

PORTLETHEN ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

Minutes of virtual meeting Wednesday 23 November 2021

PRESENT

Viv MacNeil (Chair), Alison Harris (Co-Chair), Kerry Kidd (Treasurer), Luke Kidd, Fiona Lindsay, David Wilkins, Annick Shaw, Rowena Beaton, Kelly Stevenson, Joanna Smith, Nikola Lancaster, Allyon Townhill, Konstantinos Rizopoulos, Stanislaus Amadi, Stephanie Miller, Sahet Keshiyu Ellie Robertson, Jack Bruce, Sarah Purven Ese Egbelokotor, Tracey Robinson (Secretary)

Barry Drennan (HT), Kirsty Campbell-Robertson (DHT), Jenny Law (DHT), Rhona MacKenzie (DHT), Craig Cowie (DHT)

APOLOGIES

WELCOME

Viv as Acting Chair welcomed all to the meeting and thanked Kerry for taking on the role of Treasurer

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 October 2021 were approved. The actions have been discharged once the amended Parent Constitution has been uploaded

TREASURER'S REPORT

Kerry Kidd reported that she was arranging for the bank account holder names to be updated. She confirmed that the current balance remained unchanged at £2,396.80 and asked if there was any requests from the school for funding

Action Barry Drennan to ask staff

CHAIR'S REPORT

There was no update as this was the first meeting chaired by Viv MacNeill

ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

Viv MacNeil was elected as Chair. Proposed by Tracey Robinson and seconded by Kerry Kidd. Alison Harris was proposed as Co-chair by Viv MacNeil and seconded by David Wilkins.

HEAD TEACHER'S REPORT

COVID19 Update

Cases have continued, although they have fluctuated, and there has been regular dialogue with Head Teachers and NHS colleagues. Barry Drennan reported that he had received the updated mitigations from Scottish Government earlier that day but has not had the opportunity to go through them prior to the meeting and he will update everyone in due course.

Barry reported that pupils and staff continue to adhere to current mitigations. He requested that all parents/carers remind pupils and ensure that they contact the school if anyone within the household receives a positive LFD or PCR result so the school can help to navigate and advise appropriately as some of the information on the NHS website is not fully applicable to school children and those under 18.

Staffing Updates

Craig Cowie, Depute Head Teacher, has been secured a 3-day **a ?week?** secondment for the remainder of this session with the Developing the Young Workforce Aberdeenshire central team, leading on foundation apprenticeships for the Local Authority. Interviews to fulfil the seconded post are being held on 30 November

Kerry Davidson has been appointed to Music 0.4 FTE vacancy and will start in the new year

Sandra Miller-Weyland who was appointed as Teacher of English has started this week

A new Teacher of Maths has been recruited and will start as soon as the PVG checks have been completed.

Aurora McIntosh, the School Librarian will start on 29th November.

Unfortunately there is no further information regarding the School Counsellor vacancy

Longer-term Staff absence is an on-going challenge at the school, locally and nationally. The school is managing this as best they can using supply staff, setting of work by the Faculty Principle Teachers who are also regularly setting work, reviewing/marking, and amending timetables to try to ensure pupils have subject specialists as much as possible, particularly for senior phase. Concern was raised regarding pupils undertaking Foundation Apprenticeships which clash with PSE lessons on how to fill in UKAS forms and writing their personal statement. The school has tried to address this issue and will follow up further

AP Barry to follow up

Good News Stories

Barry shared some 'good news' stories with to illustrate the excellent work of pupils and staff despite on-going challenging times. He thanked all involved in making the events happen

S1 Pupils / Healthy Breakfast –all S1 pupils received an important health and wellbeing message from our Higher Health and Food Tech class and the HE Department around the importance of a healthy breakfast. S1s were able to socialise in their Clans and receive key messages around expectations and School Values from the School Captains

S2 Careers Expo Event – ahead of S2 Careers Expo event on 26 November is an opportunity for industry partners from all sectors to meet virtually with pupils. There has been a lot of preparatory work in Clan and PSE lessons.

Clan / Pupil Work – recent highlights from Clan sessions are those focusing on Remembrance and COP26 pledges

Gardening Group (Additional Support Learning) – they recently received a prestigious Stage 1 Sprouting Award for their Gardening Project and there was an afternoon event outdoors where some local partners could come and find out more.

Paired Reading –the Paired Reading programme has been re-instated whereby Senior pupil volunteers are support younger year groups in paired reading during their free periods and Clan time.

Interhouse Events – Barry thanked the Guidance Team, PE and School/House/Sports Captains running a number of inter-house events to help pupils identify with their Houses such as rounders, football, Tug of War and some non-sporting activities. A STEM week and some Christmas-themed quizzes are planned and all events go towards the House points competition.

Children In Need –Approx. £400 was raised for Children in Need. There will be more events for charity throughout the year and there will be a calendar to ensure these are co-ordinated approach and to allow as much notice as possible.

Christmas Cards / Larder – A S6 Leadership Group are working on their additional qualification and planning the Christmas Cards in the local community project, which was a huge success last year. There will also be more donations to the Portlethen Community Larder before Christmas, with more information to follow in due course.

TikTok Issue

Barry referred to his recent communication to all parents/carers regarding an on-going social media issue about 'fake' Portlethen Academy accounts containing horrible messages and memes about members of staff. He has followed protocols from Teaching Unions and the relevant national guidelines; however, the issue is still not fully resolved, and the instigators have not been sourced. He asked all parent council members to help the school in following up appropriately.

SQA

Kirsty Campbell-Robertson (Depute Head Teacher) is currently working on a SQA Prelim Timetable for January 2022. The Support for Learning Faculty are gathering evidence for Additional Assessment Arrangements which pupils may need to support them in their exams. SQA Level Changes have been communicated prior to reports and Parents' Evenings. Once the recent updated COVID mitigations from Scottish Government have been digested, the school will write to all explaining what to expect and expectations around Study Leave. Barry hopes this can be offered to S4-6 pupils as it is their first 'official' round of examinations and they need experience of time management etc. He is speaking with Head Teachers and the Local Authority. In the meantime Senior Phase pupils are being supported with study skills and more to help prepare them IN CLAN, PSE and other areas.

SQA exam diet is going ahead as planned with contingency in case required

Virtual Parents' Evening(s)

The first virtual parents evening will be on 25 November. Staff training has taken place, instructions will be sent out, and the school will monitor how things go.

S1 Additional Parent/Carer Information Evening

Feedback from S1 Parents/Carers is the need for further virtual information evening to ask specific questions re: roles and responsibilities in the Academy; how to support learning at home; what subjects/levels 'look like'; some further Q+A opportunities. This will take place on 9th December which will be recorded and published on the Portlethen Academy website with key information and updates to S1 parents/carers. An email invitation will be sent out

There will be a S2 virtual parents evening in January to help with decisions over subject choices.

The school intends to hold information evenings in relation to English and Maths

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Any other business:

- Communication: procedures to ensure parents/carers are informed of pupil progress outwith the formal reports and what is being taught in class, particularly for young people with additional support needs. Clarification of roles of the Guidance Teacher, Year Head, Depute Heads and Head Teacher and how best to get in contact if necessary

The best way to get in touch is to email Portlethen Academy

portlethen.aca@aberdeenshire.gov.uk with a message in the subject title. The email will

be passed onto the relevant person. The other way to get in touch is through the guidance teacher who is normally the first port of call for all things. This can be via e-mail to the address above or telephone call to ask for a call back.

<https://portlethenacademy.aberdeenshire.sch.uk/our-school/whos-who/> may also help.

There is also the school communication guide which has been e-mailed to all Parents/Carers a number of times throughout the session to date and is available on the Contact Us section of the school website.

Barry observed that there is a system of tracking, full reports, information evenings and parent's evenings and that with c900 pupils unfortunately it was difficult to support further additional feedback

Rhona MacKenzie outlined the process whereby concern about a pupil were raised and parents would be contacted. There are a range of methods to support a pupil who is struggling. For pupils with a support plan or supported through Additional Learning Support there are regular review meetings, which can be brought forward if there are concerns

- Communication: use of social media to support the work of the Parent Council. It was agreed that it would be good to have a Twitter and a Facebook account. These could also be used to communicate posts from e.g. National Parent Forum and would be for information only so members will not be able to comment. An email address could be set up through Aberdeenshire Council (currently it is via portlethen.aca@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)
Action Alison and Viv to explore further
- It was discussed that after Christmas break it may be possible to have outside events and suggestions are welcome

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 2 February 2022 at 7:30pm. To be held virtually