

Perth Academy Parent Council Meeting

Minute of Meeting on Wednesday 13 March 2024 7.00pm-8.30pm

Hybrid meeting Letham St Marks Kirk in person and via Teams

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies (Rebecca Mackay)

Attendees (in person)

Alison Alsmeyer
Callum Alsmeyer
Liz Barron-Majerik
Sarah Braithwaite
Stacy Dornan
Madelaine Gorton
Laura Gummow
Jill Honeyman
Lesley Joyce (Minute Clerk)
Carole Leishman (School Business Manager)
Gordy Mackay
Rebecca Mackay
David Macluskey (PKC Service Manager for Secondary Schools)
Craig Martin (Deputy Head Teacher)
Cllr Shiela McCole
Emma Milne
Gail Murray (Deputy Head Teacher)
Eleanor Paul (Head Teacher)
Derek Riley
Helen Roach
Irene Robertson
Eleanor Stamp
Mary Stanger
Jim Stewart (School Chaplain)
David Taylor (Deputy Head Teacher)
Emma Thomas
Elaine Wallace
Carly Williams
Josh Williams

Attendees (online)

Fiona Aird
Catherine Brown
Sarah Clark
Susan Dyson
Stuart Evans
Claire MacFarlane
Lyn Manzie
Mrs McDonald
Stuart Milne
Ellie Moses

Lynne Perkins
Claire Robb
Janet Ross
Adam Scrimgeour
Lucy Sharp
Sarah Sloan
Kerr Smith
Claire Stevenson
Jenny Thomson
Lorna Turnbull
Mrs Van Der Schaaf
Amanda Wade-charters
K Williams

Apologies

Cllr Barret
Cllr Chan
Lindsay Davidson
Catherine Escott
Iona Johnson
Alison Mailer
George Mailer

2 Message from Head Prefects

"Hello! We hope you are all well and are sorry we can't be with you this week, although we are looking forward to the next meeting where we have lots of good things to report! One thing we would like to pass on now is that our S6 Common Room has been renovated and is being enjoyed by all of S6. We would like to say a massive thank you to everyone at the Parent Council and all the staff who helped us to achieve this. Thanks". Charlotte Roach and Hanna Braithwaite.

3 Leadership of Change (Ms Paul)

This indicator within the school inspection focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school. The school received a 'satisfactory' rating for this indicator.

Ms Paul, Head Teacher, confirmed that the inspection report was a fair reflection of what inspectors observed during the inspection, reminding attenders about a recent letter to parents about the inspection findings which recognised challenges in the school in recent years, particularly staffing issues.

Inspectors found that there is a clear vision for the success of the school, the leadership team are setting high standards for staff and young people and identified appropriate key priorities to take forward improvement as well as being focused on empowering middle leaders to drive improvement in their departments and faculties. Findings concluded that the school should involve young people more some pupils were perceiving that their views aren't valued which Ms Paul acknowledged as an action point for herself to lead on. Ms Paul said that some comments in the report were not surprising given the challenges in recent years and advised that verbal feedback during the inspection was that what had been achieved in this area was 'remarkable' considering the level of staffing absences.

Questions/comments

Ms Paul was asked for clarification of the nature of staffing issues to which she advised that sickness absence was a prime reason, an issue being experienced by many schools across the country, and that recruitment has been ongoing to replace staff where required. For example, advertising is currently underway to recruit a full-time permanent Depute HT post which is currently being filled on a temporary basis by Mr Martin on loan from Breadalbane Academy. Mr Macluskey advised that PKC and the school are delighted to also have Mr Taylor on loan from St John's Academy to cover staff absence and that PKC are committed to their support for replacement cover to ensure continuity. The Chair advised of feedback on behalf of parents/carers who had expressed frustrations. Attenders were advised that reasons for staff absence varies and assured by Ms Paul and Mr Macluskey that the school is proactive with support for teachers in line with PKC's Health and Well-being Framework, that Ms Paul is assiduous in her efforts in this respect and that significant improvements had been made as part of the school improvement implementation journey.

4 Learning Teaching and Assessment (David Taylor)

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all young people and for which the school received a 'weak' rating. Positive comments were made in the report on aspects such as positive working relationships between young people and teachers, effective use of digital learning and good use of questioning to check for understanding. However, a key theme emerged on the need for consistency in effective practices across the school. Concerns about inconsistency across the school exerting negative impacts on pupils were expressed by some attenders at the meeting.

Ms Paul advised that there is a context to the report which is that teacher-led teaching has improved results of pupil attainment and that inspectors had recommended strengthening the inter-active approach of learning and teaching.

Questions/comments

An attendee shared disappointment at the learning and asked about how best to communicate with the school. Ms Paul reminded attenders of the difference in learning and teaching approaches between primary and secondary stages acknowledging that a teacher-led approach was not suiting all young people and that action would take place to achieve a balance in the best interests of all young people and their learning journey.

Upon being asked if young people were asked for their views, Mr Taylor and Ms Paul confirmed that feedback is sought from learners and that staff are reviewing approaches referring, as an example, to books on learning and teaching approaches and techniques (eg Assessment is for Learning) purchased for each department.

Atenders were advised by Mr Taylor of a newly created learning and teaching group within the school which would continue with the planned development of a guide to effective learning and teaching to drive forward the recommendations for improvement. Ms Paul advised that teachers in the school are passionate about their work and the school, know they are valued and are open to learning and improving.

Mr Macluskey advised that some aspects referred for improvement are not particular to Perth Academy, that other schools in PKC area are experiencing similar issues and that each school is empowered to develop and implement their own action plans.

A member of staff at the meeting who was observed during the inspection advised that she had found the experience *'incredibly helpful'* and, having worked with SMT for eighteen months, is convinced that the Head Teacher and senior management team have the very best interests at heart in terms of having a clear vision and driving forward for staff and young people.

When asked about the scope of the lessons observed in the inspection, Ms Paul advised that the inspection takes place on a sampling basis with over fifty lessons having been sampled during the inspection.

5 Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion (Craig Martin)

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. The school received a 'weak' rating for this indicator. A range of aspects were commented upon in the report including strategies. Mr Martin explained that universal strategies cover what teachers do in the classroom and what young people support teachers to do with all the individuals in the classroom, as well as what is done for individuals in the classroom, for example strategies to support young people with dyslexia, to complement the learning and teaching approaches. The school is working with the Quality Improvement Officer in PKC to ensure the implementation of universal and target strategies across the school.

Mr Martin mentioned a reference in the report to some young people not feeling safe in school and confirmed that the leadership team is taking action on this as a matter of urgency. Bullying is being looked at using the bullying and equalities module and work is taking place with the guidance team to deal with this. PKC guidance for bullying is also currently being produced which will be adhered to.

Mr Martin advised that attendance of young people is in line with the national average and the school has a pupil welfare officer who works with the guidance team and makes phone calls home when pupils are not in class. Level of attendance are monitored and interventions take place making use of the RESOLVE resource within the school which was referred to positively in the inspection report.

Questions/comments

When asked to explain what RESOLVE is, Mr Martin informed that this is an excellent resource within the school which supports targeted work to identify what went wrong and propose actions which might be taken when an issue arises. The approach involves discussions between teachers and families and takes place within a nurturing environment using reflective practices to encourage individuals to face what they have done and agree action to come back into school and succeed.

When asked about measures which are taken when there are behavioural issues in class, Mr Martin advised that young people are sometimes sent out of class temporarily and sometimes not and that there is a good neighbouring system in place to assist when

incidents occur. The school also makes use of an intervention resource within SEEMIS to review patterns in pupil behaviour.

Attendees were advised that a young person's Principal Teacher of guidance is the main point of contact, generally through contact with the school office which passes on messages quickly to the relevant guidance teacher. A guidance teacher is the person who has an overview of each young person. They are supportive of discussing concerns and arrange meetings with parents/carers where they think helpful. Ms Paul advised that information about making contact with a young person's guidance teacher is clear on the school website and assured that she is open to suggestions to improve upon this approach. Mr Macluskey advised that PKC has spent a lot of time and effort on teacher training and development within schools to assist dealing with behaviours and Ms Paul advised that the school policy is based on putting interventions in place to improve behaviour such as reflective conversations (re-focus conversation, relocation, reflect, reset) depending on a situation. Ms Paul also advised that, through the Parent Council, the school has a parent group working on a communication policy. The Chair advised that she will progress work on this policy with the parent group.

The Chair drew attention to the figure in the inspection report which stated that 37.8% of young people in the school have additional support needs. She advised of receipt of an email from a parent which complemented the support staff and zone staff but had expressed concern about weak support for ASN pupils and the amount of parental effort required to ensure ASN support for their child. Accordingly, the Chair sought reassurance about capacity in the school to provide this level of support. Ms Paul assured of capacity and advised that the school is undertaking a strategic overview of this area as well as improvement of communication to parents/carers.

6 Raising attainment and achievement (Gail Murray)

Summarising on literacy, Ms Murray spoke about the school's reading attainment strategy to track and monitor learning and teaching approaches and interventions which includes consideration of culture, ethos, relationships and attendance.

Inspectors highlighted attainment and achievements for young people, advising of many positives for young people in school and the skills they are developing. Attainment has improved over past couple of years and the virtual comparator (VC) is in line with many indicators. Ms Murray advised that she would be happy to arrange a session upon request to discuss this in more detail.

Summarising on numeracy, Ms Murray advised that the school is BGE (Broad General Education) competent in recording up to third level but that teachers are less confident/competent in their judgement at the fourth level (ie S3). Work is taking place to improve staff confidence/competence and the school is looking at a new system of recording and tracking over time for all areas of the curriculum.

Mr Macluskey said that the Scottish government set attainment targets and that the inspection report used 21/22 attainment data, advising that significant improvement had taken place in the school the following year. This was a timing issue relating to when the inspection took place.

7 Parent Council Chair update

The Chair advised of another opportunity to discuss the inspection on Thursday 21st March at a public meeting at the school. She also advised that if anyone was shaken by the outcome of the school inspection, she commended the school chaplains, both of whom were in attendance at the meeting, who would be happy to talk with anyone as one of their roles is to provide support to families at the school. Mrs Honeyman (Guidance Teacher) also runs the Mental Health Ambassador programme in school and would be happy for parents to get in touch.

Ms Ramsay from the school's drama department had asked the Chair to share her thanks to the Parent Council for their support. The Chair also thanked Rachel Scott and Eleanor Stamp who have volunteered to take over the running of the Facebook page.

The next meeting will be the AGM and there will be a change around of Treasurer and Vice Chair. The next academic year will also be the current Chair's final year. She invited anyone interested in being more involved in the school to consider becoming a member of the Parent Council and to get in touch before the end of April.

The Chair also advised that Daryl McKeown, the project officer for the school exclusion zone, has offered to meet to discuss the next phase of consultations for the traffic restrictions and school exclusion zone and she invited anyone who feels strongly about this to please get in touch to become part of a mini Parent Council group to discuss this in person with Daryl.

8 Science block and other property issues

The Chair reminded of discussions at previous PC meetings about delays with getting gas supplied to our science department and disruption to learning and teaching with the work going on in the science block. Carole Leishman, Business Manager at the school advised that risk assessment for bunsen burners was now in final stages and should be signed off by the end of week commencing 18 March. She referred to noise levels experienced in the science block and advised that agreement has been reached with the contractors that drilling should not take place during teaching hours. There will be no noisy drilling during exam time and any delays this causes will be built into the timeline by, for example, building works taking place at weekends.

9 Close

In closing, the Chair thanked everyone for their questions, honesty, and concerns. She thanked Stacy Dornan for covering the online chat, Lesley Joyce for taking minutes and Letham St Mark's for the meeting space. The next and final meeting of the school year is on Wed 1st May back at the school and everyone is welcome, especially if you're a parent in the Gaelic Medium Education!

Chair : Rebecca Mackay
Vice-chair : Lindsay Davidson
Clerk : Lesley Joyce

Contact details : pcperthacademy@gmail.com
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Next meeting is the AGM scheduled for 7-8pm on Wednesday, 1 May 2024 at the school.