



# Bathgate Academy Parent Council

## Minutes of Online Meeting

Wed 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020

### Attendees:

Grant Abbot (HT), Derek Cornwall (Chair), Alison Currie, Richmond Davies, Julian Dignall, Christine Downie, Susan Griffin, Margaret Hendry, Tracey Ironside, Lisa Lumsden, Delyth MacDonald, Leigh Maybury, Mark McCallum, Alison McDermott, Carol McNicol, Helen Neary, Eleanor Sterrick, Hazel Young

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### Topics

#### 1. Apologies

Received from Karen Smillie, Tracey Bredski, Gillian Greenwell

#### 2. Minutes & Matters arising

No matters arising and minutes were approved.

#### 3. Chair's Update

Derek advised that he was now also West Lothian's representative for the National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFS) and that he attended their last forum meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> October. This meeting allows for National parent issues to be discussed and comments fed back to Scottish Government and Parent Council's across Scotland. Derek will seek to update West Lothian Parent Councils via the West Lothian Parent Forum group. Derek informed all that he highlighted to NPFS members of the excellent weekly update communication practices being adopted by Bathgate Academy of keeping parents informed since pupils have returned to school in August and in addressing any parental concerns about pupil transition to learning under new covid-19 procedures within the school.

Derek presented the Parent Council's Annual Report for 2019/20 (Appendix One) and sought re-election as Chair of the Parent Council for the forthcoming 2020/21 school year and this was duly approved by members.

Lastly Derek informed all about a new Scottish Child Payment of £10 per week for each child in the family under 6 for low income families. This is not an automatic payment and people will have to apply from 9<sup>th</sup> November and payments will start end of February 2021. Derek to attach application link to minutes.

<https://www.mygov.scot/scottish-child-payment/how-to-apply/>

#### 4. Head Teacher update

- a. **Covis-19 update** – Grant informed members that there has been an improvement in corridor social distancing and wearing of face masks within 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> years with the vast majority of pupils complying with new procedures. The latest guidance is the requirement for S4-S6 pupils and teachers to wear face masks within the classroom, unless they are exempt and further updates on this will be released later this week via the school app. Risk assessments are up to date within the school and being updated daily when latest guidance notices are issued.

Whilst there has been some covid-19 positive cases within the school of late, local and national protocols are being adopted and track and trace findings have identified no positive transmission of cases within the school environment. Parents are being informed via group call, and phone calls to impacted pupils and Derek stated that the process of keeping parents fully informed by the school was effective in keeping the timeline as short as possible when cases are identified.

PE can now continue indoors with a gradual build-up of sports such as Badminton and Volleyball. Practical cookery has now started for S1/2 and has been a logistical challenge in readiness for classes and hoped that the remaining year groups will be in place through November.

Online assemblies are being carried out on a Monday and year group assemblies are being held every fortnight within the school.

- b. **2020 School Exam results** – Grant presented the school's attendance trends from 2015 through to 2020 and went through the 2020 exams results for the SCQF 5+ and SQA 5+, 3+ and 1+ teacher assessments.

Cat scores are showing increasing positive trends through an increasing school roll, changes in demographics, curriculum rationale changes introduced at BGE (English and Maths) and in keeping 6 National 5s at S4 year level and with more SCQF courses being offered within the school.

SQA have announced that there will be no exams for NAT 5 in 2021 but at this time Highers and Advanced Higher exams will progress as normal during May/June next year. A question was raised about prelims being carried out in double periods and split over different days and Grant advised that the school hall could not be used as normal and that this was the only way to emulate exam conditions under the guidance provided.

- c. **Senior Phase Assessments update** – Grant advised that Senior Phase Assessments will be carried out throughout the school year with Holistic Assessments (prelim type activity), Internal assessments (via class tests, unit tests, AB tests and C tests), Coursework and Homework all being gathered for evidence.

There has been a shift change of culture in that prelims now matter and pupils need to perform throughout the school year in order to obtain the best possible attainment result.

A question was asked about results being generous in all schools and Grant advised that teachers were good at ranking pupil estimates and providing evidence to ascertain absolute attainment for each pupil. Time constraints were of an issue in 2020 and more guidance has now been issued by SQA around the predictive evidence and that focus should be on quality and not quantity of evidence for 2021.

SQA will release exam papers planned for 2020 to schools, who can then tailor suit to the curriculum within the school based upon a past papers theme to be used.

**d. Online Parent Evening update** – Grant explained that appointments slots for S1 will be available tomorrow for the 19<sup>th</sup> November parents evening and that staff will be available for a 3-hour period between 3.45 to 8.45pm for parents to select a 5-minute time slot. It is not possible to cover all 13 subjects within this timeframe for S1-S3, but parents with pupils at senior school (S4-S6) will have the opportunity to cover all subjects within the online timeframe as less subjects are undertaken. Further opportunities will be made available should any technical glitches arise so that parents can obtain feedback from teachers. Grant also confirmed that the existing tracking reports for pupil attainment would still be issued to Parents as normal throughout the school session.

**5. Discussion Topics– Parent Backup Poster** – Derek deferred this item to next meeting as time had overrun and it was important that the focus of the meeting under the current climate was upon the headteachers update and the subsequent follow up questions being asked by parent members.

#### **6. AOCB**

- (a) Derek highlighted to members to note that the Children (Equality Protection from Assault) Scotland Act is effective from 7th November 2020 and this removes the reasonable chastisement as a defence and all forms of physical punishment or physical detention of children will be against the law in Scotland.
- (b) A question was asked if Higher exam course content would be reduced and Grant stated he was waiting on guidance from SQA regarding any possible curriculum adjustments to coursework.
- (c) A question was asked about Mr Ferrier leaving within the Maths department and when a replacement would be available and Grant advised that a new maths teacher would be in place Tuesday next week.
- (d) Derek thanked everyone for attending and closed the online meeting.

#### **7. Date of Next meeting**

Wednesday 13th January 2021, at 6pm (Online)

## **Appendix One - Chair's Annual Report 2019/20**

What an extraordinary school year we have come through. Who would have thought that our lives would be turned upside down and government restrictions imposed upon us all to stay at home, protect the NHS and ultimately save lives, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The school had to transition from normal teaching practice to remote learning, setting up new lesson plans, devising and recording communication feeds and findings new ways to connect with their pupils. Through everyone's ingenuity, strength, passion, and working together, we have navigated these unprecedented challenges to see out the school year.

We could not comprehend that our school neutral 2020 "Backup" your child poster distributed at the end of January 2020 to every school within West Lothian would be enforced indirectly onto Parents/Carers as schools were closed and remote learning/working from home became a reality for parents, pupils and teachers.

Our poster was also endorsed by the National Parent Forum of Scotland, who further distributed across Scotland via their Twitter and Facebook accounts. In addition, a letter was received on behalf of the Rt Hon John Swinney, deputy First Minister and Chair of Education and Skills Committee, who further used government networks to distribute and showcase our "Backup" poster and acknowledged the best practice being adopted by our Parent Council.

Our Parent Council continues to send out articles from the National Parent Forum of Scotland via the school app that may be of interest to parents/carers.

This year we refreshed the shape and feel of our Parent Council web page within the school's website to ensure that it portrays all aspects of our Parent Council work which in turn will hopefully increase our Parent Council profile.

I would like to thank the support provided from parents, teachers, pupils and the local community over the past 12 months which has helped everyone navigate these unprecedented times. Without all of your help, this would not have been achievable.

Furthermore, before the summer recess a letter (Appendix Two) was sent out to all staff at Bathgate Academy from our Parent Council in appreciation of the extraordinary work they had undertaken to keep our pupils engaged in learning during the school's shutdown period.

Lastly, I am more than happy to continue as chair over the school term 2020/2021.

## **Appendix Two – Staff Appreciation Letter sent by Parent Council**

*25<sup>th</sup> June 2020*

*To: Grant and all staff*

*On behalf of Bathgate Academy Parent Council, can I take this opportunity before the summer recess to say a very special thank you for all your ingenuity, your resilience, your passion and your strength, as we have navigated unprecedented challenges over the past three months. As Chair of Bathgate Academy Parent Council, I am proud to be part of a wonderful team that keeps on delivering the very best for each and every one of our pupils.*

*These past months have been hard. You and your colleagues have had to transition from your normal teaching practice to remote learning, setting up new lesson plans, devising and recording communication feeds, preparing materials, and finding new ways to connect with your pupils. And all of you have done this while juggling the effects of COVID-19 on your family and personal lives as well.*

*But you have achieved great things despite the hardship. I've been reading many messages and news articles via the school app about your incredible efforts, the great innovations and new practices being adopted, and relationships you are forging as you work to provide for our pupils. You are using existing resources and tools in new ways, and developing systems and practices that are wholly new, that will continue to provide future benefits.*

*I believe that out of something bad always comes something good and as we recover from this pandemic, the things that we have learned, the innovations you all have adopted, can be utilised in building new platforms and practices that will last beyond COVID-19, and will benefit Bathgate Academy staff and pupils for many years to come.*

*Thank you and enjoy a very much truly deserved summer recess, as best you can.*

*Kind regards*

*Derek Cornwall*

*Chair Bathgate Academy Parent Council*