



Berwickshire High School Parent Council

Online Parent Council Meeting - Minutes - 9 March 2022

Present:

Parent Council Members: Neil Bennett (Chair), Mo Lamond, Katy Master, Clare Stewart, Bruce Robertson (Rector), Diane Sinclair, Jane Taylor, Devrim Turkey (minutes)

Apologies: Anna White, Tracey Wieczorek, Katrina Reynolds, Helena Richards, Wanda-Jane Field

1. Minutes of last meeting

There were no comments

2. Chair's Report

- Neil presented a progress report on SBC funding cuts. Reported that after meeting with Education staff at SBC, Chairs had written to all local Councillors and MPs. Positive progress has been made, but group is waiting on details.

Education performance committee – Bruce and Neil attended this meeting with local Councillors and SBC education representatives. The meeting was very positive. All expressed their gratitude and thanks to Bruce, the staff and pupils, as well as the wider BHS school community for their efforts - including the Parent Council.

High School Parents' Council Chairs – formalising group - monthly meetings to continue.

Mentoring system – Neil discussed with Bruce the possibility of mentoring for senior pupils (portfolio and personal statement etc). Neil to progress this with Cameron Mabon. Consideration for a database of parent and community mentors.

Parent recruitment – Neil: Help with flyer sought and any other ideas welcomed. Katie: Harder with less opportunity to be present in building. Bruce: Concert (Cameron Mabon) as first opportunity for parents to be in building. Claire: Social media interest from parents, but no actual attendance at organised meeting. Jane: Asked when parents allowed in – Bruce: assuming when restrictions lift but Education department not confirmed yet; wonderful to encourage and welcome parents back into school. Bruce to consider an event before Concert. Transition evenings have usually had a Parent Council presence to recruit keen S1 parents. Neil to write new Heads Up entry.

3. Treasurer's Report

Main account	£2,459.49
200 Club	£1,601.07

3. Fundraising report

Fundraising meeting - 28/2/22 scheduled meeting, no one turned up, despite interest from 12 (only 2 apologies).

200 Club – Claire to do commercial to businesses and promote to parents especially when parents back in school. Carnival idea not to be pursued given lack of parent involvement. Merchandise from 125th

Anniversary event and associated photo history book will be current focus. Bruce thanked Claire for her efforts. He added that there is 'working party' interest from three people in the Anniversary event, with potential for fundraising (people from community coming into school). Bruce to provide date of working party meeting, given willingness expressed by parents present for involvement in working party.

5. 200 Club draw

1 st	£19.60	Dawn Gotterson
2 nd	£9.60	Melanie Short
3 rd	£4.80	Katie Master

6. Funding requests

1. Textbooks Maths Nat 5 and Higher £65.50
2. Textbooks Physics Higher, 23 copies, £138
3. Textbooks Technologies (Woodwork) Nat 5, 21 copies, £190.89

Funding agreed.

7. Rector's Report

Athletics championships - Student Council approached regarding parents being invited - met with unanimous and positive agreement, with proviso that parents keep their distance!

Covid – Face masks no longer mandatory; assemblies are now possible.

Education performance committee – very positive, elected members for Berwickshire present, thanks to all for input.

Senior phase attainment – Senior leadership, Faculty Heads and Heads of House to report re predicted grades. Action plans re raising attainment. Assemblies re key messages for effective study with emphasis on studying smarter. Nominations sought for pupils needing further intervention from Derek Hoffman pre-Easter. To progress with lowest 20% attainment, needing additional support, to have peer tutoring from S6. Peter Macklin meeting pupils with strong predicted grades to congratulate them.

Attainment concerns – Biology and Human Biology at Higher too low – honest discussions with team; 2022/23 course options- not 3 classes, not enough pupils, attainment not strong enough so will focus on Biology to concentrate on attainment; Human Biology can come back again if improvement evidenced; no flagging up or upset caused. Geography Higher lower than expected. Good handle on attainment picture generally. Tariff points (Scottish Government comparison tool) - above targets for S4; slightly below for S5 (not unexpected as not building on strong foundation due to Covid impact greater). Not limiting students or closing off pathway if lower grades, but with honest discussion re Prelim grades and need to shift. English & Maths - pretty happy, attainment lower across country, Covid impacting on in-class learning and exam experience.

Easter school - (annual leave for staff), online, draft timetable over the 2 weeks – to be circulated soon; national e-learning offer is good; SQA support packages for particular subjects – not heard positive teacher feedback about this.

SQA assemblies - Due, with opportunity to meet Chief Invigilator. New timetable to commence 6 June.

Enhancement to curriculum with easing restrictions - Music masterclass for Senior school, strong link to Marchmont House for Arts & Beekeeping links. Noleen Harrison, novelist, re North Berwick witch trials through Ian Bain (Librarian) securing a Scottish Government grant.

Budget – 9 Senior Heads met at HQ with Director of Education; meeting was positive, constructive, objective, progress made, Finance Dept input, awaiting indicative budget this week; cuts likely to be on a lower scale than initially expected, no management structure to be imposed. Parent Council work key to getting to this point. Katie and Bruce recognised Neil's input. Neil reinforced the need to keep the new Borders wide Chair's group going for the sake of all the schools across the Borders.

8. Matters Raised

School meals – Neil has raised with other Parent Councils. Generally, poor vegan and veggie options, too much plastic waste; Helena initially raised this item and is writing a letter for Neil to pass onto Borders Chairs Group for comment and then submit to SBC responsible person.

Careers & College advice – Katie: Need for careers and further/higher education advice to be provided earlier than S5 so that pupils can decide which subjects to choose and not narrow their options (by omitting to select appropriate subjects for career or college course). Brought to her attention by someone with no sense of life beyond school; evident that they weren't not having conversations with teachers, so hard to make informed and timely subject decisions. Eyemouth HS have a teacher assigned to help write personal statements where there is a subject resonance; not reliant upon Guidance Teacher; need for a greater bank of knowledge about subject and university progression. Bruce – Noted; some work to do on timing and quality of conversation; 1:1 conversations twice yearly. Careers Advisor quality – line manager met, raised concerns, taken seriously and shadowing adviser, sampling students etc – Bruce needs to chase up (as interrupted by Omicron). Jane: Young workforce encouraged, but not enough emphasis re potential university students (because perceived as more able): Highers and not Advance Highers sought by universities for broader subject range; Bruce – more Highers at school noted. Mo: Talent to be explored and study/career progression, beyond hobbies. Neil: seeds of ideas to progress. Need for Advance Highers? Bruce: Important if very competitive courses; if Higher results good enough, Advance Highers extend learning in area of interest, enriching; English universities favour them; Advance Highers offered to those interested, but not using too much staff time, because need for self-directed study to prepare for university; OECD report 2021 very complimentary re Advance Highers.

Parent concern – Neil: Concern from parent wishing to remain anonymous that their child was not allowed by a teacher to get their coat despite their need to go out. Bruce: policy for coats to go in locker or bag indoors, but need for common sense; vast majority of staff handle that well; some issues around pupil defiance re uniform; not a general issue observed while present at Lunch etc. Bruce encouraged contact from parent to deal with their concern sensitively. Katie: sad that need for anonymity felt by parent. Devrim: agreed with Katie and asked if there was a mechanism nonetheless to raise concerns anonymously – Bruce to check whether Q&A form has online form facilitating this.

9. AOB

Parents Evening – Mo: Great!

Blazers – Next month's agenda

10. Next Meeting

7pm 20 April 2022.