

ALFORD ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

Alford Academy
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Minutes of Meeting 23rd January 2019

Present: Colin Turnbull, David Wyllie, Liz Strachan, Denise Smith, Charlotte Milburn, Penny Fuller, Alan Brunnen, Sandy Innes, Nicola Sedgwick, Sarah Lewis, Rhona Stuart, Sheena Lawson, Monica Iloya, Richard Stroud, Tara Crooke

In Attendance: Moira Milne

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were received from Ishbel Mollison, Sarah McGregor and Karen Noble

2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting on 6th November 2018 were accepted as accurate.

Proposed by Richard Stroud

Seconded by Penny Fuller

Matters arising

2.1 Parent Council-Pupil Council partnership

Penny Fuller and Sarah McGregor attended a Pupil Council meeting on 9th January 2019. Items discussed included:

- Outdoor learning environment – Mr Cookson has contacted Aberdeenshire Council to establish the ownership boundaries of the grounds - awaiting a response.
- Survival guide for new S1 pupils – this idea was developed last year, and the new group wish to see this printed and distributed to current P7s. The Pupil Council will get costings for printing and ask Parent Council for funding. They had ideas to produce a similar guide aimed at parents also and asked Parent Council for feedback as to what should go in the guide. They are considering a You Tube style film also – ideas include accessing the school blog/webpage and how to get around the building.
- House Leaders – the Pupil Council wish to introduce these new positions. They propose to have 2 for each year group within each house. Positions would be applied for each year. The House Leaders would support House Captains and report to Pupil Council. Pupil Council wish to ask the Parent Council for funding for new badges for the next 2 years. Moira offered to split the cost with the school funding half. The total cost for 2 years is £624, so the Parent Council agreed to pay £312 and the school will pay the same amount.

- Increase in costs at canteen, lack of vegetarian options and lack of food at end of queue. Pupil Council representatives are having a meeting with the Catering Department.
- Lack of road signs to Campus. Nicola Sedgwick said that the Donside Community Council are dealing with this issue at the moment.

ACTION: Parent Council-Pupil Council partnership - Penny Fuller, Sarah Mcgregor and Liz Strachan will meet with the Pupil Council on March 13th 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/Mental Health on 20th March 2019, however the school has organised a mental health week in February for pupils and parents and therefore the event in March will focus on drugs awareness.

ACTION: Parent Council aim to continue holding topic driven events for parents across all cluster schools. The next event will be Drugs Awareness on 20th March 2019. Denise Smith and the other sub group members Monica Iloya and Sheena Lawson will liaise with Moira Milne

2.3 Upskilling workshops

David Wyllie has drafted a survey, using Survey Monkey, to ask parents if they would like to take part in an upskilling event and if so what time of the day or evening would be best. Suggestions include subjects – mathematics, use of Show My Homework, help with accessing school blog/website and study skills.

ACTION: David Wyllie will send out a survey to ask parents when the best time is to hold upskilling workshops and if they would attend.

2.4 PVGs for parent volunteers

Ongoing.

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

2.5 Community resources to enrich school education

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

Sub-group to include Colin Turnbull, Sheena Lawson and Rhona Stuart.

ACTION: Colin Turnbull will report to the next Parent Council meeting on progress of the Community Group Link - additional support needs subgroup.

2.7 School trips

Moira reported that meetings with staff are ongoing to discuss provision of trips. A variety of trips are being investigated with a range of costs. A music trip is organised for October this year.

3. Treasurer's report

In the main account there is £4,877.20 and in the lottery account £1,484. Other than clerk's fees, there have been no other expenses since the last meeting. £24.42 has been received from Easyfundraising. The funding from Aberdeenshire Council has yet to be received. Commitments to fund are ShowMyHomework £3,000 over 2 years and £312 Pupil Council badges. Some money may be put towards the Pipe Band kilts.

4. Head Teacher's report

Staffing Update:

Welcome to:

R Lovelock – Teacher of Biology

H Murray – Teacher of Drama

Departures:

W Beaton – Janitor - retired

O Oakland – Teacher of ASL

Vacancies:

ASL – 2 fte

Staffing levels will increase to accommodate the new S1 intake of 131 in August. The school roll projection is 688 and school capacity is 700. The school will continue to be creative with its use of teaching spaces which include the theatre.

Moira reported that due to a maternity leave, a vacancy is pending in Home Economics and to date there have been no applicants for the post. Senior pupils will continue to be offered courses delivered in partnership with NESCOL, however, for S1-S3 pupils, it may be that the curriculum will have to be revised with no Home Economics classes running. There will be revisions to the S1-S3 curriculum as planning for the national '1+2 Languages' agenda continues.

The Director of Education is working with Aberdeen University to attract more applicants to teaching including in subjects such as Home Economics, hoping that they those who train locally will chose to work locally.

Highlights since last meeting:

- In November the staff and pupils had workshops from the “Art of Brilliance”, supported through the school's Pupil Equity Fund. The focus was on positive mindset and increasing the resilience of pupils.
- Ivan Ilic – a musician from Paris worked with pupils and gave a performance.
- A “No Knives, Better Lives” production was delivered by a theatre company to S2 pupils
- Children in Need raised £918.29 this year. Moira showed us photos of the 5 staff acts who participated in the Lip Sync Battle.
- Rotary Young Musician of the Year – the junior winner was Catherine on the pipes, and the senior winner was Lydia on the flute.
- House Christmas trees – kindly donated by the Forbes Estate
- Christmas service, at the school led by the local chaplains.

- Whole school assembly – pupils were entertained by a flash mob carol by members of staff.

Forthcoming events:

- Health focus week – Lisa Lees has planned a variety of activities for pupils and staff in February. There will be an evening session for parents run by Sparks.
- P7 open morning – opportunity to visit the school ‘live’ and meet senior staff and pupils
- Active Schools program – activities at lunchtime and after school. Timetable to be circulated to parents by email.
- Coffee and a chat – workshop – how to help your child, resources available etc

5. School Improvement 2018-19

The focus of school improvement 2018-19:

- Mental health
- Boys attainment
- Curriculum development – more pathways , more vocational options
- Values - the staff are discussing the five school values with pupils – Respect, Honesty, Kindness, Hard work, Ambition. A group of pupils is being ‘commissioned’ to design the branding for the school, focussing on behaviours. They will have help from the business team, graphics department and industry.

5.1 Leadership development – validating our self-evaluation

Moira asked if parents felt the awards ceremony is acknowledging the school’s values. Feedback from Parents Evenings – the school is good at asking questions and now will be focussing on giving feedback on actions taken.

All teaching and non-teaching staff are involved in self-evaluation of their practice and that of the school.

5.2 Learning, teaching and assessment

Aim to working together with young people to help them reflect on learning, set targets and plan their next steps in learning.

5.3 Developing our young people -well-being, equality and inclusion

The school is working with a range of partners including Community Learning and Development to promote and support well-being, equality and inclusion.

5.4 Curriculum development

It is a challenge to help parents get up to speed on all the new pathways available to young people. Other than school based National 4/5 courses, there are N4/N5 course available at SRUC and NESCOL, foundation apprenticeships through NESCOL, some of which are equivalent to 2 Highers and also Open University modules available to S6 pupils. A question was asked about funding for transport to these college courses - Moira informed us that Aberdeenshire Council funds the transport at the moment.

6. Other items for discussion

6.1 Restorative approach to discipline

Feedback positive, the data shows a small number of pupils per day are asked to “pause for thought” due to behaviour in class. Using this approach, Moira reported that a very small minority of pupils progress to further misbehaviour in

class. If the behaviour is more serious, then the school will follow the exclusions policy. If a pupil receives a level 2 for misbehaviour, the Principal Teacher will be involved, and a letter will be sent home with advice to contact the pupil's guidance teacher or the subject Principal Teacher. A parent asked if the letters could be individualised rather than standard. Moira said that this would involve additional workload - the details of the misbehaviour will be discussed when the parents contact the school. If considered necessary, Guidance Teachers will contact parents directly before sending out a letter. It was shared that some pupils are not happy about disruptive classmates being included in lessons, however the school is inclusive and works to improve the behaviour of young people not engaging as well as they should.

At lunchtimes, if there is an issue off campus e.g. if the school is contacted by a member of the public about behaviour, then the issue will be addressed by school, and parents may be contacted. Prefects are helping with some areas of behaviour such as queues in the canteen.

6.2 e-Sgiol

The e-learning course for Psychology was a solution to an emergency situation during the year when there was no longer a teacher available to continue the Higher course. The feedback from the class is positive generally, after they have settled in to it. The lessons are delivered by video conferencing with pupils able to talk to the lecturer via microphones. The pupils can email the lecturer with questions at any time. The prelim will be taken on-line in February.

Aberdeenshire Council is in the early stages of looking at a Virtual Academy which could help with delivering courses that may otherwise not be possible.

6.3 Safe Drive, Stay Alive

This event happens in November each year for schools across the whole of Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen city. It is for S5 pupils only, with an evening session for parents. If pupils miss the opportunity, they can sometimes join another school group on another day. Some parents felt that all pupils of driving age should be given this chance. The school try to address this during PSE classes and have also held a "Crash Live" event at the Transport Museum for S4 pupils.

6.4 Drugs in School

A parent voiced concerns that older pupils involved with the selling of drugs are grooming younger pupils to become drug sellers, thus ensuring the continuity of drug selling in the Alford area. Drugs are available in all communities and Alford Academy continues to educate pupils about the dangers; the Guidance team are talking to all pupils and encouraging them to come forward if they have any information or have concerns. Any issues with drugs in school are followed up by the Police and parents are informed. Moira stressed that if parents have any information on drugs and drug selling this should be passed directly to the police. Nicola Sedgwick reported that Donside Community Council receive a report from the Police every month regarding drugs in the community, the number of instances is very low. It is hoped that the Drugs Awareness event taking place in March will help inform parents about current drugs and what to look for in their youngsters.

6.5 Pupils use of electronic devices during school hours

Does the educational use of smartphones and tablets outweigh the negative side? Scottish schools are allowed to choose whether they ban phones from lessons or even the whole school, but at Alford Academy the aim is to educate pupils to use them appropriately. A consultation on the use of mobile devices in school

is planned, and a clear policy on phone use at school will be written so that parents can help reinforce this.

6.6 Teaching study skills

Study skills are built into various programs in the school such as PSE, the new skills development classes (used to be MEL) as well as by individual subject teachers. It would be good to show parents these study skills too – this is a possible topic for one of the upskilling workshops.

Standard study methods are not always effective for pupils with additional needs and the ASL (Additional Support for Learning) team are good at finding appropriate tools for individual pupils.

6.7 School Uniform

Maira asked how the school can encourage pupils to wear the school uniform? Talking to the youngsters, the main issue appears to be peer pressure. It was noted that significant effort was put in by pupils who chose to introduce a blazer a few years ago. This was consulted on with parents and teachers at the time. The important role of parents in supporting the school uniform was shared. The current uniform has been in place now for three years and the next step will be to ask current pupils for their views on the S1-S3 uniform and whether the blazer should be introduced for these pupils.

6.8 S6 area for relaxing

Carried forward to next meeting

6.9 Use of private tutors by parents

Carried forward to next meeting

7. Proposals for funding

- Pipe band kilts – the pipe band have been fundraising themselves and may ask the Parent Council for help with extra funds if needed.

8. Date of next meeting

Monday 18th March 2019

Close 9.15pm

ACTION POINTS

- ACTION:** Parent Council-Pupil Council partnership - Penny Fuller, Sarah Mcgregor and Liz Strachan will meet with the Pupil Council on March 13th 2019 and report back to Parent council at the next meeting. Moira Milne/Penny Fuller
- ACTION:** Parent Council aim to continue holding topic driven events for parents across all cluster schools. The next event will be Drugs Awareness on 20th March 2019. Denise Smith and the other sub group members Monica Iloya and Sheena Lawson will liaise with Moira Milne
- ACTION:** David Wyllie will send out a survey to ask parents when the best time is to hold upskilling workshops and if they would attend.
- 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:** Colin Turnbull will report to the next Parent Council meeting on progress of the Community Group Link - additional support needs subgroup.

PARENT COUNCIL SUB-GROUPS

Fundraising	David Wyllie
Parent Council-Pupil Council partnership	Penny Fuller Sarah Mcgregor Liz Strachan
Volunteering	David Wyllie Sarah Mcgregor
Drugs awareness/mental health event	Denise Smith Sheena Lawson Monica Iloya
Community resources to enrich school education	Penny Fuller Sarah Mcgregor Nicola Sedgwick
Community group link – additional support needs	Colin Turnbull Sheena Lawson Rhona Stuart