

ALFORD ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

Alford Academy
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Minutes of Meeting 6th November 2018

Present: David Wyllie, Liz Strachan, Denise Smith, Penny Fuller, Sandy Innes, Tara Crooke, Ishbel Mollison, Monica Iloya, Rhona Stuart and Richard Stroud

In Attendance: Moira Milne, Stuart Cookson

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were received from Colin Turnbull, Sarah McGregor, Charlotte Milburn, Cllr John Latham, Sabina Smith, Sheena Lawson, Sarah Lewis, Donna Gray and Nicola Sedgwick

2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting on 17th September 2018 were accepted as accurate, after the addition of some staff names in section 4. Staffing Update

Proposed by Penny Fuller

Seconded by Sandy Innes

Matters arising

2.1 Parent Council-Pupil Council partnership

Penny Fuller and Liz Strachan attended a Pupil Council meeting on 31st October. The pupils discussed:

- Outdoor learning environment – ideas to make the woodland area at the back of the school into an outdoor learning area which could be used for forest schools and other activities. Stuart Cookson is investigating this and taking advice from experts. It will be developed in conjunction with the nursey and primary.
- More bins and benches outside
- Positive feedback on provision of more lockers, tables and chairs inside the school
- 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.

ACTION: Parent Council-Pupil Council partnership - Penny Fuller, Sarah Mcgregor and Liz Strachan will meet with the Pupil Council on Jan 9th 2019 and report back to Parent council at the next meeting. Moira Milne/Penny Fuller

2.2 Forum across all cluster schools

A successful information evening about university, apprenticeships and other career paths took place on June 6th. The next event will be Drugs Awareness/Mental Health on 20th March 2019.(see 5.2 below)

2.3 Constitution review (see 6. below)

2.4 Parental Engagement (see 5. below)

2.5 PVGs for parent volunteers

David Wyllie has contacted Caroline McIver and has the information about applications for PVGs for parents. If the help is non-specific for the future, it can be difficult to ensure that the PVG will cover the activity. It is hoped to have a bank of parent volunteers that are available to help at short notice

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

2.6 Fundraising

David Wyllie has sent out information to all parents via the school about the Parent Council lottery and EasyFundraising. David reported that there have been 6 more parents interested in the lottery so far.

3. Treasurer's report

In the main account there was £3,975.78 and in the lottery account £2,156 at the end of October. Money needs to be transferred from the lottery account to the main account. Other than clerk's fees, there have been no other expenses since the last meeting.

4. Head Teacher's report

Staffing Update:

Welcome to:

H Czarnecki	Teacher of Computing
R Forsyth	Teacher of Business
S Whitelaw	Teacher of ASL

Departures:

A MacLean	Teacher of ASL
B Munro	Teacher of RME/Psychology

Pending arrival:

R Lovelock	Teacher of Biology
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Interviews:

Drama (supply teacher only at present)
ASL

Higher Psychology will this year be taught using an e-learning service based on the West Coast "e-Sgiol", which is a real time virtual learning course. There will be a teacher from Alford present in the class at times and homework will be set and marked using GLOW. In Aberdeenshire there are 2 other schools using this to cover courses that would otherwise be difficult to provide.

Highlights since last meeting:

- The new house is called Glenbuchat and has had a big launch, the mascot has still to be decided.
- Macmillan coffee morning in the staff lounge – Interact Club
- S1 Open Evening – parents and pupils had a tour around all the faculties - positive feedback.
- Upcoming band from Glasgow – “Single By Sunday” – delivered message about cyber-bullying/social media as well as playing.
- Careers Evening – hugely successful again, well attended.
- Duchess of Rothesay visit – cluster primary schools were represented as well as the Alford Schools and nursery. The Duchess joined in with the Hospitality class and was entertained by dancers, the choir and the pipe band.
- YPI – Youth and Philanthropy Initiative – The Wood Foundation donates £3,000 to Scottish Secondary Schools that participate, to give to a charity. Groups of pupils chose a charity and give presentations. The winning group’s charity then receives £3,000. Semi-finals have taken place, finals soon.

5. Parental Engagement

5.1 Understanding progress reports sessions feedback

Sessions were held to get feedback on the new format of progress reports for S4-6 parents. There was good feedback and parents and staff liked the informal drop in style. This format will be used for other subjects – suggestions included apprenticeships and course choice. An idea is to have sessions after the formal course choice evenings, with key staff present to help with specific issues.

5.2 Drugs Awareness/Mental Health Event

The sub-group of Denise Smith, Monica Iloya and Sheena Lawson will liaise with Moira Milne to organise this event in conjunction with the school.

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

5.3 Upskilling Workshops

Ongoing – A pilot workshop for mathematics is proposed.

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

5.4 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.

5.5 Community group links – additional support needs

Sub-group to include Colin Turnbull, Sheena Lawson and Rhona Stuart. Liz will contact Colin to organise first meeting.

ACTION: Liz Strachan will contact Colin Turnbull to arrange the first meeting of the Community Group Link - additional support needs subgroup.

6. Constitution review

The draft updated constitution was sent to all parents by email and posted on the blog. There were no objections, so the new updated constitution will be adopted. In order to receive Parent council funding from the council, the evidence for constitution review must be sent to Christine McLennan (Education Support Officer – Parental Engagement). Liz will email the AGM minutes and constitution.

ACTION: Liz Strachan will send Christine McLennan (Education Support Officer – Parental Engagement) a copy of the AGM minutes and the updated constitution.

7. School Improvement 2018

Moira reminded parents of the 4 key measures from ‘How good is our school’, used as quality indicators i.e.

- Leadership of change
- Learning, teaching and assessment
- Ensuring well-being, equity and inclusion
- Raising attainment and achievement

A Quality Improvement Visit by Head Teachers and Senior Officers will take place at Alford Academy on 19 and 20 November and focus on validating the school’s approach to self-evaluation and in particular the quality indicator ‘Learning, teaching and assessment’.

A parent asked how Alford compares with other schools with regard to staffing issues, Moira reported that there have been similar issues elsewhere. Alford Academy has seen 20 longstanding teachers retire over the past 5 years as well as natural changes such as staff moving away from the area or abroad, change of direction, promotion etc.

Achievement is good at Alford Academy and the school is looking at how to maintain and further improve attainment. Data from external qualifications is analysed not only by subject but also individual papers/components to identify where improvements need to be focussed.

The 3-year improvement plan aims for:

- The very best leaders (all levels)
- The very best learners
- The very best curriculum
- The very best teachers

The pupil equity fund is provided to help disadvantaged pupils. It is awarded based on the number of pupils who are entitled to free school meals. Some has been spent this year on trips to NESCOL and SRUC with generally very positive feedback. Some money has been spent on literacy – including work led by an illustrator of graphic novels with the aim to challenge more reluctant readers. Money is available to purchase essential items such as calculators.

Recent improvements include:

- Family learning event for S1 parents, resources demonstrated with help of network librarian. Next step - open to other year groups.

- Skills Development Academy – this replaces “MEL” (Mentoring for Effective Learning) classes. Pupils will work towards SQA qualifications such as BGE personal development award (S1-3), Employability (S4), Leadership Academy (S5/6). The top awards are equivalent to a Higher. Skills for learning, life and work will be taught – literacy, numeracy, health and well-being, employability, thinking skills and leadership. Feedback from pupils highlighted areas of interest to them such as job interview skills, application forms, personal finance, journey planning. Moira reported that staff are motivated by the Skills Development Academy and older pupils are able to help younger ones as all pupils have this at the same time on their timetable.

Moira asked how the school can get more feedback from parents regarding school improvement. An idea was to give out a questionnaire at parents’ evenings and other information events, that can be returned at a later date, so that parents can have time to think about it. It should be friendly and accessible and contain useful information such as how to contact the school or parent council. It could be anonymous if parents do not wish to be identified.

Feedback in the form of the annual Standards and Quality report will be circulated to parents very soon.

8. Proposals for funding

8.1 Pipe band – want to get kilts made and are planning a trip abroad next year. Total funds needed £6,000, they have already raised £1,700 from sponsorship and fundraising. They have asked for £500 from the Parent Council. The parents present agreed but asked if the pipe band could complete an application form for funding, and send a representative to our next meeting, if possible, to explain their plans.

8.2 Show My Homework – the Parent Council have committed to funding this for another 2 years (total £3,700), however local Councils across Scotland are concerned with the provision of this type of external app in schools and GDPR. There is not an answer yet. Parents present here thought that this is not what the Data Protection Act should be about.

9. School trips/activities

Staff have had meetings to discuss school trips and are planning trips for S1-3 initially. The school is waiting for proposals from staff for curriculum-based trips both in the UK and abroad, which will be finalised at a meeting soon. The school will need to ensure that there are reserve members of staff to cover trips in case of illness etc.

10. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 23rd January 2019

Close 9pm

ACTION POINTS

- ACTION:** Parent Council-Pupil Council partnership - Penny Fuller, Sarah Mcgregor and Liz Strachan will meet with the Pupil Council on Jan 9th 2019 and report back to Parent council at the next meeting. Moira Milne/Penny Fuller
- ACTION:** David Wyllie and Sarah McGregor will organise PVG applications for parents interested in volunteering
- ACTION:** Parent Council aim to continue holding topic driven events for parents across all cluster schools. The next event will be Drugs Awareness/Mental Health 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 draft a survey to ask parents when the best time is to hold upskilling workshops and if they would attend. A pilot workshop for mathematics is proposed.
- 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:** Liz Strachan will contact Colin Turnbull to arrange the first meeting of the Community Group Link - additional support needs subgroup.
- ACTION:** Liz Strachan will send Christine McLennan (Education Support Officer – Parental Engagement) a copy of the AGM minutes and the updated constitution

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