

ALFORD ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

Alford Academy
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Minutes of Meeting 18th March 2019

Present: Colin Turnbull, David Wyllie, Liz Strachan, Denise Smith, Charlotte Milburn, Penny Fuller, Sandy Innes, Sarah Lewis, Monica Iloya, Karen Noble, Angela Findlay, Ingrid Huldal, Tracy Sewell, Jolene Mackay

In Attendance: Moira Milne, Cllr John Latham

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were received from Ishbel Mollison, Sarah McGregor, Louise Mitchell, Nicola Sedgwick, Tara Crooke

1.1 Active Schools Co-ordinator Peter Young attended at the start of the meeting to ask for help with ideas and volunteers for clubs and activities that he organises in conjunction with the school. He asked for the best way to get information out. If anyone has an ideas for activities or wishes to volunteer they can contact Peter by email at peter.young@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

1.2 Pipe band funding bid (Item 8 on agenda)

Two members of the Alford Academy Pipe Band gave an excellent presentation for their request for help with funding for kilts and waistcoats. The band only had 5 members not many years ago and now has 23, including 10 drummers and 13 pipers. The band has taken part in the Scottish Schools Pipe Band Championships for the last 3 years and have been improving each year, coming 14th the first time, 7th last year and 4th this year. They have been invited to play at the Menin Gate Last Post Ceremony in October during the Alford Academy music trip to Belgium. The cost of buying tartan and making kilts and waistcoats is approx. £8,000. The band has raised £6,000 so far. The tartan is being designed exclusively for Alford Academy and the whole school will be voting on the final design. The Parent Council agreed to donate £500. Sandy Innes very kindly offered to match the figure and will also donate £500.

2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting on 23rd January 2019 were accepted as accurate with two alterations:

4. Head Teacher's report – Highlights - House Christmas trees donated by the Forbes Estate.

6.4 Drugs in School - the details of the question asked by a parent has been added to this.
Proposed by Sandy Innes
Seconded by David Wyllie

Matters arising

2.1 Parent Council-Pupil Council partnership

Penny Fuller, Liz Strachan and Sarah McGregor attended a Pupil Council meeting on 13th March 2019. Items discussed included:

- Outdoor learning environment – Mr Cookson has contacted Aberdeenshire Council to establish the ownership boundaries of the grounds – still awaiting a response.
- Survival guide for new S1 pupils – the guide has been shared with the Senior leadership Team and the final draft should be ready for the link week for P7 pupils.
- Pupil Council asked for ideas from parents to include in a parent survival guide. This was discussed at the Parent Council meeting and ideas will be passed on to the pupil council. Charlotte Milburn offered to co-ordinate a set of FAQs for parents which can be put on the school website/blog. Ideas suggested: point of contact at school is guidance staff, website, how to access blog, Parent Council role and contact, school handbook, campus facilities, mobile phone use, bus buddies, tiredness due to long days, uniform.

ACTION: Charlotte Milburn will co-ordinate a set of FAQs for parents which can be put on the school website/blog If anyone has any ideas for FAQs for new parents please email alfordaca.pc@outlook.com

- House Leaders – applications have been received for the new House Leader positions and are being assessed.
- Pupil Council representatives have had a meeting with the Catering Department and the new Chef to discuss concerns and ideas for improvement. It is hoped menus will be displayed on the plasma screens and menu choices can be adjusted more to suit requirements of pupils.
- Pupils feel that the existing S6 study space is not ideal due to noise at class changeover time and no power points/lack of access to laptops. A solution suggested by the Pupil Council to take to the Senior Leadership Team is identifying free classrooms as official study spaces for S6 pupils.
- PPF – some pupil council members have had the chance to attend the Pupil Participation Forum run by Aberdeenshire Council at Woodhill House. They have found it very beneficial sharing ideas with pupils from other schools.

ACTION: Parent Council-Pupil Council partnership - Penny Fuller, Sarah McGregor and Liz Strachan will meet with the Pupil Council on May 8th 2019 and report back to Parent council at the next meeting. Moira Milne/Penny Fuller

2.2 Forum across all cluster schools

The next event planned is Drugs Awareness on 20th March 2019

2.3 Upskilling workshops

David Wyllie presented the results of the survey on the best time to hold upskilling events. The most popular time to hold events was the evening but not on a Parents evening. 82 people responded to the survey, the main topics requested were English, Maths and study skills.

ACTION: David Wyllie/Moira Milne will plan a pilot upskilling session with mathematics as the topic.

2.4 PVGs for parent volunteers

Ongoing. David Wyllie will ask Peter Young, the active schools co-ordinator for his experience with PVGs for volunteers. The problem has been that PVGs had to be obtained for a specific role, rather than for generic help. Cllr John Latham offered to look into this on our behalf.

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

2.5 Community resources to enrich school education

Ongoing. A sub-group will look at opportunities to provide activities in conjunction with local businesses and Donside Community Council to enrich school education. Penny Fuller, Sarah McGregor and Nicola Sedgwick will meet, and liaise with Moira Milne, then report to the next Parent Council meeting.

ACTION: Community resources to enrich school education -Penny Fuller, Sarah McGregor and Nicola Sedgwick will meet as a sub-group, and liaise with Moira Milne to look at opportunities to provide activities in conjunction with local businesses and the Donside Community Council.

2.6 Community group links – additional support needs

Due to work commitments, Colin Turnbull is unable to be the lead for this subgroup at present. Moira Milne reported that Academy staff plan to contact the local “Spikin Autism” group, as a first step. As always any individual issues/queries should be discussed directly with the school. .

ACTION: Moira Milne will update the Parent Council on any suggestions/outcomes of the meeting of with school staff and the “Spikin Autism” community group, as appropriate.

2.7 School trips -update

Moira reported a trip has been offered to third year pupils with the company “Active Highs” near Fort William for 4 days in May costing approx. £290. A ski trip to the Alps costing over £800 was thought to be too expensive by parents present. A suggestion was made to look at a ski trip locally, such as Braemar, as an alternative. Parents agreed that a cap of approx. £600 on the cost of a trip would be appropriate.

3. Treasurer’s report

In the main account, at the end of February, there was £4,777.20 and in the lottery account £1,842.50. Other than clerk’s fees, there have been no other expenses since the last meeting. £69.70 has been received from Easyfundraising. The funding from Aberdeenshire Council of £470.25 has now been received.

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

4. Head Teacher’s report

Staffing Update:

Vacancies: Home Economics – H Wright - maternity leave, no applicants. HE will not be run next session for lower years. NESCOL college course will be offered for exam years. The college may be able to provide taster courses for younger pupils also.

ASL – vacancies filled.

PSA – new position supported by Pupil Equity Funding

PE – more capacity needed due to increasing roll

Business – on-going vacancy for 1 year, covered by supply staff and guidance staff. There has been good uptake of the new Foundation Apprenticeships offered with the possibility of Business and Accounts being offered in school, instead of travelling to college.

Technical – one applicant, interview date set.

Staffing levels will increase to accommodate the projected increase in school roll (current S1 intake of 131 in August). The school roll projection is 688 and school capacity is 700.

Highlights since last meeting:

- Macmillan coffee morning – organised by younger pupils for the staff.
- Junior girls football team won the schools league.
- Health and Wellbeing events – good turnout and more participation in activities by pupils this year.
- House assemblies – led by House Captains
- BBC Young Reporters – pupils interviewed Izzy Tolometti, gymnast and former pupil.
- Fairtrade Fashion Show – S6 leadership team organised this, good turnout.
- Student Council – numbers increasing.
- World Book Day
- Higher Biology Trip to Highland Wildlife Park
- Pipe Band – very successful at Scottish Schools Pipe Band Championships
- Brandon Hunt – 21-year-old up and coming musician, performed to 1st and 3rd years, good message of dangers of social media.
- RGU -2nd years STEM visit
- “Faculty Fortunes” – staff and pupils organised quiz in aid of Comic Relief

Forthcoming events:

- Katie Melua visiting and performing with the choir for the whole school and will be interviewed by M Lenthall S5.

SMHW (ShowMyHomework) update

Moira reported that the SMHW app is not consistently used by all staff and the school is looking at this. Some parents were not sure how to access the SMHW app; David Wyllie will make sure the blog has information about SMHW. The blog can be difficult to find as it is not on a drop-down menu on the website. If possible, a link will be added to the website under the parent tab to access the blog. The school will send out an email explaining how to access the blog and SMHW.

Parental Engagement – feedback and next steps

An event was held on 27th Feb to get feedback from parents. Themes discussed included school lunches, bus buddies, tapping into former pupils, maths confidence, pathways to jobs and career options. It was felt that any parent workshops would be better in the evenings at 7pm, many parents would struggle to get there for 6pm. A suggestion was made to record workshops or have webinars. The content of the curriculum for subjects such as mathematics could be covered in an evening with separate events for S1-3 and S4-6. Pupils could lead hands-on workshops.

School Uniform

The majority of pupils are good at adhering to school uniform guidelines, though peer pressure is an issue in some year groups. The school has planned for S6 pupils to talk to the S3 year group about the importance of school uniform. A question was asked if demerits are used in the

school – Moira reported that they are currently used as a “flag”, and the Guidance team use this data to identify pupils who are not complying with school expectations. Informal feedback was sought from the S1-3 year groups regarding blazers – they were not in favour of introducing them for younger years.

S6 last day in school

Traditionally the S6 last day has been a “muck-up” day but in previous years this has been taken too far with an impact on other pupils and campus users that will not be tolerated. Moira wishes to stop this kind of behaviour but still allow S6 to celebrate their last day in some way. The school has suggested a trip such as bowling, but the pupils were not keen on this idea. Colin Turnbull said he agreed that the line had been crossed last year and supported the school’s view on direction and guidance to pupils and parents. A question was asked if it was the S4 and S5 leavers who caused more problems, and if so, were they included in the end of school celebration plans. Mrs Milne reported that the school talk to the S4 and S5 pupils separately on a one to one basis, but it may be better to allow them to discuss as a group what they would like to do, separate from the S6s.

5. Other items for discussion

5.1 S6 area for relaxing

S6 pupils have a designated area for studying though this is often noisy due to its location. The pupils would like an area for relaxing with sofas etc, but other spaces in the school are multi use and Moira said this would not be practical. The pupils can use the canteen anytime. Moira is considering access to the campus staff lounge but some S6 have shared that they would not wish to use the space when staff are in. Realistically this may not be an option as different teams of staff use the staff lounge at a variety of times throughout the day. .

5.2 Use of private tutors by parents

A parent queried why parents need to pay for private tutors and asked if there is an underlying issue with teaching or student’s attention. Moira replied that there are various reasons why parents choose to pay for private tutoring and it concerns her when parents feel tutors are necessary as many teaching staff are willing to give extra time to pupils if they lack confidence, need additional help or are not progressing. Many staff offer sessions at lunchtime and some after school. The feeling from some parents was that in some cases the relationship between the pupil and teacher is such that a tutor may be the way forward to get back on track. Also, tutors specialising in dyslexia etc may be able to help a child in a way that a regular class teacher may not. Moira stressed that the school will do all it can to support pupils with their learning and policies and procedures are in place to assist with this. It was also commented that the use of tutors is widespread and that parents of pupils at private schools also use tutors, this is not just restricted to state schools. It was suggested that the pathway to discuss issues with the school could be put in the survival guide.

5.3 Littering in Alford

A question was asked by a parent about the perception that it is Alford Academy children dropping litter at lunchtimes and are there any existing awareness initiatives addressing litter in the village that the school could connect with. Moira shared that she has raised this with the Donside Community Council, who are keen to work with the school regarding this issue. Moira will update the Parent Council at the next meeting.

ACTION: Moira Milne will update the Parent Council on the progress of the School and Donside Community Council to tackle littering in Alford at the next meeting.

6. Fundraising subgroup – future of fundraising lottery

David Wyllie has run the Parent Council lottery since it was launched in 2011, but he will be standing down in May as he will no longer have any children at the school. David asked if anyone would like to take over the lottery, or did the Parent Council want to opt for a couple of events a year instead? Colin Turnbull thanked David Wyllie for the huge contribution that he has made to the Parent Council and school over the years. The lottery raised £2-3,000 a year for many years, but numbers have dropped, and the amount is now about £1,400 a year.

ACTION: Any volunteers interested in taking over David Wyllie's role can contact David at David@brackla.com

7. Parent Council Health Check

Carried forward to next meeting

8. Proposals for funding

- Pipe band kilts – see 1.2 above

9. AOB – Sandy Innes asked how much help pupils get with job application processes etc as from his personal experience some young people seem to have little idea. Moira said that all pupils have opportunities in school to develop skills for work, CV writing and interview skills. .

10. Dates of future meetings

Tuesday 14th May 2019 7pm

Wednesday 19th June 2019 8pm

Monday 26th August 2019 7pm

Close 9.45pm

ACTION POINTS

- ACTION:** Charlotte Milburn will co-ordinate a set of FAQs for parents which can be put on the school website/blog If anyone has any ideas for FAQs for new parents please email alfordaca.pc@outlook.com
- ACTION:** Parent Council-Pupil Council partnership - Penny Fuller, Sarah McGregor and Liz Strachan will meet with the Pupil Council on May 8th 2019 and report back to Parent council at the next meeting. Moira Milne/Penny Fuller
- ACTION:** David Wyllie/Moira Milne will plan a pilot upskilling session with mathematics as the topic.
- ACTION:** David Wyllie and Sarah McGregor will organise PVG applications for parents interested in volunteering
- ACTION:** Community resources to enrich school education -Penny Fuller, Sarah McGregor and Nicola Sedgwick will meet as a sub-group, and liaise with Moira Milne to look at opportunities to provide activities in conjunction with local businesses and the Donside Community Council.
- ACTION:** Moira Milne will update the Parent Council on any suggestions/outcomes of the meeting of with school staff and the “Spikin Autism” community group, as appropriate.
- ACTION:** Moira Milne will update the Parent Council on the progress of the School and Donside Community Council to tackle littering in Alford at the next meeting.
- ACTION:** Any volunteers interested in taking over David Wyllie’s role can contact David at David@brackla.com

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

POSITIONS TO BE FILLED:

Fundraising co-ordinator - contact David Wyllie for information David@brackla.com
Secretary - contact Liz Strachan for information at alfordaca.pc@outlook.com