

**Queensferry Community High School**  
**Minutes of Parent Council Meeting - 26 October 2021**  
**7pm via MS Teams**



Minutes

Present :

Parents/Carers : Sarah Clarkson/Chair (SC), Alan Balanowski (AB), Anne-Marie Boyd (AMB), Claire Whyte (CW) Eileen Grant (EG), Tim Hall (TH), Lyndsey Devin (LD), Steven Budge (SB), Louise Wilson (LW), Graeme McInley (GM), Dave Sansom (DS), Jacky Nickelbein (JN), Sarah Baird (SB)

Teaching Staff/Other: David Flint (DF), Norman Work (NW), Kevin Thomas (KT), Craig Downie/HT (CD)

Minute Taker/Clerk: Sarah Bennett (SBe)

Apologies: Kirsten Briggs

1.	Welcome	
	SC welcomed all attendees to the meeting and reminded everyone that they are present as parents, carers, educational professionals and members of the wider Queensferry community as they share an investment in the education of young people at QHS. She looks forward to working constructively with attendees over the next year.	
2.	Apologies	
	Apologies were noted.	
3.	Minutes of last meeting	
	There were no minutes taken at the previous Parent Council Meeting.	
4.	Chair's Update	
	The Parent Council had met as a parent/carer only group in September where they had introduced new members and spoken about aspirations for the coming year. SC thanked members who had volunteered to fill roles within the Parent Council. The Parent Council area on the School Website has been updated.  SC had attended a training session for new chairs run by Edinburgh Council. She had also attended recruitment training and advised members that this is open to any Parent Council member who is interested in becoming involved	All

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	<p>in school recruitment. <b>Action 1</b> – Members to contact SC if they wish to undertake recruitment training.</p> <p>SC confirmed that the Agenda has been changed so that no new items will be raised under AOCB. This is to give the HT the opportunity to prepare answers to queries ahead of the meeting.</p> <p>SC had accessed Connect which is a virtual platform which provides resources to parent councils. It also provides the opportunity for individual parents to provide feedback on wider national education issues. There is usually one topic raised for discussion every month. <b>Action 2</b> – Any parent council member who is interested in participating in this forum should contact SC. <b>Action 3</b> – CW to contact Liz Martin from the PSA with information about Connect.</p> <p>AB and SC had taken a look at the Parent Council Constitution with a view to giving it a refresh. Any changes will need to be approved by the Parent Forum. They had also had an introductory meeting with CD and discussed how the Parent Council can help in wider strategic items.</p> <p>SC had been in touch with elected Council representatives to extend invitations to meetings and was delighted to welcome Councillor Norman Work to this evening’s meeting. Councillor Louise Young confirmed that she would attend if there were specific items that would benefit from her being present. One of these items was the rising rolls and contingency planning around school breaching capacity and the possibility of temporary accommodation. It was proposed that this would be discussed at a future meeting.</p>	All CW
5.	Parent Council Representatives’ Update	
	<p>CEC Locality Rep Update          MB had trouble joining the meeting and confirmed that he would provide his update to SC by e-mail. <b>Action 4</b> – MB to provide briefing by e-mail.</p> <p>Cluster Group Liaison Update          SB confirmed that there was no update but confirmed he was attempting to connect with all primary schools in the area.</p> <p>PSA Update          CW confirmed that she had spoken to Liz Martin, current PSA Chair. The PSA had not met since March 2020 and had not had or was not planning to have any fundraising activities or events due to the school being inaccessible due</p>	MB

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	<p>to Covid restrictions. The PSA are light on numbers due to a number of parents leaving but had not had any active recruitment. Liz Martin was planning to contact KT to initiate a meeting.</p> <p>Queensferry &amp; District Community Council Liaison Update          AMB had nothing to report at present but noted that DF and GMcl were present at the Parent Council meeting.</p> <p>Treasurer's Report          ME confirmed that the current balance was £4526.18. SC confirmed that parents were interested in utilising these funds to help the school. CW discussed how Queensferry Primary School used Parent Council funds when she was chair. <b>Action 5</b> – Parent Council members to discuss how funds can be utilised at future meeting. Parent Council to liaise with CW and KT on how they might like the funds to be used.</p>	All
6.	Queensferry & District Community Council Update	
	<p>The QDCC had met with Michelle Gordon from QHS and had discussed the resurrection of the Youth Engagement Group. They had discussed the opportunity for QHS to be involved in community projects, support for 60+ links and pupil leadership. Under any other business, they had looked at clubs for young people outwith the School including a girls group, LGBT groups and transition from P7 to S1. The QDCC will have a follow-up meeting with QHS.</p> <p>The QDCC was looking at career paths for older pupils and the possibility to hook up with local business for work experience.</p>	
7.	Head Teacher's Report/Update	
	<p>CD said in the future he will try to get the HT's Report to members ahead of the meeting. The update which had been sent to parents and carers ahead of the October break would form the basis of the discussion at this meeting.</p> <p>Staff at QHS are working incredibly hard in a challenging environment supporting both pupils in the classroom and those that had required to self-isolate at home. CD appreciated the positive messages and feedback he has received from parents. He reiterated that he was very receptive to feedback and looked forward to working with parents and carers to make an even more successful school.</p> <p>CD discussed the revised Assessment Strategy, confirmed the changes have been made with the best interests of pupils at heart and said that information</p>	



has been sent out to parents/carers. He confirmed that there would be no prelims or study leave (a directive from the Scottish Government enforced by the Local Authority) in this current academic year. The Assessment Calendar for Window 1 will be shared with pupils and parents on the 27 October and the intention was to share the Calendar for Windows 2 and 3 by the end of November. Due to Covid restrictions, it will not be possible to have a large number of pupils in the Games or Assembly Hall and assessments will, instead, take place in classrooms under strict exam conditions. CD confirmed that most schools in Edinburgh are following the same Assessment Strategy.

CD spoke about how the Covid situation has affected the confidence of young people and putting pupils in a situation where they rely on the result of one prelim could be damaging. If pupils do not perform well in the first assessment window, they will have 2 more opportunities. They will receive feedback after each assessment and this will inform their learning. CD confirmed that the Assessment Strategy being undertaken this year is absolutely the best choice for the wellbeing of the young people at QHS. He spoke about how it was unfortunate that this information had not been shared until October but this was because he had not started in post till mid-September.

Concerns were raised with CD around the Maths provision within the school, CD has acknowledged the concerns and the school are looking at the curriculum structure and time allocations to support. CD believes that young people are not receiving enough numeracy and literacy education and is looking to increase time spent in Maths and English. An existing member of staff has successfully being appointed to another post and the recruitment of this post is now underway. CD has also put out for an additional maths teacher to help support the team. Advertisements have been placed on a national maths forum and communications have gone out highlighting the amazing opportunities of working at QHS.

The School is also recruiting an acting deputy head teacher, an acting wellbeing hub leader, temporary PE teacher, temporary support for learning Teacher and a permanent support officer who will hopefully engage with families of young people who have not engaged with school as successfully as others post-Covid. CD confirmed that the School will be carrying out a curriculum review consultation ahead of recruiting more permanent members of staff.

CD spoke about the pause on the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and confirmed that the School is waiting for the City of Edinburgh Council to



approve first aid courses for staff before pupils can be taken on expeditions. He was aware of the backlog and confirmed he would speak to the CEC.

Staff at QHS have given feedback to CD that they want consistency on standards for pupils around such things as uniform, lateness and being out of class during lessons. CD confirmed that there has been a significant improvement over the past 3 weeks and there is a fantastic atmosphere and ethos within the School. There has also been a reduction in the number of duty head calls during classes where teachers require assistance due to misbehaviour during lessons.

Regarding communication, CD is aware that sending a large number of e-mails at any one time is not effective and is looking at other ways to communicate with parents and carers. He spoke about an App that he is considering which will enable more effective communication.

CD spoke about how QHS is working in challenging times post-Covid. They are looking to employ a permanent pupil support officer who will work with families where young people have been become disengaged with learning post-Covid. The School is undertaking a huge piece of work revising how they are tracking and monitoring progress and how they intervene with pupils who are struggling. There will be additional literacy, numeracy and wellbeing groups.

The School is reinstating parents' evenings. The parents of S2 pupils have yet to meet the teachers and their first parents' evening will not take place until March 2022. The School is always open to communication from parents and for ideas on how they can improve. There were issues with tracking and reporting at the start of term however KT has put together a very effective new reporting system.

CD spoke about how the School will shortly be undertaking a curriculum review. He believes that the current curriculum does not offer enough choice to pupils, that there needs to be a greater emphasis on literacy and numeracy and more pathways in the senior phase for young people. He presented another model to staff at the recent in-service day. He will consult with staff, pupils and parents. CD believes that the current curriculum caters for those looking to move to higher or further education but not so much for those looking at other pathways. Other priorities include improving ICT, creating a rigorous quality assurance scheme and launching a positive behaviour strategy



in 2022 although CD confirmed that the curriculum review is the School's main priority.

The School is also looking to change the tracking and monitoring process so early interventions can be made. They are also looking to create a data sharing system. All pupils in the City of Edinburgh will receive their own I-Pad by December 2022.

CD spoke about how is keen to start celebrating success within the school. He is looking to create a group to discuss this and initial ideas include events, award nights and graduation ceremonies which will bring the whole community together.

KT spoke about how he and Natalie Honeyford have been engaging with a group called Class Charts about an App which will give staff the opportunity to record the interactions and positive outcomes and challenges in lessons. They are looking to roll this out to S1-3 in January 2022 and the rest of the School later in the year. They have been liaising with staff at Castlebrae High School who have been using this App and they have reported that this has transformed the way in which teachers interact with pupils and parents. KT also spoke about how they will manage positive change at QHS, that there are exciting times ahead for the School and encouraged parents to work with the School.

SC thanked CD and KT for the hugely positive and detailed report. She spoke about the energy and ambition for the School which comes through. She welcomed questions from the attendees of the meeting.

- *There was a query around the assessments and the fact that pupils will not experience an exam under "normal" exam conditions.*

CD confirmed that currently there are restrictions on the number of pupils allowed in one room however they will be sitting assessments in classrooms under exam conditions.

- *The number of assessments is causing great anxiety to young people.*

CD confirmed that the 3 Assessment Window programme is not really different to a normal year for the senior phase and they would have always had an assessment before a report was sent out. The School will always support the wellbeing of its young people and there will be minimal assessment however they have to gather enough evidence to give judgements. The timetable should help the young people plan ahead.



- *Teachers are putting enormous pressure on young people.*  
CD confirmed that there should not be constant pressure but there will be and has always been a certain level of pressure for senior phase pupils. If a young person is struggling then they or their parent are encouraged to contact the School for help.
- *Last year, it was unclear what the weighting of each assessment was so pupils felt constantly pressurised as they believed every test counted towards the final grade.*  
Last year, every school had concerns over the senior phase assessments. This year, the SQA have made it very clear that assessment results will not be used as evidence. If exams are cancelled, then CD's understanding is that grades will be made on teacher judgement based on course work, homework and assessments.
- *Feedback has been received from S4 parents whose children are struggling with the transition from the junior to senior phase in terms of increased testing and assessments.*  
CD confirmed that because an assessment strategy was not in place at the start of term then young people have only just heard about them. This situation will hopefully be avoided in the future as calendars will have been issued. He stated that young people entering S4 would always notice an increase in workload and testing.
- *S2 parents have reported that have not any communication from teachers since their young people started in 2020. There is anxiety around the fact that S2 pupils have to choose their subjects for S3, there has been no communication from the School and they will be the last school year to have their parents' evenings.*  
CD spoke about the fact that there would be questions asked from whichever year group had their parents' evenings last. He confirmed that teachers would not reach out to parents unless there was an issue with their child. Pupils and parents of S2's would be given adequate information and notice ahead of choices being made. SC spoke about the issue of the lack of parents' evenings last year had been discussed previously and it had been confirmed that there would be additional reporting. The Parent Council had asked about virtual parents' evenings but it was deemed to be unfair to parents who did not have the technology to participate. CD has confirmed that contingency planning is in place for parents so that nobody will be excluded.



- *Young people have been under enormous pressure with assessments ahead of the October break. Pupils need to be reassured by teachers that assessments are different from last year.*

The wellbeing of young people is of paramount importance. CD acknowledges and fully appreciates how difficult this year is given the uncertainty over the last few years. Staff will do everything to support pupils and to ensure correct messaging. It will be more challenging given the fact that pupils cannot attend assemblies where one person is delivering the message but staff will do everything they can to support and mediate.

- *Clarity was sought on the School's mobile phone policy.*

CD confirmed that the School will be considering all its policies however the curriculum review would take priority. In the meantime, some teachers use mobile phones for learning and they are utilised as part of the class. If this is not the case, then all mobile phones should be turned off and put in bags.

- *At present, young people can only choose 6 National 5's which affects their choices for Highers. Will this be reviewed?*

CD spoke about the perfect model for young people would be being able to choose 7 National 5's in S4 and he would put this out for consultation.

SC closed the question and answer session.

CW commented on the many positives and expressed excitement at the proposed changes. SC spoke about the energy and ambition and confirmed that the Parent Council can help and support the School. She thanked all attendees for their time.

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> December and will be held virtually.

**Action 6** - Attendees should contact SC with any items they wish to discuss.

**Action 7** – Attendees to pass apologies to SC.

**Action 8** – Attendees to contact AB if they require the December Teams invitation.

All





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ACTION LIST

1.	All	Action 1 – Members to contact SC if they wish to undertake recruitment training.
2.	All	Action 2 – Any parent council member who is interested in participating in the Connect Forum should contact SC.
3.	CW	Action 3 – CW to contact Liz Martin from the PSA with information about Connect.
4.	MB	Action 4 – MB to provide briefing by e-mail.
5.	All	Action 5 – Parent Council members to discuss how funds can be utilised at future meeting. Parent Council to liaise with CW and KT on how they might like the funds to be used.
6.	All	Action 6 - Attendees should contact SC with any items they wish to discuss at the December meeting.
7.	All	Action 7 – Attendees to pass apologies to SC.
8.	All	Action 8 – Attendees to contact AB if they require the December Teams invitation.