

Dalkeith High School Parent Council

Tuesday 18 April 2017

Present: Allyson Dobson (AD), Caroline Pearson (CP), Cath Stewart (CS), Julie Darling (JD), Chantal Bruce (CB), Nicola Johnson (NJ), Deborah Slater, Stephanie Heasman, Marianne Flockhart, Anne Murray

Apologies: Morag Ryan, Bill McQueen, Carolyne Ross, Pauline Dickson

Welcome: Caroline Pearson (Chair) welcomed everyone

Approval of previous minutes: Approved

PTA Update:

The raffle will be extended as feedback showed that some tickets weren't handed out until just before the closing date. Further announcements will go out to advertise it again. There has also been quite a lot of disparity in the numbers of tickets sold per house. However, so far £645 has been raised!

A bag pack has been organised for 6 May 2017 at Morrison's, Dalkeith and pupil volunteers are needed. The event will last from 10 am to 2 pm but volunteers only need to stay for an hour at a time. A letter will be issued shortly.

This is a great way to raise funds, with the last bag pack raising over £800.

The P7 welcome evening is coming up in June, and this will be an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of the PTA and PC and hopefully gather new members.

The Facebook page is gaining followers and a great way to communicate but it was agreed that not everyone is on Facebook and we have to continue to make use of all our communication avenues.

100 Club is still planned and the gambling license has been approved but at least 50 numbers need to be sold straight away to get the club started. A volunteer is also needed to run the club.

AD expressed her appreciation of everything the PTA has been doing to raise funds. A great amount has already been raised in a short space of time and she really appreciates all the hard work and support given by the PTA members.

Communication

On the subject of communication, AD has been looking into a couple of software packages that can highlight when homework is due by sending a message to pupils and parents. This should help to improve parent communication.

Head Teacher Update

Uniform

CS gave an update on the results of the questionnaire given to the Pupil Voice. There were some quite varied responses however, pupils did seem to like having a choice (i.e. polo shirts vs shirt & tie) and blazers were not popular.

AD would still like to proceed on the basis of shirt & tie, black trousers/skirt and black shoes for all years. The majority of the committee was in agreement.

There is still a question around blazers being compulsory for 6th years, should this be extended or should it be removed? The consensus in the Parent Council was that it should be removed but it was suggested that the upcoming 6th year pupils should be asked for their opinion on blazers before a final decision.

Staffing Changes

Gail Preston has been appointed as Depute Head. She has been acting in this role for the last couple of years.

Many thanks to the parents who assisted with the interview process – Caroline Pearson, Bill McQueen and Linda Hamilton.

AD is requesting resource for the following subjects:

Chemistry

Biology

Computing

PE

History

There are also 2 full time vacancies in CDT and Music.

There is a preferred candidate list for Midlothian – any NQT currently in a Midlothian school can apply and if successful they will be added to the list and therefore, be a preferred candidate for any vacancies.

As a result of this we have appointed 2 NQTs into permanent roles in maths and English.

Finally, two teachers will be leaving, one from music and one from English.

Finance

Last year the school was overstaffed in certain areas, to ensure continuity of staffing. This year AD is continuing to manage the budget well, ensuring that it is in a healthy position to enable further recruitment.

Salon

The school's hair and beauty salon is now up and running and already teaching some classes. The cost was around £16k – £17k but it is felt to be money well spent, as pupils no longer have to be bussed to Newbattle, and it should help develop links with the wider community.

Wider Achievements

The Spring newsletter is now on the website and gives updates on all the activities and achievements.

Lothian won the house points challenge this year with Buccleuch as runner up. Prizes will be enjoyed in June.

Pupil Equity Funding

AD explained that this is funding being provided directly from the Scottish Government (not coming via local councils) to all Scottish schools. It will be in place for the lifetime of the current Scottish Government so should be available for at least 3 years, at around £70,000 per year. The funding should be used to close poverty-related attainment gaps, and DHS is currently identifying the gaps across all sectors.

Attainment should be raised in: numeracy and literacy; achieving a positive destination; health and well-being.

The primary levers should be in: learning and teaching; leadership; families and communities.

Five questions were discussed:

1. What do we want all of our pupils to be able to do by the time they leave Dalkeith High School? (our 'non-negotiables')

PC response –

- Qualifications
- Confidence and experience
- Communication skills, self confidence
- Numeracy and literacy at an appropriate level
- Working on strengths
- Choice (subject matter?)
- Opportunities for wider achievements
- Feeling safe

2. What are the barriers to learning in our community?

PC response –

- Lack of teachers in certain disciplines
- Lack of networking with parents (missed opportunities to use their skills/knowledge)
- Lack of information about job types and what's involved
- Pressures, anxiety, stress
- Poor wifi

3. What is currently working well in our school community in terms of raising attainment and achievement for all or our pupils?

PC response –

- Engaged staff

- Study clubs, lunchtime clubs
- Maths camp
- Music – end of year show
- Duke of Edinburgh and other award schemes
- Department trips and activities
- International connections
- P7 transitioning
- Pupil fundraising
- Curriculum – ‘stage not age’ – bringing school together

4. What do we need to do more of to help to raise attainment and achievement for all?

PC response –

- Make better use of parental community e.g. how did parents get into their job/career
- Make better use of ex- pupils
- ‘Softer start’ to school day – nurture group in the morning
- For pupils not likely to continue through senior phase – bank evidence of work done during junior phase

5. What do we need to do less of to help to raise attainment and achievement for all?

(Maybe this question needs to be rephrased)

The meeting was closed.

Parent Council meeting dates 2017:

23 May 2017