

**Aboyne Academy Parent Council**  
**Minutes of Meeting – Monday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020**  
**online**  
**Attendees:**

<b>Office Bearers</b>	<b>Parent Council Members</b>
Rob Brooker (Chair)	Susan Nicoll
Sarah Leahy (Vice Chair)	Shauna Wright
Natasha Pawlukiewicz (Secretary)	Claire Drewitt
Julie Mitchell-Mehta (Treasurer)	Mette Cormack
	Charles Dunbar
Lorraine Scott (Head Teacher)	Mo Cormack
Michael Foy (Head Teacher)	Catherine Thomson
Barry Drennan (Depute Head Teacher)	
Ashley Easton (Guidance)	Ishbel Nunn Leonie Gordon Abigail Harris
	Fiona Walmsley

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Blackett and Cllr Gibb.

**2. Minutes and Actions from last meeting**

The minutes of 6<sup>th</sup> October were approved. Cost of School Day still to send out.

**3. Chairperson's Report**

On 24<sup>th</sup> November there was a meeting between the Council, Parent Council chairs and the General Teaching Council of Scotland re the number of referrals from parents to Parent Councils. The GTCS wanted to be clear that it is not the organisation that should be contacted in the first instance if parents have complaints about teachers; parents and carers should contact the school first, and if issues cannot be resolved by the school the local authority is the next port of call. .

Aberdeenshire Council have updated on the Covid situation, with an information session on 19<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Been very busy however lots on hold i.e. Xmas events, fundraising.

**4. Treasurer's Report**

A donation of £380 was received from Corinne Ross who had made and sold masks - thank you. The allocation from Aberdeenshire Council of £478.50 to come.

There will be £1000 plus in the bank by the end of the year so a cheque will be written to the school.

The bank in Aboyne closes on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan. It's difficult to open online account, but Bank of Scotland helping.

On 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> January there is training for treasurers and fundraising online, free for anyone, would be good for PC members. Could make this part of the Parent Council member standard training.

Question: Should we get together just as the Parent Council in the new year to look at how we operate?

**5. Head Teacher's Report**

This has been a difficult term with the death of pupil Corey Liversedge during the October break and the ongoing constraints and rules imposed by Covid. Dealing with staff and pupil wellbeing remains our priority.

Several positive events have helped to raise everyone's spirits: -

- Hats off to S6 pupils who decorated the school for Children in Need, they raised approximately £3750.
- A poignant Remembrance event was held online.
- Successful house events have taken place over the past 4 weeks including Kahoot quizzes in form classes, hockey tournaments for all year groups, Christmas card competition and an S2 Battle of the Bands.

Leadership pupils have been working hard in the background to make these events happen.

The school has been one of those to receive Chrome books for identified pupils (120 in total).

Successful parent nights have been held using phones. The online meeting system was not as successful due to connectivity issues, but we would like to progress this to get it operational in the future. Phone system will continue for now. S1 parents' night is now rescheduled to take place on March 8th.

We have a full complement of staff this session plus additional supply teachers, so it is a healthy situation.

Covid update: - there has been no major self-isolation of groups of pupils or staff. There is a need to remind some pupils about the rules but the majority follow rules in school.

## 6. Buses

**Wearing of masks on buses:** message put out to Parent Forum. Need parents to understand consequences of not wearing masks on buses. No enforcement on buses. Parent letter going out tomorrow (consequences of someone testing positive would mean that many pupils on the bus would have to self-isolate if they were not wearing masks). All schools with transport facing this issue.

Perception of risk possibly lower here in Aberdeenshire.

PC can only follow up with messages to PF.

Role of senior pupils/prefects in letting staff know if issues arise has been good.

**Snow:** on 4<sup>th</sup> December there were delayed and broken-down buses. Concerned parents got in touch and school flagged up these issues with the PTU:

Poor communication from bus companies resulted in some pupils waiting for long time periods in wet and cold conditions, some went home (as only meant to wait 15 mins). Penalty points can be placed against the transporter so need to let PTU know as a school and via parents if contracts not coming up to scratch. Contract would be stopped if the company receives 100 penalty points within 12 months.

School not informed about Ballater bus being late. Other issues have been flagged up which Mrs Scott has passed on to PTU.

**Action re communication?** Stagecoach have promised to be more proactive with their communication in future, and the Torphins bus issue has gone back to PTU. Can we do something to test communication links out? Is there an emergency plan in place? Yes and it has been used recently. Assurances from providers.

Are there emergency forms for local people to host pupils during adverse weather? Not this year because of Covid restrictions.

## 7. Covid – effects on school and impact in wider area

Information session for SLT and PC chairs was held to update on the impact in wider community. In Aberdeenshire the financial implications of people claiming employment support, and the speed of increase, is huge (75 percent increase). 30 percent of jobs in hospitality, tourism, and retail sectors are expected to be lost. 85 percent increase in accessing of foodbanks.

Marr: increase in debt, CAB has seen a huge increase. Marr Area Partnership has developed a food network, 286 families requiring food. In very rural areas the issues are hidden, with choices between heating and eating, wifi connectivity.

Services directory passed on so people know where to go to get help. Been seen by many.

School working with Annette Johnston from Aberdeenshire Council for signposting and assistance.

Challenging for pupils to adhere to the new dynamics: poor behaviour, exclusions etc have increased. The school is a safe place for some so if the school changes too it makes it hard to adjust. Same across the country. Majority of pupils are coping ok.

NHS Grampian and AC hold meetings weekly with SLT which is useful.

Tier 3: what changes in school? Pupils would have to wear masks in class.

## **8. Pupil mental health and Family Nurture**

Concerns about the impact on pupils re mental health:

First half of first term was ok but second half and now term two, seeing concerns and having to support pupils. May not be visible but work is ongoing.

Guidance weekly meeting, weekly house meeting, been ongoing.

Had to react quickly to Corey's death: SLT and Guidance (were outstanding in support they offered) knew who needed to be targeted and signposted. Sign up system for pupils, and Guidance have gone out of their way. They have a list of pupils plus others that might need extra support (traffic light system).

Educational Psychology advice: pupils need to know that there is someone there all the time. Publicised to pupils and a room/member of staff made available for the first few weeks in November.

SLT spoke to Samaritans for training, Papyrus, reassurance that the school is doing the right thing. Education Psychology team worked to bring together advice, cards were given out, will do more, support made visible round the school.

Tana, the school counsellor, is in place, one of first in the shire. Good feedback from pupils.

New school nurse, also offering advice and signposting to appropriate mental health supports.

Pupil Support Worker also. Making sure no duplication.

Rise in self harm cases: organised training with Penumbra for SLT, Guidance. Resources for parents will be made available.

Meetings with local GPs (waiting list for CAMHS is huge) so if we have concerns re pupils, have an agreement whereby Barry Drennan can contact them and they will get an urgent appt with them within 24/48 hours. GPs really happy that they've been contacted.

Meeting with head of CAMHS and Dr Grandison re issues here: comms not very clear from their side and reaching down to individual school level. 24hr unscheduled care team available for school. Grampian Psychology Hub available: information to parents will go out. Can self-refer. This is predominately in relation to coping with the impact of COVID-19. More resources will become available.

There will be more information re CAMHS and the community child health referral process that will be shared across key individuals within the school.

Hayley, the Network Librarian, has funding for a library mental health first aid project.

Next term: PSW Seasons for Growth programme for pupils dealing with loss/change. Mental health strategy for school: would like more first aiders trained. Mental health pupil ambassadors.

School website will be updated in due course.

*Is there any additional monitoring with students that the school is doing to "check in" that they are managing with the situation?*

Focus on being in school environment again at start. Regular SHANARRI questionnaires looking at how pupils are doing at a moment in time: done at least once a term. This is focused around the 8 wellbeing indicators – Safe / Healthy / Active / Nurtured / Achieving / Respected / Responsible and Included.

Parent Council has had offers of help from parents and community groups which have been passed on to school, thank you.

*Noticed improvement in pupil mental health?* Many coping well, but been difficult time for some pupils.

*Staff too?* Support for them via sessions with counsellor, signposting advice, quiet room for staff been set up. Input from Samaritans and others.

MF: so many uncertainties, hopefully now we have answers that will help pupils.

Staff wellbeing survey carried out.

Family nurture: Educational Psychology service have put together aspects of family nurture for parents to access. Link can be accessed (Rob to put on Facebook).

Work on this done at beginning of 2020 can be amended re exams.

*How are pupils being prepared for leaving school?*

This is the focus for next 2 terms. UCAS forms have to be done by end of week.

Formulating plan in PSE looking at life beyond school, go through list of things.

Accommodation, budgeting, keeping safe, this year will need to be tailored slightly.

Every pupil has a plan B in place. Work with Skills Development Scotland.

## **9. Exams and Assessments**

Uncertainty been tough for pupils. Better now that we have concrete information.

Internal assessments and rigorous moderation procedures will be utilised to produce a provisional result for each subject across N5, Higher and A Higher. All Faculties have been prepared for this eventuality and further guidance from the SQA to support our teachers will be issued in January.

Most pupils happy with this: small but often approach.

28<sup>th</sup> May for Nat5 deadline.

Prelim diet: traditional assessment won't be appropriate. Still need timed assessments under exam setting in games hall.

Assessment windows: 3 of them. First in last week Jan/first week Feb for Higher and AH only: games hall, not as long, not called prelims, simpler timetable, just mornings, one exam per day. Only part of the course will be assessed. 2<sup>nd</sup> assessment window around Easter over 2 week period: important to get pupils engaged to the end of courses. Ongoing classwork plus assessment windows will determine predictive grades: SQA only looking for several pieces of evidence.

Nat 5: assessment window end of Feb: some subjects but not all will use this. Not all will want or need it. Done in classes, not games hall.

H/AH socially distanced in hall as per seating in class.

Timetable will be shared before end of week with parents and pupils.

Assembly on Friday morning for S4/5/6s to let them know change was expected, therefore much prep already done.

Started new classes after Easter, much earlier than other schools.

*When will school year end?* don't have answer yet. No dates re H/AH from SQA yet so once we have those there will be liaison at Authority level about end of year dates. Job market: must be equity for those leaving school at the same time.

Workload for teachers will be significant over next 2 terms. Very experienced team, many are exam setters.

Timetable won't have exact timings for assessment window: teachers will communicate what topics are to be covered before the holidays.

*Q&A for parents that the PC could support?*

Good idea. Michael will build this into plan for new term.

### **10. Engaging with Parents: update from Connect training**

Connect: resource Aberdeenshire Council provides for PCs.

This training: expecting to learn how the Parent Council should engage with parents, instead benefits of having parents engaged with learning process and pupil attainment. Main message is pupils want moral support and guidance in finding answers from parents, and not that they expect parents to know the answers.

As PC what do we do about this? Covid has told us there are new ways of working.

PC could get together in new year to talk about engaging with parents better.

S1 parents have not had chance to come to school. Satchel – how to use it.

Engagement with other parents not on PC: link to them? PC take on role to support.

Could compile info for school.

Barry Drennan looking for online version of S1 parent support across each faculty area.

Family learning, working closely with CLD, for extra literacy and numeracy support.

Covid has meant we're not physically present at events. Need to think strategically and how we can make best use of technology.

**Rob - arrange meeting for PC members.**

### **11. AOB**

Thanks to all, and Happy Xmas.

### **12. Date and location of next meeting.**

TBC in new year.