

Minutes of the Parent Council Meeting held on Wednesday 7 May at 1830 in the Library of St Joseph's College

Present

Claire Renton (Chair), Bernadette Jones (Headteacher), Jennifer Challinor, Tommy Crombie, Kenny Pullen, Fiona Purdie, Shirley Shek, David Stainthorpe, Keith Walters, Amanda Brown (Clerk).

Apologies

Gail Stewart, Alexandra Stores and Rebecca Topping.

In attendance:

Joanne Pullen, John Macgill

Welcome

C Renton welcomed everyone and thanked them for making the time and effort to attend the meeting. B Jones then offered a prayer for the success of the Conclave.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes were agreed as read. Any matters arising from these are included in the Agenda for the meeting.

Chair Report

Requirements for PVG

C Renton raised the issue of PVG requirements for any parent engaging with children in the school community. C Renton noted that she had attended the information evening with Vanessa Morris the previous evening. V Morris had sent to the school hard copies of the documentation, C Renton offered this around the Parent Council, but it was declined. There is a requirement for the parent council to have PVG submitted for 1 July 2025 for any parent who meets this requirement. It is currently stated that a PVG will be required for parents who have a regulated role with children that is either physical, written, verbal or could have undue influence over a child and there has been thinking around the Chair becoming PVG noted. C Renton noted that she did not have the capacity to undertake a PVG and was concerned about additional responsibilities. To clarify the position, if the Parent Council did not seek PVG, C Renton agreed to ask for legal advice from the Connect advice team and had asked for

contacts at Volunteer/Disclosure Scotland. However, since current parental involvement includes supporting at school led and controlled events and participating in school owned policy reviews, it was agreed by those present that in carrying out these duties, parents did not have responsibility for pupils nor had the opportunity to influence under the terms of the changes from Disclosure Scotland and therefore the Parent Council did not currently meet the need for PVG registration and would not seek this. Noting that no parent volunteered to undertake the disclosure process, it was also agreed that C Renton would make enquires at the next Regional Parent Council Forum to find out how other schools within the Authority are managing this.

Additional reporting requirements

C Renton explained that more is now being asked of Parent Councils in terms of reporting and recording to attract funding support from the local Authority. She stated that not having the administrative capacity, noting the secretary role was vacant; to handle the new requirements, the additional duties are also likely to be a barrier to parental involvement. D Stainthorpe suggested that this should be raised to DGC and indicated that if the Authority is now placing further administrative burdens on Parent Councils, they should provide more financial resources to pay for this.

Request to move AGM to June

This was placed as an Agenda item because, had it been agreed Parent Council members would need to be PVG checked, then it might be prudent to have the new Parent Council in place before the 1 July submission date for PVG checks. This move of agenda date was a request from DGC. Although not currently required, as agreed above (PVG requirements) there was a brief discussion about moving the AGM. Following this it was agreed to keep to the current timing of October, as this is currently working noting there would be no S1 or S6 parents in June of each year. D Stainthorpe stated that we had considered moving meetings to align with those of the Education Committee from the Local Authority. It was agreed in principle, if this could be done, it would be helpful.

C Renton advised the dates could be found on the DGC website but noted they would only be available up to December.

Succession Planning and Vote of Thanks to All Who are on Their Last Meeting

D Stainthorpe left the meeting early due to a family commitment. This was his final meeting as a parent. He together with G Stewart, T Crombie, L Nosratzadeh and K Walters will all resign after tonight's meeting as their children will leave school at the end of this session.

Both C Renton and B Jones offered grateful thanks to all for their long and constructive support of the Parent Council and PFA (K Walters and L Nosratzadeh), stating that it had been a pleasure to work with them during their years of involvement. T Crombie, having been a pupil, stated that he had enjoyed returning to the school community as parent and being involved in the Parent Council. K Walters likewise agreed that he had enjoyed his roles on both the Parent Council and PFA.

Note: all would be very welcome to come back onto the parent council as community representatives.

Feedback on Review of PC Activity Across the Region

C Renton suggested we revisit this agenda item at the September meeting due to the volume of activity on the agenda but acknowledged that our Parent Council is both active and visible, and as a group we support and communicate with parents through various approaches including Facebook to raise awareness of both Parent Council and school activities.

C Renton also noted the level of activity the school organised for our young people compared with other schools and thanked the school for this.

Feedback on S3 Study for Mocks Support and Pastoral Support Call

C Renton stated that the Study Support document provided to S3 pupils had been very useful. B Jones stated that this had been created by a team headed by Mrs Bellile-Sharp (DHT) and a review of its impact in supporting pupils would be carried out. C Renton also indicated that the 8-minute call from Pastoral Care staff to discuss the forthcoming S4 timetables for next session had been an excellent inclusion. B Jones stated that although this new approach was time consuming; by engaging with parents on this important topic it was time well spent and could serve some pupils more effectively in the longer term.

Head Teacher's Report

With great sadness B Jones started her report by announcing the death of Kirsty Hayes, PT for Religious Education who had lost her battle with cancer. Mrs Hayes had been a pupil at the school and a teacher in St. Joseph's College for over 24 years. Her funeral will take place on Wednesday 14 May at St Andrew's Church. The cortege will come to the school before going to the church. Pupils and staff will line Craigs Road as a mark of respect as the cortege passes. Members of staff and pupils will also be attending the funeral and arrangements have been made within the school to support this.

B Jones reported that SQA examinations have started and are running smoothly. The school is grateful to the invigilation team for their support during this period which is busy due to the very large number of pupils sitting a wide range of exams.

She also reported that the school is one of the first in the Authority to receive the UNICEF Silver: Rights Aware Status as part of the Rights Respecting Schools Award and is now working towards achieving the Gold status. The accreditation team who monitored the school's activities were very impressed with the work undertaken to date.

On 28 May there will be an S3 Celebration of Learning. Letters inviting parents/carers to this afternoon will be distributed by the end of the week.

Arrangements for the 150th Anniversary of the school are in progress. On 6 June there will be a Mass followed by a dinner in the evening. A football tournament involving other Marist schools will take place during the day and on 7 June the intention is to have a past pupils versus present pupils football match.

As part of his visit to the Diocese of Galloway, the Papal Nuncio will visit the school on 26 June 2025.

B Jones reported that she will attend the Catholic Secondary Headteachers' Conference on 15 May.

B Jones stated that the new timetable for session 2025/2026 will start on Monday 2 June. The timetable and structure of the day will be aligned across the Authority. The day will still start at 0850 and will end at 1520. It will include a 15-minute tutor period after morning break and classes will generally have the same tutor teacher for every tutor period. An implication of

the new day may be a bus transport issue for pupils travelling to the NewAbbey/Sandyhills areas. This is likely to be resolved when new bus contracts are drawn up for the start of the new session in August. The P7 Induction days are 25-27 June. Approximately 120 new S1 pupils will be joining the school community. There will be 7 practical and 5 non-practical classes to accommodate them.

The school show – Chicago (Teen Version) will run from 17-20 June. Preparations for this show are now well underway.

B Jones also reported that S3 Junior Prefects have been elected. They are currently carrying out a range of duties within the school. Some of the new prefects will be involved in the Funeral for Mrs Hayes and the VE Day memorial service at St John's Church.

J Magill asked if there would be a collection in memory of Mrs Hayes. B Jones explained that those pupils who would have known her best are currently on exam leave and rather than have a collection at this time, monies raised from a future non-uniform charity day will be donated to Ovarian Cancer Action in her memory.

C Renton asked if a notice about the funeral could be placed on the Parent Council Facebook page. B Jones asked if the announcement could be after the formal death notice was released in newspapers by the family. She also stated that the school would also put out a message through their social media once the information is released.

J Challinor asked if there is a space, where pupils who knew Mrs Hayes, could go should they need some personal time. B Jones stated that the Oratory and the Pastoral Care office are both available to pupils who might be experiencing sadness at this tragic loss.

Treasurer's Report

S Shek acknowledged the role L Nosratzadeh had played in updating and rationalising the accounting process that will help to reduce the bank charges. C Renton also offered thanks to Linda for efforts in her role as Treasurer. A Stores has agreed to be a third signatory along with C Renton and S Shek (post meeting R Topping agreed to be a 4th signatory).

Rationalisation of accounts to reduce charges

S Shek reported that charges for transactions were due to start in April. To date, there have been none. However, she is aware of some banks that might provide a better service for our account which has few transactions. Virgin Money was suggested as one possibility.

S Shek agreed to research other possible accounts and report back at the next meeting.

PFA Update

Changes to Constitution

Due to potential issues with Liability Insurance for the PFA when supporting the school at events and the likelihood of increased bank charges for transactions, J Challinor suggested that the PFA should be a sub-group of the Parent Council rather than an entity in its own right. If they are to become a sub-group then instead of a constitution, they would have a Terms of Reference which would form part of the Parent Council Constitution. K Walters agreed to check with the bank whether this change would pose any issues prior to any change being made. Noting there would still be required to be a separate lead for this activity if a subgroup of the parent council.

K Walters informed the Parent Council that the PFA met last month. C Renton asked if anything was being done to encourage new members, especially since he and L Nosratzadeh are leaving at the end of this session. K Walters stated that while there are parents who are willing to volunteer and support school activities such as Parent Evening and the School Show, few want to attend meetings. He has set up a WhatsApp group to request support at events and this is working well. He did however agree more needed to be done to try and promote the PFA. He stated that S McCaughey will be the only remaining member, and she is currently acting as Treasurer and running the main fund raiser – the 100 Club. K Walters is working on a clear exit strategy and would share this with the parent council.

In terms of funds, K Walters informed the Parent Council that the 100 Club currently has a balance of £1,967 and the main PFA account has £1,586. He stated there had been discussions at the last PFA meeting about raising the 100 Club fee to £18 per year and to there being one £50 prize each month. It is hoped that this bigger payment might encourage more support.

C Renton stated that to help raise awareness of the PFA and the fund raiser it could be promoted as the winner each month on the Facebook page. This was suggested at the

previous meeting, and it was agreed, to be a good idea. C Renton asked for names of winners to be given to her. She stated she would use only First name and initial in order for winners to retain some level of privacy. No-one had this information and to follow up with L Nosratzadeh when she returns from leave.

The group do a lot of good work in supporting the school raising funds, with Linda and Keith leaving and limited members there is concern around the future of this group and activity which is an important part of the school community.

School Trips Update

B Jones listed the school trips currently running this and next session:

- S1 London trip 42 pupils.
- S2 Paris – 119 pupils – There will be an alternative timetable for the remaining S2 pupils that will involve them having a day out in Carlisle.
- There will be trips to Iceland and Krakow (Auschwitz) in the Autumn.
- The Ski Trip to Italy taking 150 pupils will take place in January 2026.
- A trip to New York is currently in the pipeline. Letters will go to pupils about this trip soon. It is aimed at those who will be in the senior phase in the 2026-27 session.

It was acknowledged by C Renton and other parent council members that the trip information sessions have been excellent - both useful and informative.

B Jones was asked if the trips listed above would continue in future years. She stated that since they were linked to the curriculum it was likely that such trips would continue to run. She did state that the costs to the school in running these, in terms of bank charges had increased significantly due to the new banking rules and the number of instalment payments being made. It was generally agreed that parents should be made aware of this, as some might be able to make a one-off payment to help reduce the level of charges being accrued by the school. C Renton offered thanks to all staff who are involvement in trips, stating that they go above and beyond in supporting this valued extra provision.

School Policy Reviews

Digital Policy

B Jones stated that a Draft updated Mobile Device Policy is due to be sent to parents/ carers before the start of the new timetable. She stated that once it has been sent out a questionnaire will then be sent to parents/ carers to ascertain their views. Currently the school is carrying out work to meet the criteria for a Digital Schools Award.

C Renton asked is a summary sheet on the Digital Award could be distributed so that Parent Council members could see how the full digital picture connects under it.

With specific reference to the updated draft Mobile Device Policy, J Magill stated that he didn't believe that its development had taken on board requests from some parents. He indicated that he had 34 parents who wanted further consultation on it. In accordance with the constitution, he requested there be an extraordinary meeting to discuss the draft policy and the consultation around it.

C Renton thanked J Magill for raising this but stated that she has asked the Parent Council for someone to lead on organising a special meeting if requested, there were no volunteers (noting again there is no secretary in place currently) and there were limited financial resources to hold another meeting. T Crombie suggested parents could attend an ordinary meeting to discuss this. K Walters stated that constitutionally there was a right to an extraordinary meeting. C Renton noted this but without resource there was difficult. C Renton suggested the following: instead of another meeting at this time, the since the Policy in question was still in draft form, that the Parent Council should see the draft before it was distributed to the Parent/Carer body. By checking it, the Parent Council could then use this information to help inform their decisions about the questions that would form the policy review. This was agreed as a way forward. B Jones also assured the Parent Council that the results of the review would be shared and the findings from it, together with the views of other stakeholders would be used to form the final version of the policy. She also assured the Parent Council that within the draft policy, in its current format, is a statement declaring that should parents/ carers not wish their child to have a mobile phone at school alternative technology will be provided for them should they require to access technology as part of their learning.

The point was made again around including and consulting parents in the development of school policy.

Anti-Bullying Policy, Inclusion and Equality and Rights Respecting Schools

B Jones explained that work related to these areas has currently been streamlined and currently subsumed into work relating to the Rights Respecting Schools programme. The next step will be working towards achieving the Gold Standard. J Challinor agreed to support the work of this group.

Health and Well-being group

Rebecca Topping is the parent involved in the group, which is led by Mrs Read, PT Pastoral Care. This group primarily focuses on creating Health and Well-being opportunities in the school such as the Breakfast Club.

AOCB

T Crombie stated that he had looked into a range of potential cash raising ventures to support the school's 150 years celebration. Since the 150 years is something that can be celebrated for the whole year, it was suggested some of his ideas could be done throughout the year. His suggestions included:

- A 150th Anniversary Raffle – B Jones suggested this could be arranged in conjunction with the annual Christmas market. J Macgill volunteered a prize from his partner.
- Calendar - J Magill stated if given pictures, he could create this and include school holiday dates as well as the usual bank holidays.
- 150th Anniversary book - B Jones stated the former Headteacher: Mr Michael Taylor had written a book on the school called 'Blue and Gold' recounting the years up until 2000 but perhaps an additional one of the past 25 years could be created, should a potential author be found.
- A 150th year diary.
- A commemorative bottle of whiskey – possibly in conjunction with Annandale distillery – T Crombie stated he would be happy to try and source this.
- A review of current and past pupil contributions to sports/ academic achievements.
- A drone – aerial picture photographing pupils in the shape of the number 150.

T Crombie agreed to continue to work with the school around this over the next year.

It was also suggested to ask former pupil Lee Mead to compere/ host an event. B Jones stated that she would speak with the school's Events Committee about how some of the suggestions could be acted upon.

There was no other business and C Renton thanked everyone for their contribution.

The meeting closed at 2043.

The date of the next meeting and calendar of meetings has yet to be decided and will be sent out in due course. This was the last meeting for academic year 24/25 and C Renton wished everyone a wonderful summer when it comes.