

Falkirk High School Parent Council Minutes

24th November 2020

Virtually at 1900 hrs

(1) Chair's Welcome & Apologies

N McEwen (Co-Chair), L Bennet (Co-Chair), B Watt (Treasurer), S Kelly (HT), JMacPherson (DHT), R Menzies (DHT), K Whittington (DHT), L Hepburn (Parent / Teacher rep) Cllr J Kerr, Cllr P Reid, E Strachan, S Krause; G McEwan, D Tinney, S Railey, H Jones, S Milner, P Sinclair, M Murray, H Simpson, F Shearer, A Davidson, L Marshall, L Bradbury, A Gold, S Harrison, D Leonard, D Duff, J King, V Campbell, T Bell, K Thomson, G Struthers, E Tsurtsumia, S Keen, K Hunter; H Morrison, P Sinclair.

Apologies: Cllr J Patrick, Cllr L Bennie, T Brown

(2) Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

Minutes approved

(3) Headteacher's 7-minute Briefing

HT summarised briefing infographic.

Questions on briefing

- Discussion of 'Connected Falkirk'. Confirmed that all pupils will receive a new generation iPad. Each iPad user will get their own ID to access network. No definitive dates for pupil roll-out, but February expected to be latest time. Pupils and parents will get support to use them appropriately.
- Discussion of experiences of pupil support during self-isolation. HT confirmed that there is agreement now with Union over live interaction with teachers, to enable pupils at home to participate. Recognition that some work still needed to ensure this is rolled out appropriately. KW working hard with staff to ensure shared understanding of what this entails. HT suggested contacting Heads of House if pupils are not receiving communication or work from classes. On parent suggestion of buddying/mentoring scheme to support digital teaching – HT confirmed this is ongoing.
- On parent request to reaffirm to teachers that satchel one is where to provide updates and Teams is where work is hosted. Parent/Teacher rep spoke of efforts and commitment of staff when confronting task of moving into virtual world.
- Councillor Kerr offered to take up issue of the absence (since August) of a school police officer.

(4) Communication:

Reaching Parents

- Parent Council suggest emailing 7-minute briefing to all parents, with note that this was provided to PC and invitation to get involved.
- Request to update parent council section of website. HT agreed to provide contact for updating parent council section of website. HJ to share Twitter account.

Communicating Learning

- Parent asked about information about how information is made available for each course, topics to be covered, textbooks/handbooks, tests, etc, with suggestion of a systematic approach to using Teams, to avoid current guddle and make it easier for kids to navigate.
- HT acknowledged inconsistency between teacher approaches, agreed to have a look at this with faculty heads. File structure, etc to be part of digital training, to ensure material is accessible and has a common approach. HT also agreed to raise issue of broader communication of course content and topics with Faculty heads. Parents noted usefulness of Satchel One as a way of learning about upcoming deadlines/study commitments.
- Two parents volunteered to join communication group: Susanne Harrison and Pam Sinclair. (From webex chat - Tammy Bell and Andrea Davidson would be interested in engagement group too).
- HT update on pilot of virtual parent evening. Now approved by Falkirk Council. Pilot expected in January, with roll-out thereafter for one-to-one virtual parent-teacher meetings.

(5) Fund-raising/Community building/Fun Activities

HT reported that school looking at a series of initiatives to rebuild identity of school with fun activities. Ideas coming from young people on how to mark Christmas, and to put fun back into school - discussed today at SMT. JMac provided update on 'classroom to care home initiative'. Plans to build on this - parents invited to nominate people in the community who would benefit from/welcome support packages from pupils. Pupil junior management exploring these issues. HT welcomed offer of Parent Council involvement in fund-raising activities.

(6) AGM

Treasurer's Financial Report/200 Club Update

- Accounts reports and confirmed. Bryan to submit to Falkirk Council
- Agreement to try to move 200 club to digital format – LM to liaise with KH

Annual Report.

- Noted there was no Annual report this year, given exceptional circumstances and recent change of chair

Confirmation/nomination of office-holders:

- Co-Chairs: Lyn Bennet/Nicola McEwen to remain co-chairs– Bryan confirmed, Pam seconded
- Vice-Chair: Pam Sinclair and Andrea Davidson volunteered to share this role
- Treasurer: Bryan Watt – confirmed (though note this is his last year – suggestion that someone shadow him in the role. No volunteers yet)
- 200 Club: Karen Hunter – confirmed.

(7) AOCB

Prelims – scheduling and content

HT shared parent concerns about preparation for prelims. Noted virtual supported study available for senior pupils. Confirmed senior prelim diet to take place in January. Some practical subjects might do prelim-type activities in December, but not as part of formal prelims. December prelims would be too soon to allow students to show full potential. Gathering evidence for SQA has changed significantly this year, because of cancellation of Nat 5s. So, no prelims for Nat 5s, though subjects might do some exam-type activities. No decisions will be taken on a young person's grade in January. Exam timetables to be issued in December. Part of purpose of prelim is to experience exam revision/stress of exams. SQA has yet to confirm when estimates are to be submitted, and other clarifications, including exam conditions. RM to deliver SQA assembly for young people once information is available.

Coats/Cold classrooms:

Risk assessment makes clear that classroom windows should be open only for 10 mins at start and end of lesson. Static extraction system allows for ventilation all the time. Pupils (including prefects) are permitted to wear coats in class. Falkirk Council has permitted increase in heating by 2 degrees.

Online tool – e-sgoil study support group.

Education Scotland providing a supported study programme, so only running after school. FHS is offering their own supported study programme, and not yet convinced of quality of content of e-sgoil programme but are looking into it. Pilots running in BGE. KW suggests feedback is mixed.

Additional issues:

- Parent asked about shake-up of form class. KW gave update on focus group review of PEP.
- Parent raised issue about litter. HT updated on efforts to try to minimise litter. Longer-term piece of work through eco group, etc. Noted added challenge created by absence of school police officer.

- Parent raised potential for confusion from track and trace letters from NHS when siblings at school. HT confirmed awareness of the issue, but no control over those communications. In talks with local authority to ensure clarity.

Thanks:

Parents wished to put on record their appreciation and thanks to the SMT and the wider teaching team for their efforts in teaching the children and keeping them safe during these challenging times, recognise that staff are having to juggle health protection, built environment, new teaching technology alongside their usual commitment to teaching.

(8) Date of Next Meeting

23 February 2021 – changed date due to Online Parent Evening Dates.