

ALFORD ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

Alford Academy
Greystone Road
ALFORD
AB33 8TY



www.alfordacademy.aberdeenshire.sch.uk

alfordaca.pc@outlook.com

Minutes of Meeting 14th May 2019

Present: Colin Turnbull, David Wyllie, Liz Strachan, Denise Smith, Sandy Innes, Fiona Walker, Louise Mitchell, Monica Iloya, Ingrid Huldal, Tracy Sewell, Gloria Malcolm, Flora Grigor-Taylor, Sarah Mcgregor

In Attendance: Moira Milne, Cllr John Latham

1. Welcome and Apologies

Colin Turnbull welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Penny Fuller, Donna Grey, Sarah Lewis, Angela Findlay, Nicola Sedgwick, Sabina Smith, Charlotte Milburn, Cllr Robbie Withey

2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting on 18th March 2019 were accepted as accurate.

Proposed by Sandy Innes

Seconded by David Wyllie

Matters arising

2.1 FAQs for website/blog -Charlotte Milburn will compile a list from all the suggestions and this will be sent to the Parent Council contact list for comment.

ACTION: Charlotte Milburn will co-ordinate a set of FAQs for parents which can be put on the school website/blog

2.2 Parent Council-Pupil Council partnership

Penny Fuller and Sarah Mcgregor attended a Pupil Council meeting on 8th May 2019. The main discussion centred around the pupil and parent survival guides. The pupils are working on these and felt that the parent guide should mirror the pupil guide and be consistent with its information.

ACTION: Parent Council-Pupil Council partnership - Penny Fuller, Sarah Mcgregor and Liz Strachan will meet with the Pupil Council on 12th June 2019 and report back to Parent council at the next meeting. Moira Milne/Penny Fuller

2.3 Upskilling workshops

This will be carried forward to the improvement plan for the next academic year. The plan is to hold a pilot upskilling workshop with mathematics as the topic.

ACTION: A pilot upskilling session with mathematics as the topic will be planned – carried forward to the improvement plan for the next academic year. Moira Milne

2.4 PVGs for parent volunteers

David Wyllie spoke to Peter Young, the Active Schools co-ordinator for his experience with PVGs for volunteers and he sent some information regarding role descriptions. The “classroom helper” role description fits most situations, enabling a PVG to be obtained for this by any parents wishing to help with various activities. Cllr John Latham reported that he had confirmation from Neil Smillie, the Strategic Development Officer for Aberdeenshire Council, that a classroom helper PVG would be suitable for parent helpers in a variety of situations. The school contact for the process of PVG application is Caroline McIver. The parent forum will be asked for their interest in volunteering and PVG applications can be made.

ACTION: David Wyllie and Sarah McGregor will contact Caroline McIver and organise PVG applications for parents interested in volunteering.

2.5 Community resources to enrich school education

In conjunction with Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) the school is actively contacting businesses for a proposed event in September. The school is currently working with the local business Mackies.

2.6 Community group links – additional support needs

A team from the Academy is going to meet the “Spikin Autism” group to explain the transition process from P7 to S1 for those pupils with additional support needs.

2.7 Littering

Activities to deal with littering include:

- “Bin it” roadshow for S2 pupils – interactive workshop, aiming to confront pupils with the effect of littering on communities and the environment.
- Community Council – working with school on bin provision in the village
- Posters made by an S1 pupil have been displayed in the school to try and increase awareness.

Alford Litter Group have made contact with a parent and shared their wish to work with young people in Alford. It was suggested that they should approach Colin Turnbull, as well as the chairperson of Alford Primary PC, and the Community Council, to share their ideas. It was reported that the littering in the main car park in Alford (i.e. the general public littering) has improved recently.

2.8 Future of Fundraising Lottery

No-one has volunteered to take on the fundraising lottery from David Wyllie so the last lottery draw will be in June. David will close the lottery bank account after this and let everyone know that this is the last draw. If people forget to cancel their standing orders, this will not matter as no further money can be taken once the bank account has been closed. Colin thanked David on behalf of the Parent Council for all the work he has put into the lottery, and for the huge amount of money raised, over the last 9 years. It may be that the new parent council 2019-20 may wish to hold one large fundraising event per year instead.

3. Treasurer’s report

In the main account, at the end of April, there was £6,177.15 and in the lottery account £990.50. Other than clerk’s fees, there have been no other expenses since the last meeting. £21.70 has been received from Easyfundraising.

Commitments to fund include a contribution to ShowMyHomework and the Awards Ceremony totalling £3,000 over 2 years, £312 for Pupil Council badges, and £500 to the Pipe Band towards their kilts.

4. Parent Council Health Check

The Scottish Parent Teacher Association “Connect” sent out a series of Health Check lists for Parent Councils to identify any areas for improvements. These were discussed during the meeting and the following points identified as possible areas for improvement (areas that we felt we did well have not been listed):

Committee Business

- “Our meeting always run to time” – some meetings run over time

Money Matters – no problem areas

School Matters and Learning

- “The Parent Council helps to draft the school handbook” – do we feel this is necessary?

Communication

- “We use different ways to communicate with parents” – we have ways to communicate, currently through the blog, or asking the school to email/text.
- “We produce leaflets for parents to help them engage with their child’s education”- we haven’t done this though we are helping the pupil council with the production of survival guide leaflets for pupils and for parents.
- “We have our own noticeboard/space on school noticeboard” – this is something we would like to do.
- “We produce our own newsletter” – we currently don’t produce a printed newsletter, though we do post information to the blog and include information in the school newsletter.
- “We have produced a leaflet using the Connect template *A User’s Guide to a Parent Council*” – this could be put on the blog/school website?
- “The Parent Forum know who is on the Parent Council” – if we had a space on the noticeboard, this information could be included?
- “We have a FB page/Twitter feed” – see **9.2** below
- “We always publicise our work and achievements to all parents and others in the school community” – could do better
- “We involve the parents with children at the nursery” – not directly but through community activities?
- “We use local media to publicise our work and activities” – could do more
- “We have organised the Connect information session *Involving all Parents*” – do we want to do this?

These health check points can be revisited, if time allows, at the next few meetings and further action taken then.

5. Head Teacher’s report

Staffing Update:

Vacancies: Teacher of Physics - H Davies leaving
 Teacher of Business – no applicants
 Teacher of HE – no applicants. NESCOL are able to help with exam stage and may be able to provide some teaching for S1 pupils.

Appointments: Teacher of ASL – H Fowler
Teacher of ASL – P George
Teacher of PE – P Clark
Teacher of Maths – D Wilson
School Nursing assistant – L Allan
PSA – A Wright and M Richens – supported by Pupil Equity Funding

Highlights since last meeting:

- “I’m a teacher get me out of here”. – fundraiser in aid of Literary Boxes.
- Katie Melua visited and performed with the choir for the whole school and was interviewed by M Lenthall S5. The pipe band performed for her. A very successful day.
- Music workshop
- Football – U15 boys 2nd in the Aberdeenshire Cup
- Football – junior girls won the Aberdeenshire League
- Netball – S1 Active Schools tournament – the team won every match they played. Feedback from other coaches that the Alford team were very friendly. Strong parental support for netball in Alford.
- Dof E – 5 groups took part in the bronze expedition.
- Resident writer with Cairngorms National Parks – worked on stories and verse about the outdoors, also used Scots language.
- Junior Rangers Programme – 16 young people involved in outdoor learning

6. Occasional days and additional in-service days

There are normally 2 occasional days, one in February and one in June, these have to be decided by the cluster schools. There is an extra one next year as Good Friday falls in the Easter holidays. The school proposes to add this extra day to the February break so the break will run from Thursday 13th February to Wednesday 19th February inclusive. June 1st will be the other occasional day.

For the next academic year only, there are 2 additional in-service days to be allocated, for extra teacher training – possible dates to be confirmed are Tuesday 20th August 2019 and Friday 11th October 2019.

7. Working together on school improvement

Moira Milne shared school data showing trends of attainment, comparing actual with expected attainment of an equivalent “virtual school”. It is difficult to compare schools directly as the level of poverty and disadvantage varies. This information showed that Alford Academy was mostly above its expected attainment, and any areas that were below were analysed by the school through to individual pupils and any improvement priorities identified. However, Moira was keen to stress that success is not just about exam grades and she is passionate about getting it right for every pupil. She wishes to build ambition for the pupils and the school.

A priority for session 2018-19 and beyond is increasing learning pathways to give opportunities for all, such as offering foundation apprenticeships, planning course offers with neighbouring schools and access to NESCOL courses studied along with courses at school.

Another parental engagement event is planned for 21st May to discuss how parents can work with the school to benefit the pupils.

8. Awards Ceremony

At the Awards Ceremony last year, it was noted that there were significantly fewer boys than girls receiving awards. Every member of staff is looking at how to engage boys better in their learning. There was a discussion about the way that commendations and merits are awarded,

how to acknowledge the hard work of pupils and how to decide who receives the awards at the ceremony. It is always going to be difficult to find a way to reward those who have worked hard without the possibility of upsetting those who 'just missed' receiving an award at the ceremony. A review of the other achievement assemblies is also underway to further improve how the many and varied achievements of pupils are shared and valued.

9. Other items for discussion

9.1 Interpretation of league table results

There was a recent league table in the media which ranked Scottish schools for the percentage of pupils achieving 5 Highers or more, which has been commented on by parents. Moira Milne said that success should not be measured by a single statistic which takes no account of each school's profile. Pupils attaining 5 Highers is one of many measures and does fluctuate year on year for a variety of reasons. Increasingly pupils are studying a range of qualifications over their senior school years and more pupils are going on to study at college or are taking up apprenticeships.

9.2 Parent Council Facebook page?

A Parent Council Facebook page has been thought about in the past, but the problem would be in moderating the posts, this would take a lot of time. The Parent Council publicise events and distribute information via the school blog which then appears on the school Facebook page. Some other schools have a FB page, but most are for information only. It was agreed that the current system is working at present and to continue with this. Sarah McGregor offered to take over managing the posting of information to the blog from David Wyllie.

10. Proposals for funding

None.

11. Dates of future meetings

Wednesday 19th June 2019 8pm

Monday 26th August 2019 7pm

Close 9.10pm

ACTION POINTS

- ACTION:** Charlotte Milburn will co-ordinate a set of FAQs for parents which can be put on the school website/blog.
- ACTION:** Parent Council-Pupil Council partnership - Penny Fuller, Sarah McGregor and Liz Strachan will meet with the Pupil Council on 12th June 2019 and report back to Parent council at the next meeting. Moira Milne/Penny Fuller
- ACTION:** A pilot upskilling session with mathematics as the topic will be planned – carried forward to the improvement plan for the next academic year. Moira Milne
- ACTION:** David Wyllie and Sarah McGregor will contact Caroline McIver and organise PVG applications for parents interested in volunteering.

PARENT COUNCIL SUB-GROUPS

- Fundraising** David Wyllie
- Parent Council-Pupil Council partnership** Penny Fuller
Sarah McGregor
Liz Strachan
- Volunteering** David Wyllie
Sarah McGregor
- Community resources to enrich school education**
Penny Fuller
Sarah McGregor
Nicola Sedgwick
- Community group link – additional support needs**
Sheena Lawson
Rhona Stuart