significant. They just managed to get everyone fed with the last person picking up their dinner with 4 minutes to spare.

There is a cost implication for putting menus onto the Parentpay system. Today saw 140 orders for Grab 'n' Go. The kitchen could cope with trebling the numbers of students ordering a Grab 'n' Go lunch. The problem is that the machines can't cope so putting this lunch option onto Parentpay might be a solution. This is to be carried forward to the next meeting.

New website – Update by Glenda Barton and Lisa Houston

Lisa is the new website techie person. Glenda Barton thanked Simon Fraser for all the work that he has done on the design and in managing the website in the past.

Why a new website? The parents commented the content was “out of date” and the existing website is quite dated in style. The website is an insight for parents on what our children are doing at high school. The website is a window to the school, what it stands for and what it is about. This is where inspectors look, and also new parents looking at where to send their children.

The school would like the new website to be a “one stop shop” for everything to do with the school. They are looking for a pupil portal to be included as well.

Communication strategy – We want to adopt a push and pull strategy where there is a difference in how things are communicated depending on whether you want to push something out to parents that they need to know, or pull - which are things parents want to find out for themselves.

Where are we now? PHS200 were asked to look at updating the website and Glenda researched other school websites. SBC had been considering a Borders wide website for schools but this has now been dropped.

Removal of old content – some sections hadn’t been populated or looked at for some years. Mr Lee is looking at getting the daily bulletin onto the website. We would also like to get more career information for pupils/parents to pull out. There is some repetition of content and we would like to improve the website so that parents don’t have to keep going to the front page to access information. We would also like an alumni section on the webpage.

Simon has been doing the technical updates and Lisa is checking the links are working. They are looking for parents to check if any links are broken or not working, or something significant is missing.

It was agreed the official launch date will be 12th June, with the staff and parent council members launch on 10th May.

Volunteers - Vivienne Leckie, Eleanor Fairbairn, Vanessa Rice, Monica Shaw to give feedback by end of week

Neil Smith will be the point of contact once it is launched.

Show my homework – not a great uptake of parents logging into this. It was suggested that you need to communicate something three to four times to get someone to change their behavior.

Update on SIP priorities – updates were in the latest e-bulletin. This will always be archived in the parent page of the website. There is no facility at the moment to send it to more than one parent (or carer) in a family. There is however a provision in place when both parents require an e-mail from the school.

Rector's update

Staffing:

Vacancies in History, PT Maths, PT Technical

Need one more Maths teacher next year

Mrs Russell due back next academic year (from maternity)

The school has requested probationers in Maths, English, Home Economics, Drama

Offered to pay for four probationers and asked for free ones (except in Biology and Geography).

There may be more vacancies which will be announced in May.

Increasing the number of Maths and English classes next academic year to reduce class sizes in S2 and S3 and there is an increased roll in August (by 10 or 15), but following year will see a significant jump.

PEF (Pupil Equity Funding):

PHS awarded £56,000 based on Government promise to give £1,200 for every pupil who gets free school meals (S1 to S3).

CW wants 1 or 2 parents to join a focus group (he would like Michael Pryor to be one), to come up with a sensible plan for how to spend the money. Eric Nightingale, Vivienne Sykes and Kirsten Worsley volunteered.

Funding doesn't have to be spent on the specific pupils the funding is linked to.

SIP:

Staff and pupils were asked to give priorities for next year

1. Learning & Teaching
2. Developing Young workforce
3. Mental health

Next step is to ask parents which will be done by e-mail via survey monkey

Anyone who wants to take part in staff interviews to e-mail Margaret.

PHS now in the top 20 schools (state secondary schools in Scotland) for exam attainment as per the Herald Scotland.

Pastoral Update

Donna Moretta was at the meeting to talk to parents about the Pastoral side of the school.

Building resilience and mental health are high on their agenda at the moment.

Make-up should not be excessive (this is on the website) but the school can't legally send pupils home for wearing too much make-up.

CW said there has been a significant spike in the last 5 years for mental health issues for girls nationally. It is generally believed that social media is a major cause. What it hasn't done is increase the suicide rate. Teenage boys are still more likely to commit suicide than teenage girls.

However there has been a significant increase in teenage girls having low morale and mood nationally.

Building self-esteem to make pupils feel good about themselves is very important. CW has attended sessions with Patti Santileces from Edinburgh City about this. They are now looking at training staff and parents. It is important to get parents to commit to this. This will be included in next year's SIP. They want to use the MVP model which focuses on S6s being trained to talk to younger students on bullying etc and will use this model in speaking to pupils about smoking, drugs and alcohol.

Homework Policy

Parents' concerns regarding homework over holiday times, tests straight after the holidays or getting different pieces of work coming in all at the same time has been raised by CW with teachers.

With 4th, 5th and 6th years at the moment, there is no way to change this.

The school tried to stagger deadlines for Advanced Highers but some parents have complained about the deadlines being before the SQA deadline.

Tests/assessments come at the end of each teaching topic which unfortunately usually falls at the end of a term. It is hard for the school to manage an individual's homework load. The way forward is to encourage parents to communicate with teachers when there is a problem.

Homework Policy in the junior school has been agreed with staff but assessments are more of a grey area and CW would need to talk to PTs.

Show my Homework could be made compulsory as part of the SIP but this would not be welcomed by staff who have their own methods for issuing homework. CW doesn't want to lose the goodwill of teachers.

Next PTs' meeting is on 20th April and CW will talk to them then about this subject and see what they say.

Any Other Business

How to Revise/Sit Exams – perhaps put this onto the website.

Date of next Meeting

Next meeting 7pm Wednesday, 10th May in new Sports Facility

There will be an extra meeting before the AGM specifically to look at Flexible Pathways
(Wednesday 31st May)