

Dalkeith High School Parent Council
Tuesday 17 May 2016

Present: Allyson Dobson (AD), Caroline Pearson (CP), Steve Kelly (SK), Hamish Duncan, Gail Preston, Marianne Flockhart, Jess Alexander, Carlyne Ross, Julie Darling, Iain Cumming, Anne Murray, Jane Richardson, Deborah Slater (DS)

Apologies: Chantal Bruce, Bill McQueen, Stephanie Heasman

Welcome: Chair welcomed everybody especially Jane Richardson, this was her last meeting after twelve years serving on the Parent Council and PTA. She was presented with flowers as a token of our appreciation.

Approval of previous minutes: a mistake on the previous minutes was pointed out, under school dress code, the bullet point about blazers being compulsory for S6s from August 2016 was incorrect, the final decision on this is yet to be taken. DS apologised for the error and said she would rectify it.

Matters arising: AD revisited the item about cover for staff absences giving a detailed breakdown of cover for classes for a sample week in February including those covered by subject qualified staff.

Notification of AOCB:

Difficulty of Nat 5 maths exam

School dress code

Dates for next year's Parent Council meetings and DHS' Got Talent

Water

Digital learning, feedback on Parental Consultation meeting

Pupil Voice and role of Senior School Council

Pupil Voice: Gail Preston explained that she has been working on revamping the Pupil Voice with meetings chaired by S6s and formal minutes being taken. Topics for PV meetings will be steered towards learning and teaching. In future PV meetings may take place in PSE rather than lunchtime so that pupils don't miss out on their lunch break. Pupil focus groups have taken place on particular topics, Gail provided a handout with the outcome of a focus group on dress code as an example. In future rather than opting into being involved, pupils will be chosen at random for these meetings and can opt out if they wish.

Senior School Council: Hamish Duncan (responsibility for wider achievement) spoke about the Senior School Council which is made up of the Head Boy and Girl, Deputy Head Boy and Girl, four House Captains and Prefects (exact number of prefects not decided yet). Hamish provided handouts with detailed job descriptions for each of these roles plus information on how applicants could apply for the roles. The selection process was also explained. So that these pupils are highly visible in the school it is suggested that they wear blazers. If it is decided that all S6s will wear blazers then these office bearers will have a gold trim added to their blazers to distinguish them. In return for their service to the school these pupils will be given certain privileges such as being first in the dinner queue! One parent asked if there were any other roles of responsibility for those pupils who did not want to be prefects. AD responded that there were other options and this led on to the

next item.

AD also asked Hamish Duncan to speak to the Parent Council about the **DHS Enterprise Fund**, he stressed that this idea was still at the planning stage but he provided a handout about the initial idea to raise £12 000 per year. Pupils will be encouraged to raise £15 each through fundraising, either individually or as part of team. The money in the fund will then be open to bids from pupils, parents and staff. The requests will be considered by a panel likely to be made up of SLT, Parent Council and community members. There was a general consensus around the table that this project could be a very exciting venture.

Head Teacher update:

P7 Parents' evening input:

AD explained the format for the evening including:

- an introduction by herself and a photo montage of achievements since the P7s last visited the school in the autumn
- a song from Hairspray and an opportunity to buy tickets for the show
- some S1 pupils talking about their experience
- CP speaking about the Parent Council
- Senior Pupils taking part will be in full school uniform, hopefully including blazers, to model the dress code
- S1s will be then be divided into their houses and will go off to meet the relevant staff
- An FAQ sheet will be available to the new parents

AD asked if any parents at the meeting would be willing to serve wine and nibbles in the dining hall and chat with parents about Parent Council. Five parents volunteered.

Validated self-evaluation exercise – AD explained that this would take place on Thu 26 May, who would be involved and that the focus would be on pupil support. AD requested parents to come along to participate in a focus group from 1.50 – 2.40pm on that day. Two parents offered to attend. AD was hoping for more but parents who can't attend are encouraged to provide a written submission instead. There was a question about whether this evaluation would include anything on the school's more able learners policy. AD said this was something the school was still working on. The validated self-evaluation will feed into improvement planning which is the focus of the next in-service day.

S6 Leavers' Day: AD explained what had happened in school when a group of senior pupils brought eggs, "water" balloons, fruit, etc. into the school dining hall and started throwing them around causing many other pupils and staff to run for cover. A live chicken was also released in the hall. The floors around the school became very slippery and quite a lot of pupils ended up squashed into corridors, and having to change direction quickly. Staff had to act fast to prevent a crush situation from developing. Some pupils were very scared especially as one of those involved was wearing a balaclava. AD explained the potential dangers that had arisen from the situation and the sanctions that had been applied against those involved. The clean up of the school afterwards was a lengthy process. One parent expressed her thanks to the staff for helping to make her daughter feel safe during and after the incident.

There was a brief discussion on how to prevent a similar incident from occurring again in future. One suggestion was for pupils to sign a "contract" about behaviour during the school year when booking for Prom.

National Improvement Framework: This is the Scottish Government setting out its priorities for education. It gathers evidence from local authorities including through standardised testing. In secondary schools this means literacy and numeracy testing in S3. The focus is on raising attainment.

AOCB:

Difficulty of Nat 5 maths exam – one parent expressed concern about the difficulty of the first maths paper and how different it was from all of the specimen papers. Although the pass mark will be adjusted as necessary the subsequent knock to confidence is carried into the following exams. It was also pointed out that most other subjects have some other form of assessment in addition to the exam but in maths it is all on the exam. AD suggested that a letter from the Parent Council to the SQA would be appropriate expressing these concerns. CP agreed to do this.

School dress code from August 2016:

- For BGE, same as now
- Senior Phase – white shirt and tie, blazers for S6s, these will be mandatory for office bearers. If all S6s end up wearing blazers then braiding on blazers will distinguish office bearers.
- Emphasis on praise for wearing it e.g. double house points
- It was suggested that there was potential for a second-hand uniform / thrift shop and that this could feed back in to the Enterprise Fund discussed earlier in the meeting.
- One parent pointed out that the school couldn't enforce the wearing of school uniform and wanted the school to publicise this. Most of those present felt strongly that this would be counter-productive and there was considerable discussion around this point. The majority of parents at the meeting felt that it should be school policy to have a dress code and to ask those past school leaving age to sign a "contract" to wear it. The Parent Council did not feel that it was its remit to inform other parents re legal position on uniform but that the minutes (discussion around this) were a public document and available for all to read on the school website.

Dates for next year's Parent Council meetings and Dalkeith High's Got Talent: SK to liaise with DS re dates for these.

Water: A parent pointed out that drinking water is still not readily available in school, in the dinner hall there is only flavoured water on sale. This is a topic that comes up regularly at Parent Council and has not been resolved, AD said she would investigate. Another parent suggested that pupils brought a water bottle to school with them, perhaps another idea for the Enterprise Fund: sale of water bottles.

Digital Learning: Jess Alexander attended a Parental Consultation meeting on this subject last week. She said that Midlothian Council want to develop a strategy on this for all schools in Midlothian. At the meeting there was an interesting discussion around a bring your own device to school policy. This would raise a lot of difficult questions but could also bring lots of benefits. There will be a lengthy consultation period. Jess will tell us more at the next meeting and AD suggested inviting Fraser Agnew (PE) along to that meeting too for his input. Jess provided a handout from the meeting detailing ten key action points.

The meeting was closed. **Dates for next year's PC meetings will follow asap.**