

Perth Academy Parent Council

Minute of Hybrid Meeting on Wednesday 22nd November 2023 7pm-8pm

1. Welcome, introductions, apologies and member update

Attenders in person:

Liz Barron-Majerik
Councillor Liz Barrett
Hanna Braithwaite (Head Prefect)
Sarah Braithwaite
Lindsay Davidson (Vice-chair)
Catherine Escott
Laura Gummow
Gordy Mackay
Rebecca Mackay (Chair)
Vivienne Mackinnon
Eleanor Paul (Head Teacher)
Charlotte Roach (Head Prefect)
Irene Robertson
Janet Ross
Sarah Sloan (Treasurer)
Eleanor Stamp
Mary Stanger

Attenders online:

Amanda Charters
Gail Jack
Iona Johnston
Lesley Joyce (Guest)
Lyn Manzie
Cllr Sheila McCole
Jenny Mills
Lois van der Schaaf
Louise Walsh
George Mailer

Apologies:

Stacy Dornan
Emma Milne

The Chair nominated Emma Milne to become a PC member. She has volunteered to shadow Sarah Sloan (Treasurer) with a view to taking on that role in the next academic year. This was nominated and seconded by Lindsay Davidson and Janet Ross respectively.

2. Head prefect update and questions

The Head Prefects confirmed that new furniture had been added to the Common Room and the carpet cleaned. There is still a hope that the walls may be re-decorated. Fundraising for the school charity is going well and the Christmas Fair had been a success. 'Sponsor a teacher' had been advertised through the school news team and had raised £250. Ideas for the future include having a stall at St John's Kirk, library input for book donations, a quiz night, and a candy cane delivery service. The Head Prefects gave some feedback on their involvement in the current school inspection and confirmed that they had enjoyed being part of the process and had received helpful advice from the school Inspector.

3. Focus on relationships policy/behaviour

Mrs Paul advised that time was spent on working with stakeholders to get everyone involved with creating the school's new vision and values. Aspects of the feedback during the work has guided actions which are now being taken around behaviours and values to ensure a focus on respect, integrity safety and equity treating each person as an individual and accepting that different people may require different responses/supports. Parents/carers had been informed of the new relationship policy via the newsletter. The new relationship policy has also been covered at school assemblies and in every classroom in the school.

Ms Paul shared results of a school survey around well-being indicators which showed that some pupils believe they could work harder. In relation to feeling listened to and feeling safe other pupils looking out for each other was the issue that pupils felt was most lacking. Feedback revealed instances of some young people making others feel unsafe in school. The Head Teacher stressed the critical importance of everyone feeling safe in school and the aim

of the school to support the holistic development of young people, the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence through the vision and values. These will be revisited continuously as part of the everyday life of the school to ensure everyone is bought in, with young people taking responsibility for their actions There is a strong aim to empower young people to rise to the challenge of and be prepared for their life beyond school.

Merit system has been in place since October where young people are recognised for efforts aligned to the school vision and values Where pupils are off-track with their learning, Teachers will help young people to quickly refocus, school interventions are logged to allow guidance staff analysis to inform contact with parents/carers where necessary. There is a focus on relational approaches involving staff intervention and redirection/repair conversations with teachers. The school will always try to work with a young person to learn from mistakes through various interventions with exclusion being regarded as a last resort.

Previous issues around the school toilets had been improved due to the completion of the toilet upgrade which all have been glad to see.

4 Open time for questions/discussion from parents

The Head Teacher was asked how success will be measured as to the relationships policy and how the merit system works. Ms Paul advised that learning walks by teachers take place and feedback is shared. Teacher guides on the structure of lessons have resulted in a noted improvement, with young people being more involved in the process of school improvement and helpful discussions had taken place with school inspectors during the past week. With regard to the merit system, Ms Paul stated that there has not been a positive recognition system in place previously and expressed a belief that it's important to give recognition where recognition is due Teachers advise a pupil when a merit is logged, the school office send out a groupcall to parents to let them know which had proven to be an efficient process for all involved. The Head Teacher also advised that the pandemic experience appeared to have had a significant impact on certain groups of young people and that this is also the case nationally. The school is trying a number of ways to support young people and improve behaviour, as well as trying to make learning engaging and fun which is what young people highlighted during the Pupil Voice conference.

The Head Prefects were asked their opinion on the new relationship policy and they were positive about it.

One attender spoke about a newspaper article where a teachers union thought the restorative policy was taking up too much time and if not done well could undermine teacher's authority. Mrs Paul provided assurance that teachers' authority in the classroom would not be undermined. There are high expectations in place but the interventions of staff have a positive relational basis rather than being based on punishment and fear. An attender advised that children may be affected by poor behaviour from some pupils. Ms Paul agreed that it was important to prevent lost learning time due to challenging behaviour Attender acknowledged that it was obviously a feature of teaching in classrooms today.

5 Parent Chair update

The Chair informed that feedback from the PC survey in September had highlighted learning and teaching as a priority so the PC had written to Heads of Department asking what practical support the PC could provide. Details on this will be provided in a later item on the agenda. Feedback also suggested aiming for a more relaxed environment for meetings which is scheduled for the next meeting and possibly a change in location for March. In addition, consideration will be given to varying the evenings for meetings in 2024/25.

The Chair focused on questions in the survey asking what we should be challenging our school on and what we should be encouraging our school on. The common theme which emerged with regard to the former was behaviour so hopefully the informative update from Ms Paul this evening has helped us all understand and appreciate what our school is doing in this respect and as this is an important issue for parents the PC hope to get more feedback on success of policy in future meetings.

The common theme with regard to what our school is doing well was appreciation of staff who are consistently at work, caring, doing their best for pupils. The Chair indicated an intention to invite some staff members to the meeting in January to discuss and understand their points of view, also the PC could look into the possibility of doing something at teacher in-service days in February.

6 Treasurer update

The Treasurer informed that requests for financial support had been received from the Music, Drama, Geography and Modern Languages departments. The amount requested exceeded PC funds so the Treasurer proposed that the PC commit to a contribution of £2,000 towards costs which was supported by attenders at the meeting.

Geography have asked for field equipment cost £432

Mod Lang annual subscription for a digital resource (2 years agreed) £280 per year

Drama asked for lighting and tailor's dummies for 2 classrooms. PC agreed 1 classroom £482

Music – glockenspiel's and keyboards beyond repair - £2,100 – PC will apply for funding but at the moment will offer money for the glockenspiels - £500

There was discussion of various fund raising possibilities.

7 Head Teacher update and staffing update

The Head Teacher advised that recruitment is currently underway to fill a number of vacancies. One attender noted that much discussion had taken place at the meeting about pupil behaviour and asked about any action could be taken by the parent council to reward teachers who obtain positive outcomes. The Head Teacher advised that there was a lot of great work taking place across the school and that praise and words of thanks were appreciated, including the messages in the card and strawberry tarts provided by the PC at the end of the last academic session. One attender pondered if pupils could nominate teacher of the month? Ms Paul highlighted this was a nice idea however advised caution as it would be difficult to ensure fairness and this process could impact negatively on staff who were not nominated.

8 Items raised by parents

The following items were raised and responses from the Head Teacher were as follows:

Additional Support Needs provision in place to support, for example, dyslexia/ADHT and what might be done to mitigate any funding cuts?

Additional support needs staffing has been increased in all Perth & Kinross schools over last two years and improvements made to support the ongoing increase in needs. The Head Teacher encouraged anyone who feels their child needs more support to get in touch with the school without hesitation.

Guidance role and school:parent/carer communication

The Head Teacher advised that the school is looking at communication approaches being implemented in departments with high attainment (eg PE department) with a view to sharing and encouraging good practice across other departments. When parents/carers

contact the school, the school office triages the information and passes the contact on to the appropriate Principal Teacher of Guidance. They are the first point of contact for all parental contacts. Ms Paul intimated that sometimes this was problematic if the query was subject-specific as the PT Guidance then had to contact the department and get back to them and that this sometimes causes delay and confusion. Ms Paul indicated that she is asking Principal Teachers of subject departments to be proactive in contacting parents early to support young people to do their best.

There have been parents working on a document to make communication expectations clear to help both parents and school. An apology from a parent was given that this document has not been completed yet and they will make sure the school is given it asap.

Supporting children that would benefit from being 'stretched' The Head Teacher advised that this is a challenge that all teachers are faced with and that as a school we want to improve. More concentrated focus on this is a part of the school's improvement plan to improve learning & teaching.

9 Opportunities for parents

The Chair and Deputy Chair confirmed that all will be welcome on 2 Dec 10-12am to make Christmas decorations. The Chair thanked Cindy Lamb who will be preparing some crafts.

The plan to hold a Christmas Swap Shop and social event had been shelved because of the school inspection and to give way to the World Challenge Fair for the school community a decision has been taken to doing something on 24th January instead.

The Chair thanked members for the Christmas hamper idea to raise money for the PC and also a suggestion had been made to make up hampers for families that might struggle over the festive season. Attendees supported these ideas and any who would like to be involved with this or any other fund-raising activity should get in touch.

10 Close

The Chair advised attendees to take anything helpful from the range of second-hand uniforms and study books donated by members. The Chair thanked everyone and invited anyone to get in touch with any ideas, concerns or encouragements.

Next meeting scheduled for 7-8pm on 24.01.24

Contact details : pcperthacademy@gmail.com

Chair : Rebecca Mackay Vice-chair : Linsday Davidson

Treasurer : Sarah Sloan Clerk : Lesley Joyce