

ALFORD ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

Alford Academy
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Minutes of Meeting 8th November 2017

Present: Colin Turnbull, Liz Strachan, David Wyllie, Maria Rossi, Penny Fuller, Richard Stroud, Louise Mitchell, Monica Iloya, Fay Mackay

In Attendance: Moira Milne, pupil senior executive team – E Fraser, K Stewart, S Trewin and B Nichol

1. Welcome and Apologies

Colin Turnbull welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Nicola Sedgwick, Tara Croke, Sarah McGregor, Sue-Ann Grant, Sandy Innes, Denise Smith, Yvonne Buckingham, Charlotte Milburn, Kerry Bryant

2. Meet the pupil senior executive team

The new senior executive team of E Fraser, K Stewart, S Trewin and B Nichol outlined their aims for the year and progress so far. Their main aim has been to raise the profile of prefects, with training and team building and giving them more responsibility. There are 8 senior prefects in S6 and each house has a further 8 prefects from S5. A trial system of reducing minor unwanted behaviours such as litter dropping has begun – known as “The Book”. The senior executive team organise prefects to help at parents’ evenings and other events such as the careers evening. A further leadership opportunity is being considered i.e. to introduce class captains in each MEL group

The senior executive team asked if any parents could help with advice about team-leading. Colin Turnbull offered help with coaching, a similar approach to the “Insights” programme could be useful for them.

3. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting on 18th September 2017 were accepted as accurate.

Proposed by Penny Fuller

Seconded by Colin Turnbull

Matters arising

3.1 Parent Council- Pupil Council partnership – outdoor learning environment

Penny Fuller met the pupil council and listened to their ideas for the outdoor environment.

- Bags, bins and benches were the main priority.
- A poly-tunnel with vegetable beds was a popular idea, though there are problems of maintaining these in the holidays. It was suggested the pupil council could contact the Alford Gardens Club and the Men’s Shed group for help and advice. It was suggested that a polytunnel would be difficult to protect from damage and that raised beds were probably the best option.

- Pupils were interested in the “Forest Schools” type of activities, this could possibly be achieved through the Duke of Edinburgh scheme or Junior Rangers.
- Christmas lights for outside the entrance to the campus – pupils wished to have a tree that had lights. Parent Council offered to give £100 for this purpose. It was suggested that the pupils could compare solar lights with battery ones and share their findings. The tree will be donated by the Alford Lights Committee.
- Developing the use of the triangle shaped courtyard - Shona Ogilvie is helping with consultation on this.

ACTION: Outdoor learning environment – Pupil Council representatives will be invited to a Parent Council meeting. Moira Milne/Penny Fuller

3.2 Supporting learning

Ongoing

ACTION: a subgroup will meet to develop ways to share resources and ideas with parents to support their child’s learning. Colin Turnbull and Moira Milne

3.3 Forum across all cluster schools

Ongoing. No date yet, topic of first event will be dyslexia.

ACTION: Parent Council to create a forum across all cluster schools and aim to hold a topic driven event twice yearly.

3.4 Focus Groups

Ongoing

ACTION: Moira Milne and Colin Turnbull will look at ways to discuss and progress feedback gathered at parents’ evenings and how focus groups could be developed.

3.5 Information evening in June

An information evening is proposed to be held in June for the current S4-5s with advice about university, apprenticeships and other career paths.

David Wyllie gave presentations in the theatre at the careers evening with financial advice for students and parents. Half hour slots were scheduled but it was felt that it should be more informal at the evening in June. Former pupils will be invited to share their experiences. A date will be set in June.

ACTION: An information evening is proposed to be held in June for the current S4-5s with advice about university, apprenticeships and other career paths. David Wyllie.

3.6 Recognising positive achievements – Awards Ceremony

The school aims to reward hard work at the Awards ceremony as well as attainment and individual achievements. Pupils in S1-3 are awarded commendation certificates to reward hard work and some parents remarked that there were markedly fewer boys receiving awards at the ceremony this time. The school are monitoring trends such as this – natural fluctuations in year groups may account for it, rather than the change to the awarding of certificates. Strategies are in place to motivate all pupils to work to the best of their ability.

4. Treasurer's report

In the main account there is £4,174.50 and in the lottery account £1,826. The annual payment from Aberdeenshire Council has yet to be received. Easyfundraising has generated £829.29 to date, currently having 13 supporters. There is a commitment to fund projects for the outdoor environment, it was agreed to match fund projects if possible and encourage other ways of raising funds.

5. Head Teacher's report

Staffing Update

Appointments:

PT Creativity and Enterprise – H Bradley appointed

Retirals:

M MacDonald – ASL

P McDonald – Geography

Vacancies:

Home Economics – many vacancies across Aberdeenshire

Business – 4th time advertised this session, may need to review courses on offer next session, if position not filled

ASL – 2 positions, interviews pending

Moira reported that she is increasingly working with other schools and colleges to plan the curriculum, look at how courses can be delivered differently and share resources and teachers/lecturers.

Highlights since last meeting:

- Monymusk Church – 4 Alford Academy pupils performed at the 850 years celebration.
- European Day of Languages – money raised for Medicins Sans Frontieres
- Some pupils took part in mock trials in Aberdeen Sheriff Court as part of the Modern Studies course
- Safe Drive – theatre company production to encourage safe driving
- Northsound Energy Challenge – Alford Academy came a close 2nd
- Eco group – visitors from Fairtrade
- Macmillan coffee morning organised by Interact Club
- Sponsored walk – this year at Gartly – good weather, happy walkers
- Basketball – the open team won the Scottish league
- Snow Sports – the team qualified for the Nationals in Glasgow and achieved 5th place
- Careers evening – very busy and successful
- House assemblies – led by house captains
- James Toseland visit – a pupil from Alford Academy who writes a rock blog contacted James and he came to Alford to be interviewed and perform.

Forthcoming events include:

- In service days in November – all cluster school staff will attend mental health awareness presentations; keynote speaker is Andy Cope – The Art of Brilliance. (Made possible with pupil equity funding).
- Representatives from the Child Brain Injury Trust will talk to some secondary staff.
- Children In Need Day – whole school involved.
- YPI – Youth Philanthropy Initiative – S5 pupils give presentations on a chosen charity, winners will receive money for their charity.
- Rotary Young Musician planned and hosted by the Interact Club.

6. Standards and Quality Report and Improvement Plan

As we were running short of time, Moira offered to email this information out.

7. 3-18 update

Penny Fuller attended the meeting of the 3-18 group, involving parents from primary and secondary working together. Consultations are proposed on vision and values and how the 3-18 policy is delivered. Consultations will be focussed in a week of events, with pop up consultation stations and focus groups for cluster Parent Council chairs and other community groups.

8. Raising the profile of the Parent Council

At the S1 parents evening, alternative ways of asking questions were piloted as well as the traditional questionnaires. Ipad questionnaires were very popular, as were large posters with questions that parents could write on and see what other parents had answered. Questions about Parent Council resulted in some answers that highlighted the need to raise the profile, though the majority of parents were aware of the work of the Parent Council. It was felt that social media is a valuable tool that we could utilise further, and we must continue to be present at as many events as possible. Using text message reminders for Parent Council meetings and events is useful and will be continued. One suggestion was to put key points from meetings on social media such as Facebook.

9. Proposals for funding

- £100 for lights for outdoor Christmas tree – agreed earlier - see 3.1 Parent Council -Pupil Council partnership.
- £125.80 for bottled water for sponsored walk (Colin Turnbull proposed, David Wyllie seconded)
A sponsor has been found for the Awards Ceremony for 2018.

10. Date of next meeting -Monday 22nd January 2018

Close 9.15pm

Dates of future meetings

Monday 22nd January 2018 at 7pm

Monday 19th March 2018 at 7pm

Tuesday 15th May 2018 at 7pm

Wednesday 20th June 2018 at 8pm

ACTION POINTS

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ACTION: a subgroup will meet to develop ways to share resources and ideas with parents to support their child's learning. Colin Turnbull and Moira Milne

ACTION: Parent Council to create a forum across all cluster schools and aim to hold a topic driven event twice yearly.

ACTION: Moira Milne and Colin Turnbull will look at ways to discuss and progress feedback gathered at parents' evenings and how focus groups could be developed.

ACTION: An information evening is proposed to be held in June for the current S4-5s with advice about university, apprenticeships and other career paths (David Wyllie)