



Berwickshire High School Parent Council

Minutes of Parent Council Meeting - 5 October 2022

Present

Parents: Neil Bennett, Colin Gracey, Danielle Gracey, Marianne Hodge, Mo Lamond, Katy Master, Helena Richards, Claire Stewart, Vicky Tait

Staff: Emma Dickson (Acting Depute Rector), Bruce Robertson (Rector)

1. Minutes of Last Meeting

Minutes of the meetings in June and August were approved.

2. Chairperson's Report

Neil updated the Parent Council on the following matters:

- Mental Health service provision in schools – the next meeting is scheduled for 24th October, with Lesley Munro and Justin Sinclair of SBC due to propose a costed plan.
- Food in Schools – Susan Jarvis, the Chair of Peebles Parent Council is leading on this work and is due to correspond with Debbie Hosie, the Head of Catering.
- Parent Council recruitment – Heads Up promotion and communication will continue. Neil suggested pop-up banners to promote the PC visually at events in school. Katy recalled that the PC has some of these already. Colin to search out. Neil to review to see if still fit for purpose. There is a S1 Parents Evening on Tuesday 25th October. Agreed that some presence from PC members would be good to promote PC and encourage new parents to join, as well as to join the 200 Club. Neil, Claire, Katy and Danielle offered to help.
- Senior Awards Ceremony – Clare doing refreshments.
- PC Chairs meeting last week – presentation on dyslexia and the processes and procedures which SBC follow to identify and support those with dyslexia. There was some discussion around this topic, with mixed experiences. Some children and parents report very positively of the support they have had for identified dyslexia, but others have found the process of identifying dyslexia and getting recognition for concerns around dyslexia difficult. Emma reported that Cathy Huffman has led a programme of awareness raising in line with National Dyslexia Awareness week, which has been positively received in school. It was agreed that a further meeting on this issue would be welcome.

3. Treasurer's Report 2021-2022

The main account balance is £2,790.60. The 200 Club account balance is £226.10.

The sports tops have not yet been paid for.

4. Fundraising and 200 Club draw

September 2022

1st – 29

2nd – 37

3rd – 64

Claire reported that merchandise will be available at the Senior Awards Ceremony. Also, that the Parent Council is sharing a stall with Marie Curie at the Duns Primary School Christmas Fayre on 24th November to do the same. Finally, she reported that a meeting has been arranged to discuss the restaurant pop-up idea.

5. Rector's Report

Bruce presented his report.

In addition he reported the following:

- Abbie Gibson has been appointed as a PE Teacher and will also take on some maths teaching.
- Colin Gracey will step back from his Acting Head of Year role after the October break. The Acting Head of Year role has been advertised with interviews to be held on 22 October. Expressions of interest in taking on temporary 'Head of Year' responsibilities for each of S1, S2 and S6 have been invited from within the school.
- There are particular challenges facing the maths department at present which he is dealing with. Mrs Marchand is helping out in the maths department, along with members of staff from the science department, but the new PE teacher is able to teach maths and will take over from those members of staff when she takes up post. Maths teacher recruitment is a national and an SBC-wide problem, but the ongoing school improvement activity is helping to enhance the reputation and standing of the school such that it attracts good quality staff.
- It has been suggested that extra-curricular events such as sporting fixtures present an opportunity for refreshment based fundraising activity for the Parent Council. Often taking place on Friday afternoons/Saturday mornings.
- There are some concerns from the Music Department over the allocation of peripatetic music lessons across SBC schools. It was agreed that Neil would pick this up with SBC.
- BHS is hosting its first Pedagogy Conference on Saturday 12th November. Bill Rogers, a leading educational consultant and author, is the guest speaker.

6. SQA Attainment 2022

Bruce presented Insight Analysis Data which gave more detail about the school's SQA results and how they compare to a) Scottish Borders schools, b) the national average and c) the school's 'virtual comparator' which provides a like-for-like comparison in terms of size of school/social demographic/ location and other such metrics. A summary of this comparative data is as follows:

- At S4, there is a steady and improving trend in results across all students (the lowest attaining 20%, the highest attaining 20% and the middle 60%), to level up with comparators
- At S5, the trend is less positive, with some slight slip and sitting below averages.
- At S6, results are generally good, with the school sitting at or above averages/comparators
- BHS is sitting at the top of the SBC league table for numbers of students who by the end of S4 have five or more National Level 4 qualifications. This is a first for the school
- On the measure of the number of students who by the end of S4 have five or more National Level 5 qualifications, BHS is fourth in the SBC league table with 60%. This is up from 44% and 45% in 2018 and 2019, respectively.
- On the measure of the number of students who by the end of S5 have five or more Highers, BHS is fifth

The overall picture is one of steady improvement and levelling up to national and comparator averages, and in some areas exceeding national averages, but with some evidence to suggest that the school is underperforming at Higher. It's possible that there are some historic data anomalies that partly explain this underperformance and the school is working to unpick the data to determine the extent of that. That notwithstanding, improving performance at Higher and understanding why there is underperformance at Higher remains a priority area of focus within the overall efforts to raise attainment. Those efforts focus on:

- Extending the range of courses to meet the diverse needs of students
- Introducing short courses as part of that plan
- Improving teaching
- Carrying out more formative assessment
- Improving the support for students in relation to course/subject choices
- Data analysis to better understand attainment and performance and identify areas for attention and improvement

7. Matters raised

- a) Short courses – are these going well? There have been some reports of negative communication from teachers about their ability to teach all that is required in the time available, which increases anxiety amongst students about their ability to get on with the course. Bruce asked that any such incidences of this be reported directly to the senior leadership team so that they can be dealt with. He also confirmed that in advance of the meeting he had asked for data about predicted grades and drop-out rate for all short courses and the evidence suggests that they are going well. Only a couple of students are currently predicted not to pass.
- b) Trophies and Cups – would it be possible to repurpose some of the trophies and cups sitting in the trophy cabinet rather than buy new ones? It was agreed that Katy will approach Donald Drummond to investigate what's in the trophy cabinet.
- c) Netball funds – the netball club has a sum of money raised through events and funding applications which it is actually struggling to spend. With this year's introduction of the standard sports sub for all extra-curricular sport, it is the preference of Katy and Helena who run the netball club, that they no longer be responsible for this money. After discussion with parents and coaches at the club it is suggested that the money is handed over to the Parent Council as a ringfenced fund for small grants for girls' competitive sport. It was agreed that this was appropriate and that a set of criteria for grant applications should be drawn up. Katy, Helena, Mo and Neil to take this forward.
- d) Guidance Teacher support for positive destinations – some concerns have been raised by parents that the current position of only two Guidance Teachers across the six year groups is insufficient and that support for students as they move through the senior phase of school and start considering what lies beyond school is inadequate. The Senior Leadership team feel that the current model should work and that it needs some time to bed in. It has also been disrupted by the recent departure of Karen Thomson and promotion of Emma into the Acting Depute Rector role. There was some discussion about the support that students are getting in relation to subject choice and university application and it was agreed that this is something the school wants to look at, particularly in light of the underperformance at Higher discussed earlier in the meeting. It may also be that the measure to provide support to S1, S2 and S6 until a new acting Guidance Teacher is appointed by inviting exiting staff to take a 'head of year' role, throws up interesting and positive results.

8. DONM

2nd November 2022