



FORRES ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday 19th September 2020
6.30pm in Room B1, Forres Academy

Minutes of Meeting

| | Agenda Item | Action |
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| 1. | Welcome from Chair | |
| 2. | <p>Present Norma Matheson (Chair) NM Jan Sinclair (Head Teacher) JS Lesley Coutts (Parent) LC Claire Feaver (Councillor) CF Lorna Creswell (Councillor) LCr Jill McGhee (Website Admin) JM - minute taker.</p> <p>Apologies Mhairi Donald (Treasurer), Alison Reilly, Kevin Skivington, Siobhan Evans</p> | |
| 3. | <p>Minutes of previous meeting: Approved.</p> | |
| 4. | <p>Matters arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flowers for Ann Rossiter Anne's flowers were well received, special thanks to Alison Reilly for organising this. • S4-S6 Subject Choices Discussion around feedback from parents that choice columns were too restrictive. Claire Feaver said she had received quite a lot of feedback from parents to the effect that they found the forms difficult to complete and columns for choices to be restrictive. Jan Sinclair said that she had conferred with teachers with regard to how the current year choices compared to previous years and was advised that, if anything, they were simpler and more straight-forward than previous years. She also said that the Academy had run an information evening for parents and students on the S4-S6 Subject Choices to help inform them about all of the choices and options for students. Jan urged Claire to tell any parents with concerns | |



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| | <p>or queries about the choices to get in touch with the Academy. Claire assured her that she had done that. Jan explained that part of the reasoning behind which subjects were made available was that, on principle, she had chosen courses that guaranteed continued progression outside the Academy, in the form of either an academic qualification or a work placement opportunity.</p> <p>Norma Matheson related that in a previous year her son had been encouraged to make a choice, even though there was nothing he was particularly interested in to choose from. He chose a subject that proved to require high level of homework, which impacted his other preferred Highers. It wasn't until she intervened and spoke to the Guidance Officer about the situation that she was told about a work placement alternative. Her son subsequently decided to take advantage of the work placement and is now much happier as the work placement is relevant to his career aspirations. Norma said she was a bit disappointed that he wasn't offered the work placement initially and that he had "wasted" several months doing a subject he wasn't interested in.</p> <p>In response, Jan Sinclair made the point that students are encouraged to always select a subject as a "back-up" rather than relying on a work placement. This is because work placements can sometimes "fall down". She explained that to offer a work placement, a business or individual must pass Health and Safety rules/inspection, and they must keep a log of the student's progress and achievements in line with SQA requirements. Jan said that with the choices, the scenario the school tried at all times to avoid is "dead time" in the student's timetable – so, if a student had to choose a subject that they are not particularly interested in, it is better than doing nothing at all.</p> <p>Claire Feaver said that she had been impressed by the interest and support shown by local employers with regard to providing work placements. She said, however, that a repeated concern she'd heard voiced from employers was that literacy skills were sometimes not of the required level. Jan Sinclair responded by advising that all students are set targets and encouraged to attain the highest level they are capable of. She said that some students "slip through the net" in spite of best efforts by teachers and the school as a whole, but that there are still opportunities available to individuals to improve their literacy skills – she was aware that such courses are run locally by Moray College, for example.</p> | |



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| 5. | Treasurer's Report <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expenses: £59, comprising:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ £15 - Parent Council website domain renewal○ £44 - Flowers for Anne Rossiter• Balance: £1,914.01 | |
| 6. | Subgroups <p>Norma Matheson gave a report on a meeting held a week earlier to discuss what subgroups would be formed to extend the work of the Parent Council. Subgroup meetings are intended to be much more informal than the normal Parent Council meetings and provide an opportunity and forum for parents and carers with particular skills who would like to offer those skills in support of the students at Forres Academy. The subgroups that had been determined were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cost of the school day – Norma said that this would be a new sub group to focus on mitigating hardship. Jan's report highlighted a number of steps being taken to help reduce pressure on families. Cost of the School Day toolkit provides advice on what parent councils can be doing in this area. It is important that parent councils represent the voice of parents and that mitigation plans involve consultation with parents. It was discussed that the parent drop-in meeting in the Hub (Wednesdays at 2pm) could be an opportunity to speak to parents. Norma said she was going to try attend a meeting and encouraged other members of the parent council to go if they could fit it in. Jan remarked that the parent group at the Hub was being well attended.• Communications – it was discussed that the name “Parent Council” might be a little officious and off-putting to parents who might otherwise want to be engaged and supportive. Norma said that the Lossiemouth Parent Council had decided to change their name to “Parent Partnership” to this end, and perhaps the Forres Academy Parent Council might want to consider making such a change. Additionally, the current communication methods of the website, social media and email need to be reviewed for effectiveness. For the purposes of subgroups, it was suggested that a Whatsapp group might be more conducive to informing and engaging group members. This had worked well for the 50th Anniversary organisation subgroup previously.• Fundraising – needs review of current methods and refresh of scope/ideas. | |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sport / Extracurricular – It was thought that Siobhan had led this group in the past. As Siobhan wasn't present it was decided to leave discussion for next meeting.• Others – Jan said she is happy for the Parent Council to promote their purpose and raise awareness of the subgroups at the next Parents' Evening held by the Academy. | |
| 7. | <p>Head Teacher's Report Everyone was very appreciative of the Head Teacher's report which had been circulated to the Parent Council members. The report will be made available on the Parent Council website. Jan Sinclair said there were two points from her report that she was particularly pleased about and she elaborated on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• She had received a number of applicants for the Biology/Chemistry and Science teacher vacancies, all of which were of a very good standard.• She was pleased that two senior groups, who had worked tirelessly and organised numerous events for the school, have been successful in reaching the finals of the Moray Young Citizens Awards. They will be attending the presentations which will include a dinner at the Mansfield Hotel in Elgin. | |
| 8. | <p>Events 29th Jan - Connect (national parent council organisation) - Alison and Norma attended 30th Jan - Big Parents Meeting - no one attended from parent council 13th Feb - Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) - Jan and Norma attended May - Parent Forum (parent councils in Moray) - date and venue still to be confirmed</p> | |
| 9. | <p>Any Other Business (AOB) Norma Matheson advised the meeting that she had received an email from Pipes & Drums, requesting Parent Council to nominate one of its' members to be a contact for "championing" the cause within the school and to parents. As far as everyone understood, Kathleen Robertson had volunteered for this purpose. Jan Sinclair told the meeting that a School Pastor had started at the school in January. The concept of a School Pastor had been introduced successfully at Elgin Academy some time ago, with the purpose of providing additional level of support for young</p> | |



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| | people. Volunteers for the role are usually from local churches. There is a meeting next Tuesday, 25 th February, at the Forres Baptist Church to discuss the role of a School Pastor, anyone is welcome to attend this meeting. The role is not an avenue for religion, it is to provide support based on simple Christian principles. | |
| 10. | Date of Next Meeting: Monday 20 th April. | |