

Minutes of St Joseph's College Parent Council meeting held on Tuesday 6 September 2022 at 1900 virtually by Zoom

Present

Mel McGill (Chair), Bernadette Jones (Headteacher), Linda Nosratzadeh, Fiona Mitchell, Kenny Pullen, Fiona Purdie, Claire Renton, Gail Stewart, Rebecca Topping.

Apologies

Barbara Chierici-Black, Tommy Crombie, Thalakunte Muniraju, Jenifer Palinor, Fiona Seton, David Stainthorpe, Keith Walters.

Lynn Mitra has left the Parent Council as she has moved to another area. The Parent Council thanked Lynn for her lengthy service to the Parent Council, during the time her 4 children were pupils in the school and wished the family well in their new life.

Tracey Boyd, parent of a new pupil, was welcomed to the meeting.

Welcome & Housekeeping

M McGill welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanking them for attending. In terms of housekeeping, she requested that microphones remained muted unless individuals were speaking.

Previous Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Matters Arising

An action from last Minutes is that a survey of parents/ carers will be carried out regarding the format of future meetings. Since the start of the Covid-19 issues, meetings have been held via Zoom, previously these had been held in person within the school.

Consensus among the Parent Council members is that meetings should continue by Zoom at present, however all parents and carers will be surveyed via electronic means to gauge wider opinion on the best option for holding meetings. B Jones stated that while she understood the benefit of Zoom-based meetings for convenience and in attracting a wider number of the Parent/ Carer community to attend, she believed that some in-person meeting would be beneficial in terms of face-to-face contact. F Purdie agreed that face-to-face contact was preferable.

Headteacher's Report

B Jones reported that with the new S1 intake being 198 the school now has a roll of 940 pupils.

In-person Parent/Carer Evenings will commence again this session. The Senior Management Team however are also investigating alternative methods for arranging appointments with Parents.

Staffing

Four teachers retired at the end of last session: Mr McGee – Depute, Ms Brown – Principal Teacher Pastoral Care; Mrs Hutchison and Mrs Fritchley-Simpson – both Maths. Mr Kelvin Butler joins the school as Depute Headteacher having been redeployed from Stranraer Academy. He is currently on a phased return to work but will be in school full-time from week commencing 12 September.

A number of new staff have joined the school:

- Lesley Miller - History
- Danielle Johnstone - English
- Barbara Haining and Carol Cannon - Maths
- Eoghan Malone - Computing
- Susan Starkey - Art

Further new starts will join the school in coming weeks:

- Donna Kirk replacing Rebecca Morton in Chemistry
- Ian Herd replacing Darius Sadaat in Music
- Genna Parker replacing Amanda Brown in Pastoral Care and also teaching PE

Other staffing changes include:

- Suzanne Stoppard has been appointed as acting PT Religious Education covering for Kirsty Hayes; absent through ill health.
- Adam MacKellar will continue to act as PT for Science and Technology covering for Julie MacGregor. Mrs MacGregor will be returning to school week commencing 12 September (phased return).

B Jones acknowledged that it would take time for the new staff to settle into the school community but also that they would bring with them new and varied experience.

Supporting Attainment & Achievement

- S6 pupils will attend the annual UCAS (University and College Admissions) Exhibition on Thursday 8 September 2022 at Easterbrook Hall.
- The Rural Skills class won 3rd prize in a local community floral competition.
- Niamh Muir (S5)– has been selected to play for the Scotland Women’s Cricket team. Rosy Ryan Past Pupil and School Captain is now managing this team.

Presentation of Pre-Appeal Exam Results

Mrs Jones provided a summary report on this session’s SQA exam results.

Brief Comments

S4: Level 5 (including National 5 qualifications)

Although lower than during the Covid pandemic when an Alternative Certification Model was used, attainment for those achieving 5 or more Level % Qualifications is 2% higher than the previous exam-based results. Fifteen pupils achieved straight A’s in 7 or more subjects.

S5/6: Higher (Level 6)

The performance of St. Joseph’s College pupils in all standard National comparisons was better than the Authority average.

There are many Networkers from the Burgh schools who studied a subject or subjects at St. Joseph’s College, however their results are recorded with their base school.

S6: Advanced Highers (level 7)

Having this level of qualification is beneficial for pupils as it is a good stepping stone on to University level courses. More English-based pupils, with A levels, are now applying to Scottish Universities and some universities look at comparisons between and Advanced Highers.

Appeals Process

This year saw a change to the Appeals process as a consequence of the impact of the pandemic. Pupils could apply directly to the SQA to appeal their grade if the Grade they were awarded was lower than that estimated by their teacher and submitted to the SQA earlier in the session.

B Jones informed the Parent Council that a large number of appeals have been submitted at National 5 Level, a considerable number at Higher and fewer, but a significant number at Advanced Higher. She also stated that a significant number of pupils achieved above their estimated grades.

The SQA announced that following the issue of results in August they are likely to handle around 22,000 appeals, where actual grades were lower than those estimated. The school has already sent away the priority appeals, and the first set of general appeals (Higher and Advanced Higher) will be sent tomorrow (7 September), followed by those for National 5 on 12 September. Those pupils who require early notification of their appeal for university purposes, including those for pupils applying for certain courses this session, will be dealt with first. It is expected that other appeals will not result until the end of October at the earliest. B Jones stated that since some staff at the SQA are going on strike, the appeal process may take longer than originally anticipated. She also indicated that where a child made a direct appeal to SQA, as was their right, teachers have collated the relevant evidence, and this will be forwarded by the school.

M McGill thanked B Jones for her report and stated that the overriding message is that pupils have been successful. Congratulations to them and thanks to staff for their support through this process.

School Calendar

B Jones stated that the dates for the Parent Council Meeting for this session have been added and, as with this year they will be on different nights of the week. The AGM will be on Tuesday 4 October 2022. It was decided that the calendar dates will be shared with the Minutes and the provisional dates agreed at the AGM.

Treasurer's Report

L Nosratzadeh reported that the accounts for 2021-22 have been audited and are with the Authority. The funding for next year should be received shortly.

The current balance of the Parent Council account is £305.40. The Zoom Subscription, to enable online meetings to take place and the Clerk fees have also been paid. There are no other outstanding payments to date.

M McGill clarified for new parents that the Parent Council does not raise funds for the school and that this role is carried out by the PFA. Currently the PFA funds stand at £6513.36. Funding methods include 'The 100 Club' which is a very good fundraiser. All PFA monies are given back to the school for a variety of purposes. Recently donations have been made to the school to help purchase aprons for HE, sports uniforms, contributions to laser cutter and Kindle Fires.

AOCB

There were a number of points raised by M McGill on behalf of parents.

- M McGill asked about reports of fights among junior pupils at the start of term. B Jones reported that the incident had been dealt with and the School Liaison Police Officer had spoken to the pupils involved. She also stated that a number of staff had reported that the new S1s were settling in to the school well.
- She asked if there was to be a review of the school capacity considering the growing pupil numbers. B Jones indicated that she had been told that the capacity is 1080. Should there be another very large intake next session, this would breach this. She also stated, that as things stand there is not much spare capacity with regards to accommodation but for pupils in the senior school there are places for study, including the Library and Study Booths.
- B Jones was also asked why years groups are still separated at break and lunch time post Covid regulations. She explained that this was to make the best use of the school grounds. B Jones went onto explain that to ease congestion in corridors after break and lunch time S3-S6 should come into school through the door nearest the teaching area they were going to. When moving between periods pupils should follow the agreed 'Keep Left' system. She acknowledged that some children do find the corridors busy and have permission to move either earlier or later to avoid crowds.
- A question was raised about the efficiency of the new Fusion App. It was generally agreed that the App, used to order food from the Dining Hall is working well, making it easier for the Kitchen staff to organise lunch for large numbers of pupils quickly. The majority of junior pupils, who have school food are using this. It is also useful for those entitled to Free School meals, as money is allocated to it directly. However it was noted that every child does not always get the correct order. On occasion due to unexpected change in supplies, something offered on the App is not available. This can cause frustration for the pupil if something else they were not expecting is substituted in. B Jones stated she was happy to speak to the Catering Manager about this, indicating that he is always available and willing to sort issues where these arise to ensure a child's specific needs are met. B Jones went on to explain that the system is new,

therefore any feedback from parents was welcome, so that any improvements required could be addressed.

- M McGill reported that there was currently less communication via the school's Social Media sites than previously. B Jones explained that this is due to the Depute transition and Mr Butler will take this over once he is in the school full-time. Mr McGee has set up Satchel One for S1. Pupils will be linked to their siblings to save parent getting more than one message. Parents/Carers would receive their codes to link to the system within the next 2 weeks.
- B Jones was asked if pupils had been made aware of their Pastoral Care Teacher and House group. She explained that most pupils should know who their Pastoral Care Teacher is. However Pastoral Care Teachers for Stewart House, replacing Ms Brown will join the school soon and this may have led to some confusion among the new pupils in Stewart House.
- M McGill asked if 'period products' were still freely available within school. B Jones stated that they were available and were regularly replenished by the Facility Assistants. As well as in toilets designated for females, these could be found in the PE department changing rooms.

The meeting closed at 2041. M McGill thanked everyone for their attendance and input.

The next meeting will be the AGM, held on Tuesday 4 October 2022 at 7.15 pm via Zoom.

Additional Information

Proposed Calendar of Meeting for Next Session

Meeting Venue to be decided at AGM

- AGM Tuesday 4 October 2022 – **Starting at 1915 to accommodate a National Skills Development Scotland Parent Webinar. This will be online via Zoom.**
- Thursday 24 November 2022 at 1900
- Wednesday 16 March 2023 at 1900
- Tuesday 9 May 2023 at 1900

Parent Council Members 2021-22

Co-opted Members

Church Representative	Fr Donnelly (appointed by the Bishop)
School Representative	F Purdie
Co-Opted Member	To be decided
PFA Representative	L Nosratzadeh

Parent Council Members

- B Chierici-Black
- M McGill *
- F Mitchell
- F Purdie (School Co-opted member)
- F Seton *
- G Stewart *
- K Walters *
- T Crombie *
- L Nosratzadeh
- C Renton*
- D Stainthorpe
- R Topping
- T Muniraju *

*due to step down this year but to be put forward for a further 2-year term.

There can be up to 14 Parent Council ordinary members – who have voting rights on decisions made. Any parent/carer is welcome to attend a meeting and participate in discussions.

Current Office Bearers

Chair	M McGill
Vice Chair	C Renton
Treasurer	L Nosratzadeh
Clerk	A Brown

