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MINUTES OF THE ALFORD ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL EGM

Monday 15th May 2023 (7.00 - 9.00 pm)
Virtual - via Teams link

Attendees

- Office Bearers: Ingrid Huldal (Chair), Joe Purkis (Depute-chair), Coralie Robertson (Secretary), Dawn Brown (Treasurer).
- Parent Council Members: Monica Iloya, Lucy Greene, Fiona Henderson, Frank Sewell, Karen Leven, Tanya Viliene, Charlotte Millburn
- Parent Forum: Emma Emslie, Anne Glennie, Jill Joss, John Joss, Matthew Livington, A Lyon, Anson and Fay Mackay, Jo McGarthland, Sasha McMillian, Linda Purkis, Duncan Sewell, Mrs Strachan, Fiona Woodhead, Amy Wilson, Sharon Witherspoon
- School Staff: Mrs Angela Wotherspoon - Head Teacher
Dr Matt Skellern - Depute Head Teacher (Learning and Teaching)
Mr Stuart Cookson - Depute Head Teacher (Curriculum)
Mr Graham Scott - Depute Head Teacher (Pupil Support)
- Councillors: Cllr Jeff Goodhall, Cllr Gwyneth Petrie, Cllr Iris Walker

Apologies

Cllr Geva Blackett, Cllr Sarah Brown, Cllr Ron McKail, Cllr Anouk Kloppert, Cllr Robbie Withey

1. Welcome and agenda format

Ingrid welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that minutes of the meeting will be sent out.

2. Introduction – Parent Council Chair

- The school Improvement Plan has been in place for a while and is available on the school's website. The Parent Council (PC) has sub-groups to support school improvements, namely:
 - Parent Council & Pupil Partnership
 - Horizons
 - Community link (Additional Support Needs)
 - Communication
 - Fundraising
- The Parent Council can look at the areas it can support the school and discuss ways to do this.

3. Introduction – Head Teacher

- Alford Academy Inspection Report can be found on Education Scotland's website.
- The inspection took place in week commencing 21st November 2022, with the report published on March 2023.
- Education Scotland's core quality indicators focus on:
 - Leadership of change
 - Learning, teaching and assessment
 - Wellbeing, equality and inclusion
 - Raising Attainment and Achievement
- In August 2021 Mrs Wotherspoon worked with officers in the Authority to see where the school was and where changes were needed in the previous Improvement Plan taking into account differences since the pandemic.
- Inspection was assessed on the following 3 Core Quality indicators (QIs) from the document 'How Good is our School':
 - 1.3 Leadership of change
 - 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment
 - 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion
 - 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement
- School consulted with parents, pupils and staff to ask what they thought school did well.
- The Improvement Plan was given out to show the areas of focus.
- In November the Inspection team contacted the school and put out a scoping paper on the QIs and asked for evidence of where the school was with improvements.
- Alford Academy was the first secondary school in Aberdeenshire to be inspected since the pandemic.
- 17 inspectors were in school and it was very busy with different meetings and interactions.
- School would normally have 3 Deputes, however, at the time of the inspection 2 Deputes were in post.
- On Thursday of inspection week there was industrial action, but Mrs Wotherspoon decided to continue with the inspection as there had been so much preparation and school was ready.
- School was given verbal feedback from the inspection team on the last day of the inspection on Friday 25th of November 2022 on good practice and improvement. They spoke about what the school needed to do next and areas they needed to work on, which aligned with the school's Improvement Plan.
- The back of the school Inspection Report 'Explanation of terms of quantity' explains the terms of quantity used in the report.

4. Summary of School Inspection Report

1.3 Leadership of change

- The Inspection Report discussed what the school was good at and what this would look like going forward.
- School will continue to seek the views of all stakeholders.
- Alford Academy also works with Westhill and Aboyne Academies as part of a trio on self-improvement of school working. Over the last 3 years have used this to share good practice so staff can learn from other schools and they can learn from us. Mrs Wotherspoon has met the Heads of Westhill and Aboyne to share expertise in certain subjects. E.g., in the past worked on the alternative SQA certification model and will now be working on lesson observations.

- The majority of pupils feel their views are listened to; need to find out and understand why only minority say their views are taken into account.
- School seeks the views of parents for planning and the Parent Council hears from all the Senior Leadership team at Parent Council meetings with suggestions being well received.
- School has strong links with the community and business partners and this will continue to grow.
- Alford Academy's School Leaver profile is being seen as good practice with Mrs Wotherspoon and Mr Cookson being asked to present this to the other schools who are part of the Excelerate Program.
- School to encourage more pupil participation in the Student Council from across the school and look at opportunities for PC to help with this.
- School will look at pupils taking on enhanced roles, possibly looking at broadening prefect roles and working collaboratively with the PC to provide structure and planning e.g., Outdoor Space project.
- School has a number of partners e.g., Alford Golf Club, colleges and employers and Mr Cookson is working on more structure for pathways.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

- The Senior Leadership team, Quality Improvement Officer (QIO), Quality Improvement Manager and school felt this needs to be further developed.
- Post pandemic, we have as a school had to overcome challenges of home learning and a mix of online and in-school, with challenges for parents at home.
- When back in school there was social distancing, masks were required until April 22 and learning had changed with a different methodologies of teaching.
- Professional learning with staff is looking at what an Alford Academy lesson should look like and school is now back to lots of different learning in class.
- Priorities in the Improvement Plan are looking at shared articulation, of the language of learning high quality teaching and assessment, continuous learning for staff and learning intentions in class with success criteria.
- Developing questioning skills and planning and learning to meet the needs of learners and continuing digital learning.
- This is the remit of Mr Skellern moving forward with the Learning and Teaching group and was the focus for November and February in-service days.
- When a new Head takes up post, they are supported by the QIO to look at the school's Improvement Plan at that point and forward and school updates PC meetings.
- The school carried out a survey with staff and pupils about reporting and changed the format of the reports on SEEMIS. Once all reports have been put out there will be a follow-up survey and at the last PC meeting a small number of volunteers were asked to provide input as parents to the templates on SEEMIS.
- School is looking at consistency in teaching and how to measure this with a shared understanding of what a lesson looks like, intention and how to know these are achieved.
- School is looking at lesson observations, asking pupils what it looks like for them. The Learning and Teaching group has looked at templates for observations and how professional learning can take place to support learning, good practice and expertise, provide facilities for these with observations afterwards to know what has been achieved.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The inspection has two aspects from 'How Good is Our School' that have observations, but no score. School chose Curriculum: Learning pathways.
- Staff from Community Learning and 16Plus came to talk to pupils to see where the school was.
- School is teaching study skills and will continue with this.

- School is broadening subjects on offer with Applications of Maths at National 5 this year and Higher next year.
- Introducing National Progression awards offering qualifications at the same level without a final exam e.g., NPA at Level 5 in Journalism.
- Further qualifications are being offered in PE in S4, RMPS in S3 and S4 and a language in S3 to increase tariff points for pupils going forward.
- S4s have 4 periods for each of Maths and English with 5 periods for other subjects. In S2 and S3 pupils have a higher number of periods for Maths and English than other schools to allow for breadth and depth of attainment in subjects in S4. School now has two staff (representing one full-time post) for literacy and numeracy to support pupils. This post has been in place since mid-April and we hope to take this post forward into next session. They will provide classroom and on occasion one-to-one for pupils requiring support prior to S4.
- School to consider reviewing the S5/6 curriculum in relation to breadth and progression.
- As a result of the inspection, school has met regularly with the local minister and RE teacher to look at including religious education with the Horizons program for S5 and S6 or increasing RE.
- School has a teacher for PT Excellence, Equity & Wellbeing to improve communication around support available across the Authority.
- Horizons program will be opening up to more of the school, such as bringing mock interviews into S3.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- PC has a strong relationship with school with good engagement and an open-door policy to help improve school.
- PC involved with leadership interviews.
- Priorities for school Improvement Plan set out at the start of this school year and highlighted as
 - Green – on track
 - Yellow – behind schedule
 - Red – not achieved
- Improvement plan updated in January and asked staff and Faculty Heads to update Faculty Improvement Plan, then will come back in June to see where the school is and put out to parents.
- Plan for next year with pupils, parents and partners and bring it to PC.
- School to look at communication with the wider parent body about pupils engaging in achievement opportunities e.g., take up of Foundation Apprenticeships has increased and discussed better communication with parents of these opportunities at the last PC meeting.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding as is done in every inspection.
- The inspection identified some issues around process and these were sorted and signed off by the end of the inspection week.
- Mrs Wotherspoon and Deputes have spoken to other Heads to see how this is done.

3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing, equality and inclusion

Theme 1: Wellbeing

- Mr Scott is working in the area of wellbeing with strong communication using the pastoral team and personal and social education (PSE) sessions.
- S5/6 do not have the opportunity to experience PSE and Mr Cookson will look at this through the Horizons programme timetabling, including for those pupils out of school on Foundation Apprenticeships. He will consider having external providers come in to support this.

- A minority of pupils have experienced bullying and school, in the new session, will develop a draft anti-bullying policy around Aberdeenshire Council's newly released policy to share with pupils and parents.
- School is looking at ways to value pupils' achievements and are moving towards using SEEMIS to log praise.
- To promote healthy lifestyle, school are providing interventions with partners to help reduce pupils' anxiety and increase attendance. School would like to train more staff as Mental First Aiders, but there are difficulties getting courses. Also looking at Let's Introduce Anxiety Management (LIAM) program and training in low mood, so staff can work with pupils and families before issues would need to access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) as there is a long wait.
- School has Mental Health Practitioner staff in 2 days a week and a Councillor in for 1½ days and school is seeing positive impact with LIAM.

Theme 2: Fulfilment of statutory duties

- School is looking at how to support pupils struggling to stay in class.
- School is looking at alternative to exclusions, but if a pupil is excluded school follows a process to reflect national guidelines.
- School is looking at how to make meals more accessible to pupils.
- Mrs Wotherspoon clarified that staff work with the police on intervention work. In situations where the school suspect criminality there are strict protocols and parents of those pupils involved will be contacted, either by school or the police. There are also clear protocols around sharp objects in school.
- At the start of the year, school talk with pupils through PSE about child protection and feeling safe. Each classroom wall has a poster with the names and pictures of the child protection officers and a QR code which can be scanned to directly contact them via email. Guidance teachers' offices also have QR codes on the doors for pupils to contact them.
- There is a child protection presentation to staff at the beginning of the year and how to alert child protection officers and senior staff about child protection issues.

Theme 3: Inclusion and equality

- In PSE, pupils are looking at the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the minister will be presenting about this in the next school session.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

- Attainment in literacy and numeracy for Broad General Education (BGE) shows historical data.
- Third year Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSAs) completed virtually.
- Current S3s did not do SNSAs in P7 and teacher provided professional judgements, in their SNSAs in November S3s have high attaining pupils and generally very good, although some need extra support. Employed Literacy and Numeracy staff to support pupils.
- SNSAs are national data, but can be used individually to identify extra support.
- Improvements can be looked at by reviewing pupil results after the prelims and again in August and September with the SQA results to decide on any changes.
- When results compared with the Virtual Comparator (an average of schools similar to Alford Academy) at S5 this can take a dip as the National statistics as these do not currently include awards for Foundation Apprenticeships.
- Initial destination for the school is the highest in the Authority.
- The inspection report recommended Alford Academy's practice of project-based learning in BGE providing opportunities for learning in innovative real-life contexts should be shared more widely.

5. School Improvement Plan and Parent Council support

- The Parent Council can work with school through the Parent Council and Pupil Partnership sub-group to take into account pupils views. School looking at ways to get a wider range of views represented by the Student Council by considering extending this to representation from Clan (S1-S4).
- PC to work with school to support Student Council in putting ideas into action where possible.
- PC considering charitable status to access more funding to support school improvements.
- Fundraising sub-group and Parent Council and Pupil Partnership sub-group will share Outdoor Space project with business partners to support with achieving target fundraising.
- Communications sub-group will look at including a news section on the PC's section of the school's website to keep parents informed.
- Look at enhanced role for prefects e.g., the Senior Executive could come to PC meetings, pupils speaking to parents about their first-hand experience of course choices.
- Through PC parents can give feedback to school and the Senior Leadership team and the PC can communicate with the wider parent body.
- School will share with parents what an Alford Academy lesson looks like and consider having parents in to school.
- School to look at sharing more about Foundation Apprenticeship with parents.
- School to look at parent workshops/family information sessions with PC support. Gauge interest of wider parent body for subjects such as bullying, homework, anxiety, drugs action, social media with option of bringing in external providers. In-person sessions at school provides an opportunity to re-engage with parents post Covid by both the school and PC.
- PC take the opportunity to engage with parents at parents evenings.
- Inspection report stated 41% of pupils had additional support needs. PC to review the progress of the Community Link: ASN sub-group with school to better understand where support can be provided, perhaps workshops.
- Previous event with pupils showing parents around school worked well providing an opportunity for parental engagement and social experience for pupils. School to look at showcase events and consider topics (e.g., STEM subjects) and timings.

6. Wrap up and actions

- PC will put School Improvement Plan on the agenda for the next session to discuss progress.
- School to look at better communication with parents about the benefits to pupils of taking a Foundation Apprenticeships (action at previous PC meeting).
- School, in the new session, will develop a draft anti-bullying policy around Aberdeenshire Council's newly released policy and share with parents.
- At the last PC meeting a small number of volunteers were asked to provide input as parents to SEEMIS templates.
- PC to review the progress of the Community Link: ASN sub-group with school.
- School to look at parent workshops/family information sessions with PC support.
- Fundraising sub-group and Parent Council and Pupil Partnership sub-group will share Outdoor Space project with business partners to support with achieving target fundraising (action from last PC meeting).

The meeting concluded with thanks to the school for all the hard work prior to and throughout the inspection.

Date of next meeting14th June 2023 (Wednesday) – P7 Parent Welcome

Dates of meetings in 2023/2024 dates TBC

Parent Council Members 2022 - 2023 (Quorum 6):

Karen Leven	(S1)
Tanya Viliene	(S1)
Dawn Brown (Treasurer)	(S2)
Lucy Greene	(S2)
Sharon Witherspoon	(S3)
Coralie Robertson (Secretary)	(S3)
Fiona Henderson	(S3, S1)
Joe Purkis (Depute Chair)	(S4)
Monica Iloya	(S4)
Sarah Lewis	(S4, S2)
Frank Sewell	(S5, S4, S2)
Donna Gray	(S5, S3, S2)
Denise Smith	(S6, S4)
Ingrid Huldal (Chair)	(S6, S1)
Charlotte Milburn	(S6, S2)

Parent Council Sub-committee Members 2022-2023:

Fundraising	Ingrid Huldal, Grainne Paton, Coralie Robertson, Dawn Brown
Parent Council-Pupil Partnership	Frank Sewell, Coralie Robertson
Community Group Link: Additional Support Needs	Rhona Stuart, Donna Gray, Lisa Moir
Horizons	Joe Purkis, Lisa Moir, Jan Whitfield, John Whitfield
Communication	Charlotte Millburn, Dawn Brown