

ALFORD ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

Alford Academy
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Minutes of Meeting 26th August 2019

Present: Colin Turnbull, Liz Strachan, Denise Smith, Penny Fuller, Sarah Lewis, Grainne Patton, Gloria Malcolm, Nicola Duncan, Joe Purkis, Anne Glennie, Ingrid Huldal, Petra Glennie, Sarah Mcgregor, Amy Wilson

In Attendance: Moira Milne

1. Welcome and Apologies

Colin Turnbull welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Nicola Sedgwick, Charlotte Milburn, Frank Sewell, Angela Findlay, Fiona Henderson

2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting on 19th June 2019 were accepted as accurate, other than the addition of Petra Glennie to the attendance list.

Proposed by Penny Fuller

Seconded by Denise Smith

Matters arising

2.1 FAQs for website/blog -Charlotte Milburn has compiled a list from all the suggestions so far. Liz will email contacts again to ask for any other suggestions as there are several new S1 parents on the distribution list that may have ideas.

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

Representatives from the Parent Council will attend a pupil council meeting and report to the Parent Council at the next meeting.

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

2.3 Upskilling workshops

This will be discussed in the school improvement plan.

2.4 Applications for grants

Denise Smith has tried phoning the Marr Area Partnership but no reply as yet. Gloria will forward Denise the email address to try. Ongoing.

ACTION: Denise Smith will contact the Marr Area Partnership to find out what grants the Parent Council may be able to apply for.

2.5 “Inspire Young People” project

This will be discussed under School Improvement Priorities.

2.6 A message will be put on the blog asking parents to encourage their children to collect sponsorship money for the sponsored walk. Sarah Mcgregor has taken over posting to the blog from David Wyllie and will post the information once the sponsored walk forms are handed out by the school.

ACTION: A message from Parent Council will be put on the blog to ask parents to encourage their children to collect sponsorship money for the sponsored walk next term. Sarah Mcgregor/Moira Milne

3. Treasurer’s report

The lottery account is now closed and the money remaining transferred to the main account. In the main account there was £6,605.30 at the end of July. £44.48 has been received from Easyfundraising. £50 clerk’s fees have been paid. Payments still to be made include a contribution to ShowMyHomework and the Awards Ceremony totalling £3,000 over 2 years and £312 for Pupil Council badges. Denise Smith will contact J Beange at the school for invoices for these. Aberdeenshire Council funding for 2018-19 is still to be received (2017-18 amount received was £470.25). After all the outstanding expenses and Aberdeenshire Council funding there will be approx. £3,700 left in the main account.

Sarah Mcgregor will add a post to the blog with the Easyfundraising details for new parents.

ACTION: Sarah Mcgregor will add a post to the blog with the Easyfundraising details for new parents

4. Head Teacher’s report

Staffing Update:

Appointments: Teacher of Physics – P Walker

Teacher of Business – probationer L Docherty

Teacher of PE – P Clark

Teacher of ASL – P George

Teacher of Mathematics – D Wilson

Vacancies: Teacher of Technical – increase in staffing levels

Teacher of HE – no applicants for maternity leave cover, have interviewed for a supply list teacher. Local restaurants have noted interest in helping. NESCOL are delivering courses open to a number of schools. At present HE is not on the curriculum for new S1s next year, but it is hoped to be able to offer some skills development through the year.

Teacher of Maths – increased staffing levels due to increased roll

Teacher of Physics – new vacancy due to relocation

Highlights since last meeting:

- Awards Ceremony – successful event – the format is recognised across Aberdeenshire as an example of good practice. The objective is to reward hard work as well as

achievement, together with acknowledging success in pursuits out of school. The new way of recognising hard work in years 1-3, utilising school report data, resulted in more boys receiving awards this year, though the majority are still girls. The school consulted with Parent Council representatives about this and there has been positive feedback from parents and pupils.

- The Pipe Band tartan is woven and ready to make into kilts. Outfits will be ready for the school music trip to Belgium in October.
- House assemblies – awards were presented at these assemblies to those pupils who were not at the main ceremony but were still recognised for their hard work and achievement. The format has been changed this year, with former pupils invited to speak.
- Summer games at the end of term. Great day for staff and pupils.
- Whole school assembly first day back after the holidays - over 680 pupils and all staff in the games hall. Izzy Tolemetti (former pupil and Commonwealth gymnast) gave a talk encouraging hard work and dedication to reach goals. The senior prefect team gave personal inspirational messages to each year group.
- S6 leavers gave feedback that they would rather have a conversational type workshop with the chaplains rather than the formal S6 assemblies as at present.
- Tree of Knowledge – motivational workshops for pupils.
- YPI charity showcase – The Wood Foundation donates £2,500 to Scottish Secondary Schools that participate to give to a charity. S5 teams will be researching their chosen charity and preparing presentations. The winning team will then raise £500 to donate along with the £2,500 .
- In-service days format included new staff meeting the Head Teacher, child protection briefing for all campus staff, faculty improvement meetings, support for learning strategies for the classroom, Skills Development Academy training for staff (this replaces the Mentoring for Effective Learning programme), Google classroom training, Microsoft Office training (changeover October).
- School Uniform check – very positive this year, though not as many seniors wearing blazers. Issue with some pupils wearing PE kit to school or through the day instead of changing.
- Emile Sande, former pupil, was installed as Chancellor of Sunderland University in July. She was born in Sunderland and her parents attended the University, then a polytechnic. They missed their graduation ceremony due to Emile's birth – but at her first ceremony as chancellor, Emile presented her parents with their degrees.

Moira explained the roles of the Senior Leadership Team in the Academy as well as the Aberdeenshire Council Education leadership structure, which combine to deliver the best education for the pupils. The “One Aberdeenshire” principles include “bring your best self to work every day”. The values of Alford Academy are Honesty, Hard Work, Ambition, Respect and Kindness.

5. Parent Council Health Check

This will be reviewed at the next meeting if time.

6. School Improvement Priorities

Moira gave a presentation showing the profile of the school in terms of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation and the SQA results compared to the expected in view of this. Figures showing changes year by year were displayed also. The school analyses SQA results carefully for any issues that may need to be addressed. Most results are in-line or above the Aberdeenshire average.

The school is aiming to build ambition in pupils. The first step to success is ambition and the second step action, working together with parents to nurture, inspire and achieve.

Confidence is important, especially in subjects such as Mathematics, and pupils need to develop resilience.

Within the National Improvement Framework, the school aims to:

- Close the attainment gap
- Improve health and wellbeing
- Develop employability skills, for a positive school leaver destination for all

The 4 key drivers for this in Alford are:

1. Leadership and School Improvement

The Headteachers' Charter empowers Head Teachers to make more decisions about their own school. Staff want to develop the whole school into a vibrant learning space. The Pupil Council are looking at ways to develop the outdoor space for learning.

2. Teaching, learning and assessment

A key area for improvement is prompt communications with parents and interventions when pupil progress in learning is causing concern. The pupils are working on a branding of values in the classroom, led by staff. Principal teachers are working with other schools, sharing good practice. All staff have increased accountability, with monitoring of impact of interventions.

3. Our curriculum

The S3 curriculum is very broad, but feedback from S6 leavers was very positive about this breadth, as they felt they could try more subjects before deciding which to take further. However, this reduces time available for each subject. Third years will have a health and wellbeing program this year to try and increase resilience.

4. Our young people – the very best learners

Parental Engagement is very important for young people to maximise their attainment – more information on what schools can do to help is available at <https://education.gov.scot/improvement>. Parental involvement can take the form of coming into school to help, or for example attend open days or upskilling workshops. An upskilling workshop for parents is to be planned for Mathematics. Moira is hosting a “Share the Air” event and open sessions. Moira invited any parents to shadow her for a day. More events to see the school “live” will be planned, the Parent Council could send representatives to these and maybe serve refreshments. A parental engagement event is planned for Wednesday 18th September. Parents could support the school with help on trips and events such as the sponsored walk.

There were further discussions about the planned “Inspire Young People” project - the aim being to give ideas to help young people be ambitious, with speakers from a variety of sectors and walks of life. Ideas included a speed-dating format, lunchtime sessions, or one-to-one. Parents could mentor individual pupils to give them a goal. Another idea for this is to develop an alumni group to invite former pupils to share their pathways in life. A group of S6 pupils are starting an alumni group and the Parent Council were asked if they would like to send a representative to join the group. Joe Purkis volunteered. A suggestion was made that alumni could do a “You Tube” style video for pupils to watch. Colin Turnbull offered to help with mentoring skills and Sarah Lewis offered to give advice if needed. Grainne Patton will share details of her old school’s successful approach to using alumni to inspire pupils. An “alumni wall” has been a success there, with details of past pupils’ pathways to fame as well as ordinary jobs and careers. A stand for the alumni group can be organised at the Careers Fair. Teachers who are past pupils could share their pathways and hobbies etc? Quality of life outside work

should be promoted as well as showing that an individual can have several different jobs or careers through their life.

ACTION: A project to “Inspire Young People” will be developed in conjunction with the school, Parent Council and community. A meeting will be arranged - Ingrid Huldal/Moira Milne/Colin Turnbull/Joe Purkis

7. Proposals for funding

The pupil council are working on projects for the outdoor space and will be looking for funding. The Parent Council suggested that they send some representatives to give a presentation at one of our meetings with details of their proposal.

There was a short discussion about fund raising methods now that the Parent Council Lottery has ended. Many suggestions for events were put forward, an interesting one being a giant domino run through the campus. At the next meeting, it is hoped to set up a fundraising subgroup to plan future events. It was agreed it would be good to plan some events that included pupils and the wider community.

8. Any other business

- 8.1** Transport issues – some bus routes have changed, and many parents have made complaints to the Transport Unit at Aberdeenshire Council about these. The Keig/Tullynessle/Montgarrie route in particular has a full-size bus on single track roads which could be dangerous and is not sustainable through the winter. The bus has also been late arriving at school regularly. The school are in discussions with the transport unit. Colin will contact Aberdeenshire Council on behalf of the Parent Council.
- 8.2** A query was made about obtaining lockers by using a QR code – there was concern that if pupils didn't have access to a smart phone it would disadvantage them. Moira reassured parents that this was only one option for obtaining a locker and any concerns should be shared with Mr Gardner, who is happy to help.
- 8.3** Blue badge spaces in the Campus car park are being abused by people not entitled to use them. Excessive speed is also an issue in the car park. Aberdeenshire Council are in charge of the car park, not the campus. Warning lights that light up over a certain speed or display a smiley face if the speed limit is observed would be desirable, though funding for this may not be available through the Council.

9. Dates of future meetings

Monday 16th September 2019 AGM 7pm

Wednesday 6th November 2019 7pm

Tuesday 21st January 2020 7pm

Monday 16th March 2020 7pm

Tuesday 12th May 2020 7pm

Wednesday 17th June 2020 8pm

Start 7.05pm 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 after the holidays and report back to Parent council at the next meeting. Moira Milne/Penny Fuller
- ACTION:** Denise Smith will contact the Marr Area Partnership to find out what grants the Parent Council may be able to apply for.
- ACTION:** A message from Parent Council will be put on the blog to ask parents to encourage their children to collect sponsorship money for the sponsored walk next term. Sarah McGregor/Moira Milne
- ACTION:** Sarah McGregor will add a post to the blog with the Easyfundraising details for new parents
- ACTION:** A project to “Inspire Young People” will be developed in conjunction with the school, Parent Council and community. A meeting will be arranged - Ingrid Huldal/Moira Milne/Colin Turnbull/Joe Purkis

PARENT COUNCIL SUB-GROUPS (2019-20)

To be organised at next meeting