

PEEBLES HIGH SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL/PTA



Parent Council Meeting
Monday 29th January at 7pm
in the meeting room in the New Sports Facility

MINUTES

Present

Paul Fagan, Margaret Hogg, Glenda Barton, Lisa Houston, Sarah Keen, Muriel Foreman, Kate Whalley, Chris Knight, Eric Nightingale, Vanessa Rice, Kirstin Worsley, Vivienne Leckie, Susan Bell, Susan Jarvis, Justin Noon, Ross McLaren.

Joined by Donna Moretta and Terry McColm for a talk about the Growing in Confidence Programme. Three pupils also joined us for the session on the LGBT Charter.

Apologies

Lorna Boak, Michael Pryor, Lorraine Sykes, Eleanor Fairbairn, Sam Swinton, Tommy Davidson.

DISCUSSION ON MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

The topic for tonight's meeting was Mental Health and Wellbeing. Paul opened with the 4 values identified in the school's "Vision 2020" - Compassion, Integrity, Justice and Wisdom. Our compassion as well as being for each other and the wider school community should reach out and have a global vision where we try to understand those who hold different values and beliefs and celebrate our differences. Within justice we hope to treat everyone fairly and look out for the safety and happiness of all the school community members. We aim to be an inclusive school where members are included and involved. It is important to sustain a good relationship with pupils (and parents) as we work to ensure that we understand their reality as each pupil moves from child to young adult. Paul will provide a further update next time following a meeting to be held with SBC and other head teachers.

Donna Moretta began by explaining that they will always provide that initial support to any distressed pupil. Moving forward they will aim to help build resilience and teach about strategies which students can use to keep a 'good mental health'. Part of this will also be educating pupils about what is a normal reality (eg busy times, sadness and stress) and recognising more serious mental health issues.

Terry McColm introduced the new 'Growing in Confidence Programme'. It has already been run in some Edinburgh schools for 10 years and provides 8/9 lessons looking at the challenges faced in teenage years and the strategies to help young people through these challenges. Of key importance is keeping busy, physically active and talking. S2 pupils will be

the first to receive the full programme (starting Feb18) which will continue throughout their school life. S3-6 are at various points within the programme.

All staff received 3 sessions during the first term. They are now offering this learning opportunity to families with 4 proposed sessions running on the 1st, 7th, 13th and 19th of March starting at 6pm. They hope to attract as many families as possible. However, parents noted that the early start time on a week night may make it difficult for many parents to attend. Suggestions were made to consider recording the event, producing a podcast and also possibly having one or more sessions on a Saturday.

The school hopes to promote the programme throughout the community using invites, word of mouth, Facebook & Twitter. Hopefully all parent council attendees will sign up and aim to bring along 2 more, and that they in turn can promote and encourage others to come. Meetings will be optional and you do not require to attend all 4 sessions. Going forward, they would like to offer this programme during the first term of each school session.

Some of the other activities starting to happen within the school include:

- 'Quarriers' which offer both 1:1 counselling and group sessions,
- fortnightly house staff meetings which include mental health issues
- monthly meetings which can involve partner agencies/organisations
- programmes to help boost self-esteem, better management of relationships and support/guidance for those struggling with peer relationship or low confidence.
- a six week bibliotherapy programme is about to commence (initially to S3 girls). - Mental health will also have greater focus during Health Week.
- The SMT continue to offer study skills sessions to relieve exam anxiety.

Muriel Foreman added that she can recommend books which could help with the bibliotherapy on positive role models and 'looking for meaning' topics.

Overall the aim is to be better educated about the concerns, create a positive ethos and offer a climate of inclusion. These aims require us to be both aware and watchful and to value the importance of being kind.

LGBT issues were then highlighted by 3 pupils from the SAGA (Sexual and Gender Acceptance) group at PHS. Along with all SBC high schools they aim to achieve the Bronze status of the LGBT charter this year. They spoke about the aim to eradicate sexual and homophobic behaviours through education. All staff are receiving training from LGBT Youth Scotland. Staff and pupil LGBT champions help run the SAGA group and members have been involved with lessons to the S3s. They hope to raise greater awareness during history week. The pupils hold fortnightly open meetings. They have also surveyed pupils to evaluate their experiences of homophobic behaviour within the school. (SAGA group mostly had experienced homophobic behaviour while the survey results found that most S6 pupils had not.)

The January assembly has focused on Compassion - firstly towards oneself, then in reaching out to one another and finally to the environment.

Muriel had also asked to talk about a new guidelines document funded and supported by the Scottish Government from LGBT Youth Scotland on transgender young people. It has

many suggestions and recommendations – but not all are substantiated by research or scientific backing. There is a concern about the political ideology behind it. Paul agreed that the document should be read and discussed so that any decisions are from an informed position. Details of this document will be issued to the PC with a covering letter from Paul and Margaret.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. **Approval of minutes** Given

2. **Matters arising:**

Departmental Bids update

Football strips have arrived. Donna passed on her thanks to Lorraine.

Locality Funding Bid Update

Our bid to SBC for money towards our Opportunity Pot has failed as the allocation of money had to be for a new project.

There will be another chance to bid again as only a ¼ of the pot is being allocated at this time. The remainder is likely to be available in the 2nd wave later this year.

Paul is looking into ideas and an initial thought was an Additional Needs/numeracy/employability/shop project. Other ideas are very welcome. One suggestion made was for funds towards a mini bus (to assist with sporting events as well as transport to Borders College). Could local garages help subsidise through sponsorship?

Group Communication

Ross McLaren will look into whether it is possible to hold 2 email addresses for a pupil's parents/carers for group texts/emails being sent out. He will also monitor any discrepancies that arise with communication not reaching correct groups and investigate the settings that reduce the numbers receiving them (e.g. foreign language option etc.).

Bring Your Own Devices

User agreement going out to S4-6 on their return from study leave.

Duke of Edinburgh

The question and answer section has been added to the website.

The school could have a more targeted intervention approach to help promote both the Mental Health benefits of DofE as well as the contribution (and sense of achievement) it can give to pupils, especially for those who may not attain exam success.

Although there is a cost involved in doing DofE, families can be supported through the Poverty Proofing awards. Glenda will consider adding a section on cost to the website. Costs have risen over the past few years as the local authority has reduced its budget for Outdoor Education. This impacts the payment given to outdoor leaders who assist with the expeditions. Take up within Peebles is by far the highest across the region. There has not been a survey on the satisfaction obtained from completing DofE at PHS but this might be worthwhile considering.

External Sign

No update yet, hope to hear from Sam at the next meeting on progress.

Acoustic Curtains

School needs to look for a new supplier as 3 attempts have failed with the original company approached. Paul would also like a second opinion on whether the curtains could be situated across the back wall rather than the windows. Glenda will try to make enquires to find an alternative supplier.

3. New School Bid Update

Paul & Margaret's meeting with SBC has been delayed until 6th February.

4. Subgroup Updates:

Flexible Pathways

Paul & Margaret have started investigating ideas on how to refine our current curriculum structure. These ideas include introducing an extra choice point at the end of S2 and possibly not specialising into Physics/Biology/Chemistry options until end of S2.

They are aware of the particular need to help the results for the bottom 20%. The current system is producing very good attainment for the top 80%. S4 are all doing 6 N4/N5 subjects but they would like to offer more short courses and a greater variety of certificated courses as at Dunblane High.

Another idea might be to start working towards N4/N5 certification during S3 which may allow for more than 6 subjects in S4.

School Dinners

Hope to have the cables installed for the new machine on Wednesday 31st.

Still trying to reduce waste packaging, could consider banning sandwich packaging from the canteen.

School will consider providing juice concentrate as well as access to water which will enable pupils to use their own bottles and ban plastic bottles.

Homework

More teachers, but not all yet, are on board with using Show my Homework (SMHW). There was some feedback from the recent snow days saying too much homework was given and also some problems with login access. The first assembly to S1s covers SMHW and how to use it. The license to use SMHW costs around £5,000 for three years. Is it worth asking if improvements can be made? As we continue to use the software we can help with feedback towards the development and improve the overall usefulness of it.

5. Rector's Update

Staff

Neil Smith has begun his phased return to the library

Claire Bowles will be leaving English Department at end of February but will continue

to assist with S6 Adv H dissertations.

Richard McDowell - appointed as Community Learning Development Officer

Liz Roth has been appointed to temp 0.4 PE.

Vacancies:

Maths department require a temporary teacher.

English department require a full time teacher.

In both cases we are waiting for the new graduates to interview.

Additional Needs teacher (S1-S3) vacancy being advertised currently.

Learning & Teaching Initiative

During February teachers will be observed by the SMT. They will be looking at five areas – Learner Feedback/Differentiation/Digital L&T / Learners leading learning/High Expectations.

6. Parent Groups Updates

PHS Lottery

Email has been sent out and forms to be distributed at next assembly.

The cost per ticket is going to be £2 instead of £1. If there is a big increase in income they will consider increasing the prize money.

7. AOB

S6 Burns supper is now on 21st February in the school.

Next scheduled meeting is 7pm Tuesday 27th February in the new Sport Facility