



Strathaven Academy Parent Council Meeting

Tuesday 28th November 2023 @ 7.00pm

1. **In Attendance:** J Campbell (Chair), J Tunney (Vice Chair), C McMorris (Secretary), Ms W Huq (Headteacher), P Hamilton (Principal Teacher), M Brown (Head of Faculty for Science), L Rae, A Ali, I Fleming (Depute Head Teacher), K Cain, B Howie, A Minns.

Virtual: E Frame (Counsellor), G McKenna, J Le Blanc- Smith, E M Hall.

Apologies: C Hall, G Baker, V Leck (Teacher), K Kinniburgh, C Webber, C Mitchell, M White

2. **Minutes from previous meeting** – Accepted
3. **Matters arising not covered under agenda:**

Sandford School Transport: Update provided by L Rae. Proposal of the grant application to Community Council has not been taken forward due to a reduction in the number of parents requesting places. As the numbers have dropped to 3 – 4 children, it means the application for £5000 for this is not realistic. E Frame offered her support to any parents that are struggling with this to contact her.

4. **Head teacher Report:**

Staffing

Music Teacher vacancy has been filled – Claire Mitchell is the successful candidate from the High School of Glasgow – start date to be confirmed.

HMIE Inspection

The report is due to be published prior to the winter break.

Strengths – Learning, Teaching & Assessment

- Positive relationships set tone for calm, supported learning experiences
- Staff are committed to young people as individuals
- Lessons well-organised and resourced
- Collaborative approaches to assessment in terms of shared understanding of standards and expectations
- All faculties engage in quality assurance – and this is further strengthened through the Local Authority collaborative approach
- The sharing of assessment approaches is highly valued by staff – this is an important strength of the school
- In the Senior Phase – there is a strong understanding of standards and significant number of staff involved in SQA duties

Next Steps – Learning, Teaching & Assessment

- Continue to develop a shared understanding of effective structure of lessons e.g. start, plenary, extended tasks to deepen/challenge learning
- Explore strategies to make learning experiences more vibrant for young people e.g. differentiation, success criteria, learning intentions
- Continue planned work with skills framework to support learners in articulating their skills
- Explore strategies to enable young people to lead their learning, be active agents in the classroom, and deepen learning and thinking skills
- Work with learners at all levels in terms of understanding learning activities to improve their learning

Video Analysis

Following our inspection and the work we have been doing with external partners, we have a number of teacher volunteers who will trial video analysis as a self-evaluation tool. This would allow staff to film themselves and use this resource to reflect on their lesson. Our aim would be to use this powerful method to drive forward improvements in Learning & Teaching.

School Show

Mrs Breddy in Drama is keen to build on the success of our previous school show and we are hoping to deliver another spectacular performance in June 2024 - *Matilda Jnr!*

School Travel Plan

Strathaven Academy's travel plan intends to set out measures and best practice regarding travel arrangements for both staff and pupils. The school recognises the importance of promoting sustainable transport in order to reduce the current trend of car reliance. We believe that a School Travel Plan (STP) will help to address many of our road safety and transport problems and have a very positive effect on the local community as a whole.

We have carried out a survey to obtain an outline of views. This data will be available in due course.

Objective of Strathaven Academy's School Travel Plan:

- to reduce the number of car trips made to and from school over the next three years and to maintain or further reduce this thereafter
- reduce congestion around the school
- improve the safety of routes to the school
- reduce the detrimental impact that cars have on our environment
- improve the health and fitness of staff, pupils and parents
- further enhance our school image and develop our school ethos

We aim encourage staff, parents and pupils to adopt sustainable transport alternatives to travel to school.

Winter Assessments

These will take place from the 7th to the 21st of December and from 15th to the 26th Jan. There have been new desks, chairs and flooring for the room used for exams.

Further discussion was had about S4 study leave, with discussion around the pros and cons of this including safeguarding, support for those who need it, those who use it as "time off" etc. A variety of options were suggested including masterclasses and it was agreed this was not one size fits all.

This year coming will remain the same and S4 will come in but will consider for next year including consultation with parents/ carers and students and scoping of what other schools are doing.

Activities planned for other pupils during this time include house assemblies, the Christmas concert and the S1 pantomime to reduce the holiday “wind down” practice.

Lunchtime Provisions

We have a array of clubs on offer thanks to our S6 pupil leadership team and staff. Miss Hamilton has recently completed a survey with S1 pupils in conjunction with the canteen to establish the views of our young people and to seek opportunities to encourage pupils to use the canteen.

Since being allowed to leave the school grounds, 54% of our S1 pupils have continued to use the school canteen at lunchtime.

Reasons for pupils not using the canteen are:

51.9%	Enjoy the freedom of going to the shops
27.8%	More choice at the shops
9.3%	Prices not clear in the canteen
24.1%	Queues too big in the school canteen
9.3%	Limited menu options
22.2%	I bring my own lunch

When asked what would encourage them to stay in school rather than going to the shops, pupils responded:

- More options
- Smaller queues
- If my friends stayed in school
- Sitting down while eating
- Better food and prices

Taking the views of pupils into consideration, the janitorial team is ensuring pupils have access to the lunch area for 40 minutes. This will give them enough time to enjoy their lunch without rushing. We will work with the canteen staff to ensure prices are clear for pupils.

Tracking reports: Work has been completed with pupils and staff to update the tracking reports following feedback received last year.

Eco Schools

Mrs Greenan and the Eco Elective have completed an audit with local businesss on reusable mugs. Eight businesses surveyed allowed customers to bring resuable mugs for hot drinks. Four businesses offered a discount of approximately 25p.

Further meetings have been organised with Climate Action Strathaven to create opportunities to work together.

The eco committee will create a PowerPoint presentation to be shared during tutor time to educate pupils on recycling and sustainable solutions.

Mental and Emotional Wellbeing

The *Let's Connect* project is working to support parents/carers across SLC. The workshops aim to help parents/carers build the skills necessary to help their child talk about the things that are important to them.

We have online workshops running this term, with four in-person workshops which will be held in Calderglen High School. The dates for these have been communicated via the School App.

The workshops cover:

- Mental Health Awareness
- Understanding and Managing Stress & Anxiety
- Managing my Wellbeing and Listening
- Supporting my Child

We plan to host an evening workshop in school for Strathaven parents/carers delivered by SAMH (January/February) and, next session, run a HWB evening with a range of partner agencies. We will reach out to parents/carers who have contacts or expertise in this area. Those wishing to offer any support or involvement should contact the school.

Holocaust Memorial Event

The SLC Holocaust Memorial Event will be held in Strathaven Academy on Tuesday, 30 January 2024. As a result, the Careers Event has been rescheduled to Tuesday, 9 January 2024.

5. **Mentoring 2023/24 Programme:** Update at next Parent council meeting.

6. **Vaping Update**

It has been identified at the Headteachers meeting that this is a common difficulty in all schools and the school recognises the impact within the school community. They have organised for a company called Landed, from peer education services, to be in school this week to talk to the whole school about vaping, although there has been some negative feedback about the education provided by this service. G McKenna is aware of another education service which provides smoking cessation and will investigate if they are available in schools.

Some information on this topic had been provided by Emma Hall and passed to the Headteacher.

Further discussion was had including suggestions of vape detectors, and the need for legislation. Any suggestions to help with this ongoing issue should be shared with the school.

7. **Communications:**

Parents Evenings

S4 feedback that there were some difficulties getting bookings. It was advised that the time is allocated for parents evening at the beginning of the year and length/ hours cannot be changed. Anyone that was on the waiting list but did not receive an appointment, was contacted by the head of subject to provide feedback.

S5 tracking reports will be out tomorrow ahead of the parents evening booking going live. It was advised that, if people don't get an appointment, they should join the waiting list and the school will ensure that communication is received from the faculty head.

Any changes and ideas are welcomed to help mitigate some of the impact of limited spaces.

Feedback was received on the benefits of the face-to-face parents' evenings and online booking system.

Parents Evenings – Consultation with Parent Council/Senior Leader

A new initiative where parent/carers could book an appointment with a member of the Parent Council and a member of the Senior Leadership Team was offered for each of the Parent's Evenings. There were 7 appointment requests for the S1 evening and 17 for the S4. Some appointments were mistakenly made due to the automatic opt-in within the booking system. Despite this, it was felt by Mr Fleming, Miss Hamilton and Jack, that the initiative had provided a much-needed enhancement of communication. Both Senior Leaders took away a number of suggestions from parent/carers for consideration.

Parents Portal: 60% of parents/carers are now signed up. The school is working to increase this but must continue to use existing methods of communications at present. A reminder will be given at parents evening to sign up and S6 pupils will be available to help with setting up if required. There was a suggestion to have a countdown to this being the only method to receive communications from school as further encouragement to download.

School response feedback: Some feedback provided that parents/carers are not always receiving a response when they email or phone the office and then they are not sure where to take this. Senior Leadership team will look into this and report back.

8. **Community Football Pitches:** The school currently has 3 football teams which require a suitable pitch for their 21 home games. They have been using West Committee Rugby Club as previously they had a flat rate charge which covered them for the whole year but now they are having to pay per game at £120 a time. There are no other pitches locally of the correct size for the team or that have floodlights. It was acknowledged it is a brilliant facility that they want to use but that the costs are not sustainable. J Tunney and K Cain agreed they will go back to the West Committee and contacts to discuss.
9. **Thrive Hub Model Changes:** The parent who had asked for this to be discussed was not in attendance so the matter will be taken forward to the next meeting.
10. **AOCB**
 - i. **Listening to pupils:** Positive feedback was given that students / parents felt that the pupil voice is being heard and taken into account.
 - ii. **Music Session:** EM Hall thanked the music department for arranging the opportunity for students to participate in gigs at a music session at the Quay in East Kilbride – feedback that this was a very positive experience.

- iii. **Holiday “wind down”:** Discussion was had about the students finishing up early and that this has become an expectation and requires a culture change. The school continues to provide a variety of activities to avoid the holiday wind down and feedback from the school is that they do have quite high attendance as approaching Christmas. Suggestion of a communication out to parents that it is an expectation that pupils attended and they will miss materials and teaching if they do not.

11. Dates of next meeting:

Tuesday 30th January 2024 @ 7pm – To be amended due to clash with hosting Holocaust Memorial Event. This meeting will be virtual and held on 6th February 7pm

Tuesday 19th March 2024 @ 7pm

Tuesday 4th June 2024 @ 7pm