



STRATHAVEN ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

AGM HELD ON 7th JUNE 2022

MINUTES

WELCOME & APOLOGIES

In attendance: Jack Campbell (Chair), Ali Moon (Secretary), Andrew McIntosh, Adele Brennan, Jill Frew, Jo Tunney, Carolynne Mitchell, Yvonne Vance, Cheryl McMorris, Mel White, Alan Hall, Waheeda Huq (Headteacher), Iain Fleming (Depute Head Teacher)

Apologies: Lorna McAuley, Giovanna MacKenna, Kirstin Kinniburgh, Frances Auty, Julie LeBlanc, Cllr Elise Frame

AGM:

Jack welcomed all in attendance to the meeting.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AGM –15thJUNE 2021

The Minutes of the AGM in 2021 were approved.

HEADTEACHER'S REPORT

Ms Huq welcomed everyone to her first AGM. She thanked everyone for coming into the school, for the first time in two and a half years. Ms Huq explained she planned to give a whistlestop tour of where the school is heading. Interviews are currently taking place for a new depute head post, PC and PTA members are involved with this process. The school's leadership team will be complete by next Tuesday once the new DHT is appointed. There is a significant amount of work going on in the background at Strathaven Academy looking at systems, procedures & routines. They are working on a more user-friendly version of the School Improvement Plan. Ms Huq handed out a more simplistic document, currently in draft form, to all in attendance and asked for feedback from the PC members. She explained that everyone will take responsibility for this document within the school thus making everyone accountable. In the new term the school will be engaging with the pupils through the Pupil Council and PSE, using 'How good is our school' user friendly format. The aim is to improve the service the school

delivers to young people. This is how the school intends to move forward. Jo Tunney asked Ms Huq if the School Improvement Plan could use language which is accessible/understandable to all parents as she felt this is currently a barrier to engagement. Basic headings would be helpful, with explanations/examples as this will encourage parents to be more involved with the School Improvement Plan. Carlyne also raised the issue of the colouring, which needs to be suitable for those with colour blindness. Yvonne commented that the NHS has a readability section to check all documents prior to being presented to the public and wondered if the school had access to something similar. Carlyne said she was happy to help in this area. Ms Huq has recognised there is major area of improvement required involving communications both internally & externally. Mr Fleming will be involved with this. There is quite a bit of work to be done in-house before being sent out for feedback and asked if the PC or the wider parent forum have any expertise in this area their assistance would be appreciated. The new S6 Leadership team will also be involved in the communication plan. With regards to data for the School Improvement Plan, this will be added in once the SQA results are published in August. Ms Huq confirmed that they are working to improve what is a good school to make it better.

PARENT COUNCIL CHAIR'S REPORT

Jack delivered the chair's report. He started off saying It had been a difficult year:

The tragedy surrounding the death of an S2 pupil led to considerable grief and distress – principally for the family but also friends, teachers, school staff and the wider school community.

This tragedy caused a great deal of soul searching within the school community and at times, caused some loss of confidence in the school's response and provision. It became clear that much of what were considered to be shortcomings in the school's initial response to the tragedy, was as a result of restrictions that are imposed by SLC Education Services – in short, Mr Boyd and his team were simply not allowed to respond in a way that parent/carers hoped.

There remain many concerns around pupil behaviour, the level of wellbeing of many young people and the complex underlying reasons. This will not be solved quickly but I am confident that school staff can, with the support of parent/carers, steer us on an improving pathway.

Covid

Whilst Covid may be having a reduced impact going forward, its effects have still been felt over this academic year. In addition to pupil and staff absences, there have been restrictions within the building to help reduce cross infection. With Government funding, Academy staff stepped up to provide Supported Study sessions for those sitting external exams. That was greatly appreciated by those who attended.

Social Media

There seems to be an expectation among some parent/carers that the school is responsible for almost everything to do with a young person's upbringing; that the school should be able to fix all the anxieties and worries; and that the school is seen to be at fault when things become difficult. In my view, this is unrealistic and unfair; it is especially unfair on those teachers who work tirelessly to look after all of the stressed, anxious, and vulnerable pupils in their care. Teachers accept this role. It is however tough to take when a parent/carer takes to social media, often without the full facts or understanding of the situation and launches an attack on the school – often without having given the school the opportunity to address the concern. Please call this behaviour out, please let any perpetrator know how damaging this behaviour is.

On a more positive note, we welcome our new Headteacher; her predecessor, Kevin Boyd, had served the school very well and, on behalf of the Parent Council, we wish him success in his new role. Ms Huq has re-joined the Academy in difficult times but has already brought a very positive outlook coupled with apparently boundless enthusiasm for the promotion of the school. She has pledged to recognise and encourage attainment in all areas of school life, not just the pure academic subjects – important as they are. She wishes to raise the profile of the parent council by means of the webpage, Facebook etc., as a way to improve communication and consultation with the wider parent forum. She will support and challenge her staff, endeavouring to improve each one as individuals while being part of a team.

In conclusion, and on behalf of the PC and wider parent forum, Jack asked to record the thanks of us all, to the hard-working school staff for their efforts and for caring enough to encourage the best education for all pupils.

REVISION OF CONSTITUTION

Jack & Ms Huq had a conversation about the constitution early on in her tenure and she asked the PC to revisit it. Jack sent out the revised edition, which included contributions from Ray, Giovanna and Ms Hug, in advance of the AGM. There have been changes to the mechanics, which has been because of increasing numbers joining the PC. There is now a clause that states PC members will serve a maximum of 4 years to ensure there is a constant turnover of parents which will hopefully result in fresh ideas. There is also a proposed change to the date of the AGM to move to the Autumn term to encourage new S1 parents to become involved. The Parent Council members agreed to adopt the revised constitution. Jo asked when the next AGM will be, and Jack confirmed it will be in September 2022.

AOCB

No matters were raised.

NEXT AGM

The next AGM will take place in September 2022 - exact dates to be confirmed.

PARENT COUNCIL MEETING:

Jack welcomed everyone to the second part of the proceedings for the evening.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING –29THMARCH 2022

The minutes were approved.

MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

HEAD TEACHER'S REPORT

For this part of the meeting, Ms Huq handed over to Mr Fleming to give an overview of successes of the school. The return of Assessments & SQA exams has been received positively by both staff & pupils. In January, Winter assessments (formerly known as prelims) took place and were held under formal exam conditions. This was to give exam experience to the school's young people as there were no pupils in the school who had sat external exams. The school's chief invigilator commented that she had never seen so many pupils attend these exams. There has been a welcome return to extra-curricular activities: music (samba band), sport, other activities and trips which has pleased both pupils & staff. DYW (Developing the Young Workforce) – the school has just won Scotland's Most Enterprising School award for 2022 due to the number of connections with external agencies & businesses. Supporting young people with supported study was a great success and feedback has been positive. Mental Health Awareness week (May), Introduction of Thrive Room (nurturing area) and staff development - training staff how to support young people's mental health better. The school was very involved with COP26; Harvard (2 x S6 pupils are heading to summer school in Harvard before starting university in Scotland – they are the only 2 pupils in Scotland to do this), Sakura Day (received Japanese cherry blossom trees to plant in Strathaven Park), Queens Platinum Jubilee (3 pupils sang in the choir at the Strathclyde Park beacon lighting event), Awarded the Reading school silver award and now working towards gold & Ms Huq will be asking parents to support this application. Scotland Internationals - 2 x U15 footballers, which is a first for the school. Working closely with charities such as Refweege as a Syrian refugee & 3 Ukrainian refugees have joined the school. New improvement plan cycle is changing to make it workable and give enough time so that all staff can be involved. How we celebrate success - return of the face-to-face celebrations through school assemblies. The senior phase award ceremony is being moved to Aug/Sep - so awards will be based on performance throughout the whole year. School letters, twitter pages, Strathaven echoes are also a busy part of the school. Ali mentioned that [MH1] an S4 pupil has been selected for the Scotland national team in Karate. Jack asked why Aug/Sep for the awards ceremony and Mr Fleming said it's a way of hopefully capturing former S6 pupils, before they start college/university, to celebrate their successes.

MENTORING PROGRAMME

Jack explained this had been paused due to Covid however Ms Huq is very keen for this to start up again. Adele has taken over the role of Parent Council Co-ordinator for this project from Ali. Adele has around 12 potential mentors however is still looking for more people to be involved. Ms Huq explained how important it is to match the pupils with a suitable mentor so having a bank of mentors with different skills/experiences would be beneficial. There were concerns from a parent re PVG status of mentors. It was highlighted that there are currently lengthy delays and a cost implication for PVG applications however the PC members agreed it is something that should be investigated. . The SLC quality link officer will assist with advising on council policy. Andy suggested Ms Huq checks with Volunteer Scotland to see if funding is available to cover the cost of PVGs for mentors. Ms Huq will check with SLC if PVG is a definite requirement moving forward. Carlyne & Mel offered their services as mentors.

PROMOTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

Jack advised that a parent had raised a concern that there was a disconnect between the school's view on the level of bullying & behavioural issues and what parents believed was happening. Andy commented that he believed the year group most affected by the pandemic & its impact on schooling is the new S3 year group. From what he has observed and been told by others these pupils are really struggling with mental health, concerning behaviours and are in his view 'a bit broken'. Mel raised the point that there have been deaths within the school over the last few years and she feels they have not been spoken about adequately. Ms Huq explained that it is often difficult as SLC give direction on what can and cannot be said which ties their hands to a certain extent. PC members said there is a concern that parents perceive the school only care about those A grade students, pupils are feeling that they are not supported, and school is not a fun place to be. Ms Huq explained that assemblies had started to take place again and will be used to team build and address some of the issues pupils have. There was then a wider discussion around the pilot Promoting Positive Behaviour project which many parents thought was punitive & focused on de-merits rather than rewards. There was a view that the project was making the pupils angry because they feel like they are being continually punished. Several parents felt the school has a PR issue and they need to be better at communicating their message and the reasons behind the PPB project to the wider parent forum. Jo suggested looking at good practice in other schools to see if there was a better solution as it was felt the pilot project was creating a greater disconnect between school & parents. Ms Huq & Mr Fleming took on board parent council member's comments and would be reviewing the project. Mr Fleming advised the meeting that he is currently working on a programme with a small group of disengaged pupils using a reduced timetable outwith the main classrooms and is already seeing glimmers of success & it is anticipated these pupils will gain Nat 3 awards which they would not have done in a mainstream environment. There was a discussion around awards that recognise resilience & achievement with mixed views however it was agreed that pupils do like to be recognised for non-academic achievements. Ali suggested that maybe a way of tying together the PR issue and introducing new projects within the school was to bring in external speakers with relevant experience to deliver the school's message. There will be more discussion around this in the next meeting.

PARENT HELPERS IN CLASS

This will be discussed at the next meeting.

RETIRING MEMBERS

Jack advised the PC that there will be 4 retirees this year. 3 by rotation (Jack, Frances & Lorna) and 1 (Ali) by children having left school. Due to the changes in the constitution Jack sought re-election as Chair to carry over until the next meeting. Andy seconded this. Ms Huq presented Ali with a bouquet and a donation for the Sandford Giving Tree Backpack Appeal (which the S6 leadership team had put together) and thanked her for her time on the parent council.

(Note: post meeting Jack was advised that Mary Robertshaw & Karen Lapsley have also stood down from the PC)

AOCB

Carolyne advised the PC that there is a Scot Gov Covid fund for short courses at universities & colleges in Scotland throughout the summer. Carolyne will pass the relevant information on to Jo for the Parent Council FB page.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Dates will be circulated in due course. There being no further business the meeting ended at 2105 hours.