

Minutes of the St Joseph's College Parent Council meeting held on Wednesday 18 September at 1830 in the school Library

Present

Claire Renton (Chair), Bernadette Jones (Headteacher), Jennifer Challinor, Fiona Purdie, Rebecca Topping, Amanda Brown (Clerk)

Apologies

Kenny Pullen, Shirley Kwok, David Stainhope, Alexandra and Keith Walters

In attendance: Deborah Adedoyin Okediji, Joanne Pullen, John Magill, Gary Peacock and Laura Gibson

Welcome and Prayer

C Renton warmly welcomed everyone, including those parents attending for the first time to the Parent Council of this session. She informed those present that although unable to attend this evening, T Crombie, K Walters and D Stainthorpe had all expressed an interest in continuing to support the PFA/Parent Council. After introductions from everyone, B Jones said a prayer.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

C Renton has signed these off as a true record of the previous meeting and any points of action where included in the agenda.

Headteacher's Report

B Jones started her report by informing the Parent Council that the school roll currently sits at 897 pupils with 122 new S1 pupils having joined this session.

Information Evenings

The following information evenings have taken place – all very well attended:

- S1 Information Evening to help support parents understand the various technologies used within the school to support pupil learning, communication and engagement.
- S6 Information Evening to support the year group in their transition from school to either employment, HE or FE. While there was a focus on university/ college

applications and funding, the range of career and employment pathways open to pupils was explored.

C Renton stated that she felt the information was heavily focused on university applications and that perhaps the information relating to the other paths could have been delivered earlier in the evening. She also stated that more information would have been beneficial on how reasonable adjustments to SQA assessments are considered and processed. B Jones agreed this and an additional slide would be included to cover reasonable adjustments and the SDS element of the S6 event would be included earlier in the evening.

- P7 Information Evening to enable current P7 pupils to look around the school took place on Tuesday evening (16 September). This evening has taken place earlier than previously to allow pupil choice of secondary school to be made in October so pupils can start their transition process in their selected school from January 2026. C Renton stated that it was good to see so many pupils at the P7 evening, and she felt it was beneficial to be able to speak at this event.

In addition to the above there will be an S4/5 Information Evening, and an S1 Welcome Mass and Evening, both to be held before the October holiday. C Renton requested the opportunity to speak at the S1 event. B Jones agreed this would be a useful contribution.

In a follow up question D Okediji asked when pupils start working towards the apprenticeship pathways. B Jones explained this route starts from S4 through courses completed in conjunction with Dumfries and Galloway College. J Magill went on to explain further how the Modern Apprenticeship approach works; including what the different colleges in the region offer as well as how parents and young people access this approach. He stated that the Skills Development Scotland (SDS) website is also very good in signposting pupils and their parents/carers to the apprenticeship opportunities in the area. B Jones explained that the Career Advisor within the school is also available to provide support to pupils and parents.

B Jones went on to state, in this week promoting the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework, A Belille-Sharp (Depute) has produced a video to explain its function. This will be made available to parents through the school's social media.

School Trips

The following school trips have/will be taking place this term.

- History trip to Warsaw and Auschwitz – new trip and very well received.
- Geography trip to Iceland.
- Marist Leadership programme L'Hermitage, Lyon, France.
- The Ski Trip will take place at the start of the new year.

C Renton expressed thanks for the range of trips and J Challinor expressed thanks for the staff who supported these events. B Jones confirmed that the planning for the next batch of trips was already underway.

Staffing

- V MacRae has been appointed to the role of PT RE. Her previous role of PT Pupil Support will now be advertised.
- Miss N Gibson and Mr F McDougall have been appointed to temporary posts in Science to cover maternity leaves.
- B Fell – has been appointed to a temporary position in HE to replace T Chalk who retired in May.
- S Lundy – has been appointed to a temporary post in English to cover maternity leave.

Achievement

The school has successfully achieved the following awards:

- The Digital School's Award and in addition to this a Digital Wellbeing Award has been given due to the school's efforts in promoting cyber resilience and internet safety.
- The UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Silver Award. The school is now working towards the Gold Award.

Additionally, the school's netball, football, hockey and rugby teams have been participating in the early season games across the region.

Treasurer's Report

In S Shek's absence A Brown provided a brief report.

The Parent Council account balance last May was £163.01. Following payments to the Clerk and for bank charges at £4.25 each month, the current balance stands at £90.26.

A Stores and R Topping have been added as signatories to the bank account.

The application for this year's funds has been submitted. However, the AGM minutes and the Constitution need to be submitted before this will be processed by the Authority.

Action: Given that bank charges are a continuing issue C Renton was keen to receive the review from L Nosratzadeh (PFA) and S Shek (Parent Council) of possible alternative banks with the view of moving to one that offers a cheaper service which was discussed at the last meeting.

PFA Update

C Renton explained that since K Walters is unwell no update was available, he is still looking into the possibility of running the PFA under the umbrella of the Parent Council. It was agreed that the PFA is needed and provides valuable support in the school in terms of assistance at events and in running the 100 Club which, as a fundraiser, has helped provide several items for the school over the years. L Nosratzadeh was kindly still providing support, noting the annual fee was now £24.

During the next few months PFA support would be beneficial at Information Evenings, the Christmas Market and the Carol Service. In the current absence of K Walters, B Jones suggested that S McCaughey might be able to manage the support at these events.

C Renton asked for help from the group to support the PFA and 100 Club, no one offered to provide help. D Stainhorpe had offered help and connections would be made.

Action: C Renton asked that a Groupcall message go out to parents requesting support for the PFA and to advertise the 100 Club. C Renton asked for forms to be available to handout for the S1 Welcome Evening.

C Renton offered her support to work with S6 to provide refreshments for the S1 information evening.

Facebook page

C Renton explained that the Parent Council does not currently have a Facebook page. It had been set up by previous Chair M McGill and since her account has been deactivated, the Parent Council one has been deactivated too. Currently together with the school, the Parent Council is looking at an alternative way of having a Facebook page. B Jones suggested that in the meantime, any pertinent information might be put out through the school's Facebook page and Group Call. J Challinor suggested that Connect (Parent Council advice website) might be able to provide support with this.

C Renton requested support from the group to try and resolve this as it was an important medium to communicate with the parent forum.

Action: C Renton asked for support to try and find a resolution for communicating with the parent forum.

SQA Exam Results, including Support for Parents

The school had explained the post exam result support available to pupils within the school. However, C Renton, raised that there had been no communication to parents around support from the school on the day of the exams. She suggested that communication should be available to Parents/Carers too. B Jones explained that on the day the results were released Senior managers and teachers were available in school to help assist with any post – exam result issues. As the results are issued during the school holiday it may be helpful to provide more detailed information to parents/ carers as to when staff will be available to provide any necessary post – results support. Due partially to storm Floris, a few pupils did not receive their results by post in the expected timescale.

Feedback on the School's Results

B Jones explained that the results for 2025 exceeded the Authority average in all standard benchmarks.

With regard to appeals B Jones explained that the one priority appeal submitted had been unsuccessful. A further 217 appeals have been submitted by the school along with 37 submitted direct by students. The results of these appeals are due to be in school by 2/3 October and pupils will be informed as soon as possible thereafter of the results.

B Jones then explained that a period of robust analysis and evaluation of results is currently taking place from teacher to Authority level to help ensure continued high quality in the teaching, learning and assessment of pupils. She went on to state that raising attainment and closing the poverty related gap remains a main priority. In this regard the school continues to focus on pupil attendance and supporting those pupils who may be disadvantaged using the Insight Data to help highlight successes and areas for improvement. Additionally, Rights Respecting schools work; use of Digital Technology to enhance teaching and learning; Tracking, Monitoring and Reporting and Personal Support for Pupils all remain priorities for the school.

With reference to the 15-minute additional period B Jones was asked if this was proving useful. She stated that most classes are with the same Tutor every day and that this enables pupils to have a wellbeing check in. This short period is used for a variety of purposes e.g. the school is currently looking at using some of this time to deliver the Heart Save programme. J Pullen stated that NWCC had done this last session with great success.

Policy Updates

Digital Policy

C Renton asked about the progress being made towards the Mobile Phone and Digital Devices Policy and in particular, the questions to form the consultation to Parents and Carers. B Jones explained that the school's Digital Working Group had produced draft questionnaires for staff, pupils and parents/carers. She then distributed the Parent/

carer one for feedback. There was some initial feedback; including too many closed questions that might not provide rich information which might be useful. It was also suggested that an open question on how parents/carers feel about mobile devices and their impact on young people should be included.

It was agreed that Parent Council members would have a week to review both the Parent/Carer and Pupil questionnaires, sending in any feedback to Mrs Jones by Friday 26 September. To ensure this happened B Jones was to send the policy, draft parent questions and student questions to be shared in advance of the return date. Once the final questionnaires have been drawn up, the Parent/Carer one will be distributed along with the school policy to gather parental views on it.

School Improvement Plan

C Renton the SIP and B Jones stated that this will be made available later this month to parents.

Transport

C Renton asked if there were any concerns in relation to the new transport arrangements. She cited issues with a bus in the lay-by outside the school. (Aldermanhill Road). B Jones explained that the lay-by is a bus bay and therefore buses have the right to use it. Aware that parents collect their children from this area, she agreed to seek clarity regarding the designation of the bus bay and inform parents.

B Jones also advised she would be stopping pick up from school gate (Craigs Road) and would be communicating to parents around this item.

School Trips

B Jones stated that in addition to the already planned trips, these are also being considered:

- S1 London Trip
- S2 Paris Trip
- Senior school Rome trip
- New York Trip
- A Generation Hope (Outdoor activities) Trip

Information will be sent to parents/ carers as soon as details are finalised.

C Renton asked if the school trips already run would do so again next session. B Jones explained that she hoped trips would run again but since staff volunteer to run these/ participate in trips, it very much depends on staff willingness to undertake these demanding additional duties. C Renton agreed they were very beneficial and on behalf of the Parent Council thanked staff for their on-going support of trips as being able to participate was a fantastic help in providing an enhanced educational experience for pupils.

D Okediji asked if there was any issue with foreign nationals going on school trips abroad. B Jones backed by F Purdie explained that several foreign nationals had already been on trips without there being an issue. She stated that there are additional forms to complete and possibly a VISA needed depending on the country being visited. While the onus is on the parent to make sure they have the correct documentation in place prior to the trip, the school could provide some support with this.

L Gibson also offered thanks to the school for its phenomenal provision for those S2 pupils who chose not to go on the Paris trip.

Focus and Intentions for the Session 2025-26

C Renton asked if members could consider what the Parent Council should focus on in 25/26 for discussion at the next meeting.

Future of PFA and 100 Club

See earlier note. L Nosratzadeh, K Walters, S McCaughey and D Stainthorpe to agree the way forward for the PFA and 100 Club.

AOCB

C Renton asked if the school had settled into the new day. B Jones indicated that while in general there were few issues, a number of staff preferred the previous arrangement with a longer break and shorter lunch time. She also stated that the later finish has meant that a few pupils find it challenging to catch their bus home. The Authority together with schools is working with Bus providers to try to improve this.

B Jones stated that regarding the overall Education Budget – approximately £21 million savings over the next 3 years will be required which would have a knock effect on staffing and the size of the Council's school's estate especially since pupil numbers are dropping across the region.

J Magill queried the showing of a particular film to a class at the end of term. B Jones stated she would investigate this. He also asked what safeguarding has been put in place following social media information around the death of Charlie Kirk in America.

B Jones explained that the pupils had been spoken to during Assemblies and had been advised they should speak to their Pastoral Care teacher should they have concerns or feel distressed. Additionally, Internet Safety has been taught within Social Education and ICT classes.

J Challinor, referring to the Restart a Heart programme, asked if the school has a defibrillator. B Jones explained that the school was fortunate to have 3 on site and staff have received training on how to use these.

There was no other business and the meeting closed at 2020.

C Renton thanked everyone for attending and for their contributions.

The next meeting will be the **AGM held on Tuesday 7 October 2025 at 6.30pm followed immediately by an Ordinary Meeting.**

Further meetings will be held on: **Tuesday 25 November 2025, Wednesday 21 January 2026 and Thursday 7 May 2026.**

