

## PORTLETHEN ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

### Minutes of virtual meeting Wednesday 8 September 2021

#### PRESENT

Anne Wilkins (Acting Chair), Erica Kemp (present for the Treasurer report only), Fiona Lindsay, Kerry Kidd, Terri Taylor, Sarah Smith, Annick Shaw, Jody Mathieson, Rowena Beaton, F Gibb, Ese Igbelokotor, Kaleb Miller, Blaine Stevenson, Kosta Rizopoulos, Tracey Robinson (Secretary)

Barry Drennan (HT), Jenny Law (DHT)

#### APOLOGIES

Kirsty Campbell-Robertson (DHT)

#### WELCOME

Anne Wilkins welcomed all to the meeting with a particular welcome extended to Barry Drennan

#### MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held on May 2021 were approved.

#### TREASURER'S REPORT

Erica Kemp, who had been the Treasurer, confirmed that the current balance is £2,396.80

#### CHAIR'S REPORT

Anne Wilkins explained that, as she is Acting Chair for this meeting only, she had little business to report on. Anne noted that the [Parent Council Constitution](#) is due to be reviewed and invited any comments ahead of the next Parent Council meeting

#### ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

The positions of Chair and Treasurer are both currently vacant and, as there were no nominations forthcoming at the meeting, the election of the Chair and Treasurer will take place at the next parent council meeting. Parents are invited to consider taking up these positions, and the position of Chair could be shared between two people. Barry Drennan is very happy to talk with interested people about what the posts entail and there is also support for the Chair available through the Aberdeenshire Parent Council officer/group. Erica Kemp is willing to speak with anyone considering the office of Treasurer. There was one expression of interest at the meeting for the office of Treasurer.

#### HEAD TEACHER'S REPORT

##### General Update / Overview

Barry Drennan reported a positive start to this session. The school roll has grown (as expected) to just under 900 and there are increasing numbers of new admissions/placing requests each week. A meeting has been scheduled over the next few weeks with the Public Private Partnership Manager who supports Robertson's Buildings and the Learning Estates Team to discuss capacity going forwards.

##### COVID19 Update

There have been positive COVID19 cases since the return to school which have been managed appropriately with advice from the Test and Protect Team. The confirmed cases originate mainly from community transmission. Pupils are mostly following mitigations well and have regular reminders. Mitigations are the biggest message coming from the NHS Team, including the twice weekly Lateral Flow Tests for all staff and pupils, as the best

course of action. It would be much appreciated and helpful if Parents/Carers continued to promote these messages at home.

Expectations have changed in identifying close contacts, and the information from Aberdeenshire Council, NHS and Mr Drennan have been shared with all parents/carers. Warn and Inform letters are sent regularly to remind everyone of the signs and symptoms if they have been in class with a confirmed positive case. The number of pupils self-isolating and awaiting PCR results have increased, but there are fewer lengthy absences at present, so many pupils are returning to school quite quickly with a negative PCR result.

For pupils who need to isolate for the 10-day window, Teaching Staff are uploading materials onto new Teams/Virtual Classes, so work can be accessed from home. Mrs Campbell-Robertson is ensuring that the Connecting Scotland Laptops/Chromebooks are distributed to those who need them from the eligibility criteria, to support home learning and teaching. Mr Drennan thanked her and the Technician Team for their support. He noted that the confirmed COVID numbers have been quite low compared to some other schools.

### **Staffing Updates**

Fiona Johnston (Music Teacher) has taken up the interim 0.4 FTE post Guidance for Bourtree House. Interviews for 0.4 Permanent and 1FTE Fixed-Term Guidance posts are taking place on 14<sup>th</sup> September. Interviews for the English teacher post are taking place shortly.

Lili Nagy, the School Counsellor, has left and will be replaced by a fully qualified Counsellor and Mr Drennan is awaiting an update from recruitment/her line manager. The Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) School Co-ordinator (Jess Stephen) has also left and Mr Drennan is awaiting information regarding a replacement in due course.

Lastly, the library remains open for short times within the week while the Library Re-Structure takes shape across the Aberdeenshire Council. The good news is, that following recruitment, there will be a full-time School Librarian, although timelines are uncertain.

### **SQA Results / SQA This Session**

Staff were very proud of our Senior Phase exam results and successes this session after a very challenging year. The resilience and determination shown by Senior Phase pupils was outstanding and individual successes have been recognised and appreciated. There was a SQA Event held at Portlethen Academy on the 10<sup>th</sup> August which attracted press from across the Local Authority and nationally, interviewing some of our pupils about their experiences, the varied curriculum on offer, and their achievements. Mr Drennan expressed his thanks for the pupils who took part and Mr Cowie for facilitating.

SQA Examinations are returning for this session in the usual May/June time frame and Course Descriptors have recently been published for Teachers to align/re-structure the courses they teach accordingly. Whilst staff work on this, it is realised and appreciated that for the majority of Senior Phase Pupils this will be their first in-person examination experience. The school wants to do all it can to alleviate any fears, worries or anxieties that the pupils might have and to also support parents and carers to fully understand everything and how best they might support their young people. Therefore, in the evening of Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> October, the school plans to host a virtual SQA Information Evening open to Parents/Carers to explain the SQA requirements, calendar, answer any queries, and to share some accessible Study Supports and hints/tips to support your child in their learning. The SQA information evening will be recorded so that parents and carers can access the information if they cannot make the event. In Clan Tutor Time, S4s are starting to look at Study Skills and ways to best use their time to consolidate the learning in class and there will

be follow-up work in PSE around this and the mental health supports available should pupils feel overwhelmed or anxious.

### **S1s Settling In / Next Steps**

This year the S1 cohort is very large with 184 pupils coming from the 5 cluster primary schools and also some out of zone. Most didn't get a full face-to-face P7 Transition experience due to the circumstances, however, Mrs Campbell-Robertson organised and oversaw the Virtual Transition activities, and Rhona and the Additional Support for Learning Faculty, Guidance Team, CLD and Debbie Mackay the Pupil Support Worker all gave up some of their holiday time (as they do each year) to support some pupils who require additional support in PASS. Mr Drennan expressed his thanks to all staff involved. He was also very proud of how S1 pupils have managed to settle in and for the Prefects and Captains in supporting them so well for the first few weeks.

Within the S1 year group there is quite a significant level of Additional Support for Learning needs, and ASL Staff/PSAs have been re-shuffled to support them as best we can. Pupils have been reminded of the school values and expectations in how we respect one another, and what behaviour is expected in lessons and in the local community; and this will be followed up in Pupil Briefings. Parents/Carers will receive a Settling-In Report over the next few weeks to give a snapshot of how their child is doing.

To support the Transition experience for Parents/Carers, Rhona will be in touch to organise a few short focus groups over the next few weeks to get some feedback about further inputs, information or sessions that would be useful for you to help adjust to Academy life. It is hoped to have an online session in due course for S1 Parents/Carers to attend.

### **COVID Recovery Money**

The Scottish Government have given schools additional money to support COVID Recovery, and this is being used to:

- advertise for a fixed-term PSA to support classes in the middle year groups, as some support has come out of there to help our S1s at present.
- Purchasing a licence for software/an app called SUMDOG which is designed to support Literacy and Numeracy across the school and that all pupils will have access to in school and at home

### **Parents' Evenings**

The School Calendar is set for the year and key dates will be published on the website shortly with the caveat that some may be subject to change, depending on the restrictions and circumstances. The first official Parents' Evening is scheduled towards the end of November. It is not yet known whether these will be face-to-face in school or through video conferencing calls.

### **Clubs and Activities / Litter**

Some clubs and activities are starting up again and these are being fully risk assessed to meet any current COVID restrictions. Information is being posted daily in the bulletin and pupils are encouraged to try new activities, gain new skills and make new friendships.

There has been an increase in litter across the community and school grounds which is being addressed through Pupil Briefings and the support of our wider Pupil Leadership Team (Prefects/Captains), to support SLT and Staff members on duty at lunchtimes.

### **School Ties / Fundraising**

Mr Drennan thanked the Parent Council for funding the purchasing ties for all new S1s. Currently ties are not compulsory due to on-going PE changing/COVID and he would like feedback on this going forwards from Parent Council, pupils and staff in due course.

Mr Drennan took an action to see if key information from the daily briefings, such as the timetable of extra-curricular activities, could be published on the school website.

Currently Mr Drennan is awaiting a response from Aberdeenshire Council in relation to work experience. In the meantime, the school are trying to take this forward through the DYW agenda.

As a Chair had not been elected, David Wilkins kindly volunteered to be the Acting Chair for the next meeting only

**DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday 13 October 2021 at 7:30pm. To be held virtually