

Berwickshire High School Parent Council Annual General Meeting

Chair's Report – 2023/24

The 2023/24 school year has seen Berwickshire High School go from strength to strength, again academically with improved SQA results, but also with extra-curricular activities for both pupils, teachers and the wider school community. Examples include the Duke of Edinburgh expeditions and Battlefields trip to Belgium and France as well as sporting trips for pupils, the Pedagogy Conference for staff and the wider teaching community and the first, community popular, Christmas Fair held in school since the Covid pandemic. School shows have also continued throughout the year to great aplomb.

Fundraising

The Parent Council (PC) continues to support the school through fundraising and the 200 Club which continue to bring in money which this year has helped to fund: application fees for the BDA Quality Assurance Mark assessment, teaching aids/software for the Enhanced Provision department, refreshments at both Music department senior and school-wide shows, trophies for sports day, end of term ice cream van, Awards Ceremony and house prizes, the school hardship fund and departmental and library books.

The reinstatement of the Christmas Fair is another significant fund raiser for the PC and has boosted our funds significantly. Special thanks go out to Vicki Tait for her stellar efforts in organising the fair last year and continuing to do so this year. Appreciation also goes out to all those who helped with the previous fair, as well as other fundraisers, and who have put their hand up to help with the coming event in November.

Thanks also go to Vicki in approaching and dealing with the admin to gain funds from local windfarms to purchase books for the school library and to potentially hold library-focused community events too. We received £1,900 from Preston and Abbey Community Trust and £1,000 from Blackhill Windfarm Community Fund. We thank both funds for their generous contributions to our school.

Treasury

The PC funds continue to be healthy enough to help fund school equipment, books, trips and training. Thanks to Mo Lamond as Treasurer for keeping across the detail, managing the 200 Club, and liaising with bank accounts and the school to keep us in check.

Profile Raising

The PC continues to be active in helping the school raise its positive profile, albeit it's doing very well given the TV and press coverage it has seen recently. Amongst other collateral: pop-up banners were created for use in and out of school. Posters were created for the second very successful Pedagogy Conference. Awards and graduation certificates were also created for use at both the Junior and Senior Awards Ceremonies and Graduation Ceremony.

New Parent Recruitment

One area for focus where we are lacking is in recruiting new parents to the Parent Council meetings. We need a real push here to encourage parents from both the junior and senior schools to come along to Parent Council to create a wider, more inclusive discussion forum, as well as engage with the school in building its culture. We also desperately need more parents to offer to become office bearers, albeit they should never feel obliged to do so.

Scottish Borders Council (SBC) wide High School Chairs Group

The High School Chairs Group, which has been running for a few years now, continues to be a powerful Borders-wide collective voice for our high schools. The Group continues to exchange messages on school issues and meets every few months on Teams to swap ideas and concerns.

Neurodiversity

This year saw the PC continue to help champion support for neurodiverse pupils in our school. We are actively engaging with The British Dyslexia Association to achieve their Quality Assurance Mark. This will continue throughout the year. Thanks go to Kathy Huffman, Head of Support for Learning at BHS and her team for leading for the school on this, as well as Vicki in leading for the PC.

Leadership

The school involves the Parent Council in the interview process for senior leaders and as you're all aware, we've seen a change in leadership of the school for this academic year, with Bruce Robertson taking a year off and Emma Dickson stepping up to the post of Rector. Cameron Murray has also stepped up to cover the Deputy Rector position vacated by Emma. I'm sure you'll all join me in taking this opportunity to welcome Emma to her new position and extend her, Cameron Murray, the Senior Leadership Team, teachers and the wider school staff community the support of the Parent Council going forward.

In my capacity as Chair thank you to all PC participants and Treasurer Mo Lamond for your support and continued contribution to the progress of our school. I'd also like to say a fond farewell to all parents and staff who have left the school community this year, as well as welcome new parents and teachers joining BHS. It's exciting times for our school and I'd like you to join me in celebrating the success of Berwickshire High School and offer our continued parental support going forward.

Best regards,

Neil Bennett

BHS Parent Council Chair