

DCHS Parent Council Meeting at school and online via Teams
Tuesday 12 November 2024 from 6.30pm - 8pm

MINUTES

Next meeting will be Wednesday 29 January, 6.30-8pm

Attending

In person: Simon (Chair); Rachel (Treasurer); Abi (Secretary); Farjana, Mohamed, Valerie, Ian, Mae, Laragh, Tara, Claire

Rachel Robertson (Head Teacher)

Online: Jenni, Trisha, Marilyn, Carol-Ann, Julie

Virginie Potier (Teacher)

Apologies

Anne Hay

AGENDA ITEM	COMMENTS
2. Notes from the last meeting and action points	<p>Action points from the last meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Redesigning school signage - Mrs Robertson to provide visuals to be circulated to parents via parent council (for info rather than comment) <p>This activity has been paused to give time to prepare for the school inspection. Work by the designer is ongoing so visuals can be circulated soon (by January at the latest). Pupil art work in the glass cases will be updated at the same time as signage replaced.</p> <p>Action: Mrs Robertson to circulate visuals for school signage redesign after the inspection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fundraising – list collated by Jenni of fundraising ideas used by other schools to be circulated <p>Simon had not circulated the list as there did not appear to be capacity among parents to do this at present. Fundraising is discussed later in the meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parent council accounts to be verified <p>Rachel had not yet managed to do this but was making slow progress. The deadline was the AGM in May next year.</p> <p>Action: Rachel to get accounts verified.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benches and lockers – pupil heads of school to discuss with Pupil Leadership Team (consultation group made up of pupils from all year groups) <p>There was an ongoing proposal for the parent council to pay for lockers and benches for the school. Note though that the lockers would only be available for senior pupils.</p> <p>Mrs Robertson fed back that pupils had been keen for this to happen. However, there were space issues as the number of students at school had increased considerably since it was first suggested.</p> <p>Simon also noted that the parent council had spent lots of its available funds on other school priorities since then.</p> <p>Action: Mrs Robertson to discuss whether there is space to place lockers with school business manager and Amey (the company which manages the school).</p> <p>Action: Simon and Jenni to follow up with Mrs Robertson after school inspection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the school grounds – Simon to follow up <p>This is discussed under Chair's update below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for children with additional support needs during the school holidays – interested parents had been invited to work together on this. <p>This is discussed under Chair's update below.</p>
3. Head of School update	<p>Neither pupil heads were able to attend the meeting.</p> <p>Simon noted that there had been a Hallowe'en Party to raise money for the S6 prom.</p> <p>At the previous meeting, the pupil Head of School had set out a proposal for more school events to bring different school year groups together as well as bringing parents into the school.</p> <p>Simon asked if Mrs Robertson could get an update to be circulated to parent council members when available.</p>
4. Head teacher's update	<p>Mrs Robertson's full update is included at the end of these minutes. Key issues were:</p> <p>Computer science teacher – the school had been unable to recruit a computing science teacher for the school year 2024/25. This meant that pupils hoping to take computing science had had to pick alternative courses (with some senior pupils being sent to other schools to access the course).</p> <p>Mrs Robertson was not planning to try to recruit again this year, but would do so in advance of the next school year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simon had agreed raise this issue at the locality meeting (a forum for all school parent council chairs in the local area) <p>Simon fed back that City of Edinburgh Council has set up a taskforce to look at recruitment in subject areas where teachers</p>

were scarce. Rachel Blythe had agreed to represent the parent council on this forum.

- Rachel had agreed to raise this with Edinburgh University to see if any support could be provided

Rachel had had low level discussions with people working at Moray House (teacher training), and the Informatics and Maths Departments. She flagged the ongoing offer of tutor support to pupils from the maths department.

School inspection – the school was having a full inspection (from the government's school agency Education Scotland) on the week of 18th to 22nd November. Teaching staff had been very busy preparing for this. Among other things, there would be lesson observations and focus groups with pupils and parents/carers. The Head teacher would be made aware of high level findings on Friday 22nd November. A full report would follow some weeks later. This will be published on the school website.

Parent questions – there are detailed written answers to parent questions at the end of these minutes. Points raised by those present included:

- Lost property – Mrs Robertson noted that parent volunteers worked on returning lost property at some schools. Jenni had done this at Broughton Primary School and was prepared to take on.

Action: Simon and Jenni to discuss further – keen to recruit a small group to take this on.

- Incident involving assault on police liaison officer – Mrs Robertson emphasised that, if any parent was concerned about the direct impact of this on their child, they could contact her directly.
- Vaping in toilets – Mrs Robertson emphasised that teachers can and do enter the toilet areas. They cannot search pupils but can request that they voluntarily empty their bags or pockets. There are regular patrols, and any vapes found are confiscated.
- Tracking information for pupils attending courses at other schools – the council is currently working on a system where information from other schools will automatically be incorporated into the tracking reports issued by Drummond. However, this is not yet possible. Mrs Sloan had provided feedback directly to parents. Any parents who had not had the information they needed should contact their child's guidance teacher in the first instance. Information for college courses comes from the college.
- Practical arrangements for pupils attending courses at other schools – Mrs Robertson apologised that communication on

	<p>this issue had not been better. It will be improved for next year. Again, any parents who did not have the information they needed should contact their child's guidance teacher.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Support for pupils hoping to go onto university</u> – as well as the support detailed in her written response (at the end of these minutes), Mrs Robertson said that pupils could get support with writing a personal statement from Mr Paley (guidance). The school had access to the UCAS application system and would track applications to ensure no pupils missed the deadline. • <u>Duke of Edinburgh trip (outdoor skills and volunteering programme)</u> – The trip had to be arranged at short notice this year. However, the school intended that pupils in S4 who were not able to attend would have the opportunity of another trip in early 2025. The plans were to continue to offer Duke of Edinburgh to a new group of pupils in S3 as well as for those in S5 to be able to do a silver award. • <u>Changes to prelim arrangements</u> – Mrs Robertson drew attention to a letter (23 September) which outlined the changes and invited questions from parents. She noted that the school had worked closely with other schools who had implemented similar plans in Edinburgh and that there would be ongoing review of the impact. The dates for prelim assessments for senior pupils are available on the school website. This will be updated with any changes as a result of the school inspection.
<p>5. Chair's update</p>	<p>The key points covered in the Chair's update were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School grounds – there had been calls for action to improve the look of the school grounds at the last meeting. Simon had agreed to follow this up. Simon noted that the school had been allocated two of the planters (the large, rust orange blocks) from Leith Walk. These would be delivered soon. They were in negotiation with Amey about a suitable site in the grounds for them. Rachel had been helping the support for learning teachers with a funding application to improve part of the grounds. If successful, they would get around £500 worth of support in relation to their proposals. There were several deadlines a year, so it would be possible to re-submit if they were unsuccessful. The next step was to get input from pupils about what they wanted to see happening. • School holiday support for children with additional support needs – Carol-Ann and Trisha had been working on this. • School learning and assessment policy – Mrs Sloan had been working on this and sought input from parents. Five parents had been recruited via the parent council to provide feedback.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing the Young Workforce – Various relevant links (to employers, training opportunities and the like) had been identified via parents and had been sent on to the school co-ordinator, Amy Kirk. • Phone policy – Following feedback from parent council members, Mrs Robertson had agreed to re-enforce the current policy – that phones should be in bags and on silent at all times during lessons and when moving between classes. • Recruitment training – Parents could attend council run training to be able to be involved in the recruitment of senior school staff. One parent had since done this. <p>Action: Any interested parents should contact Simon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whatsapp group for interested parents – Simon had created a Whatsapp group as a sounding board for parent council issues and decisions between meetings. A number of parents had joined – and anyone else with an interest was welcome to do so. <p>Action: Any other interested parents can get in touch with Simon to join the group.</p>
6. Treasurer's update	<p>Rachel noted that there was approximately £2,200 in the account (with some small items of expenditure still to come out). The sum had reduced significantly since the last meeting due to agreed expenditure to support several school trips.</p> <p>The parent council receives approximately £700 per year from City of Edinburgh Council. However, Rachel noted that, in order to maintain current levels of expenditure, fundraising activities would be necessary. Parent council funding of the school's Duke of Edinburgh activities was flagged as something that would need additional funds.</p> <p>Some parents noted that, in other schools, parents contributed to Duke of Edinburgh costs (with an opportunity to pay more to support parents who could not afford to do so). This was not the policy at Drummond, where the current approach was to minimise all costs which could be a barrier to participation for pupils.</p>
7. Open Forum	<p>Fundraising</p> <p>The Chair raised the issue of fundraising. There had not been any fundraising activities in the current memory of those in the parent council. However, there may be an issue with capacity to take this on.</p> <p>Comments included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school grounds had been used for car boot sales in the past. This could be a way of raising money but may require a licence [Update – the legislation says that no licence is required for community groups, but City of

	<p>Edinburgh Council's website implies otherwise. Abi following up.]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Give As You Live" was a way of raising money via weekly shopping, which would be a low effort way of fundraising. Simon used a similar system, Easy Fundraising. He raised about £40 per year – but this could equate to quite a lot of money if eg. 100 parents signed up. • Summer and Christmas fairs were options put on by lots of schools. As well as raising money, they would build links with the community. • Parents may be more motivated to get involved in fundraising if we set a target for raising money for a particular objective. • Tesco Bags of Help (using the plastic tokens to vote for a local community project) – the school had done this for the initial fundraising for Duke of Edinburgh equipment. The parent involved reported that it was a relatively straight forward process. • Parents may have various skills relevant to fundraising – eg. DJing, pub quizzes. The parent council could ask them to help out – if it's what they love doing, it will be easier to get motivated. • Pupils could be involved (eg. school talent show) – Jenni noted that feedback several years ago was that they liked bake sales, although we could ask again. <p>Agreed: As there was more appetite for this than expected, the parent council should form a fundraising group. This group could discuss fundraising options, but there was no expectation at this stage that it had to commit to doing anything. Simon would be involved but not chair. Other people present also volunteered.</p> <p>Action: Any parent who wants to join the fundraising group should get in touch with Simon.</p> <p>Group for parents of children with additional support needs</p> <p>Trisha raised the suggestion of forming this group. Some children came from outside the school catchment area and, anyway, it was more difficult for parents to meet other parents when their children were at high school. Peer support of this nature could be hugely valuable. She had no fixed proposal at present – it could involve occasional in-person meetings or take place online.</p> <p>Action: Simon to discuss further with Trisha and Carol-Ann.</p> <p>Council cuts to support for children with additional support needs</p>
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	<p>Carol-Ann highlighted that council officials were currently trying to make £4million of cuts to the school support available to children with additional support needs. This would have an impact across all pupils as it would have a knock-on effect on school and teacher capacity to support pupils generally.</p> <p>Agreed: The parent council would write to councillors in the school ward to protest against the cuts. Councillors should be asked to raise this within their party group and encourage colleagues on the Education Committee to vote against the cuts.</p> <p>Action: Simon to speak to Carol-Ann to take this forward.</p>
8. Any other comments or questions	<p>Issues raised were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of school achievements – how could parents ensure these were noted? Pupils were asked to raise anything relevant during PSE lessons and parents were invited to feedback at the end of Mrs Robertson’s monthly newsletter. Parents should contact guidance teachers at present. But, in the future, Mrs Robertson planned to put a questionnaire on the school website. • Tracking reports – feedback that the numbers used on the tracking reports were not clearly explained. <p>Action: Mrs Robertson to speak to Mrs Sloan (who dealt with the reports) about this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving children in any planting activity in the school grounds <p>Action: Simon with follow this up.</p>

DCHS Parent Council Meeting – Headteacher's Update

Tuesday 12 November 2024

Staffing update

We are pleased to have welcomed Mr Rory Lawton as teacher of Support for Learning; Ms Sarah Yeoman as Teacher of Mathematics; and Ms Lauren Anderton as Clerical Assistant in the school office.

Mr David Morris left his role as Pupil Support Assistant at the end of the half term; we have recently nominated two successful candidates to the role of PSA and look forward to announcing further details in due course.

Recruitment is underway to fill vacancies in Health and Food Technology and Support for Learning, with both adverts currently live.

Questions from parents and carers:

1. Lost property, even when named, is often never found. How can we improve the system?

We have recently invested in additional clothes rails to better store and display items of lost uniform and moved this all to the space where we host Breakfast Club in order to support young people to locate items.

We are aware of some schools operating a parent-led system to manage lost property weekly and would welcome input from parents and carers to facilitate this at Drummond.

2. Following the recent violent playground incident between a police officer and a student, why wasn't a special assembly called to address the matter openly with pupils, as an opportunity to learn and come together?

An incident took place in school last week involving a young person and our School Link Police Officer. The nature of the incident is confidential in line with our approaches to being a Rights Respecting School, alongside safeguarding and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC). Steps were taken at the time to keep all pupils safe, by staff diverting the movement of pupils through corridors and the reception area. If the wellbeing of any young person has been impacted by them witnessing this incident, we would encourage parents and carers to liaise directly with the relevant Pupil Support Leader to discuss available supports.

3. (asked by 2 people) How is the school dealing with the issue of vaping in the toilets, since adults are not allowed into pupil toilets? This is impacting on the health of young people who do not want to vape or who feel intimidated about going into the toilets.

Signs are displayed clearly in the school building to indicate that smoking and vaping are not permitted on the premises. This message is reinforced through PSE lessons. If young people are found with vapes, these are confiscated and reported to parents & carers. As teachers, we do not hold the right to search children and young people. Our Duty Head system ensures that a member of staff is on call during every period and lunchtime throughout the week and the Duty Heads carry out routine checks of toilet areas when they are walking around the school. If any young person

encounters a peer who is vaping, they can report this in confidence to any member of staff.

4. For S6 pupils taking subjects outside Drummond, how do we receive their pupil tracking reports and get updates on their progress?

We have a new Pupil Tracking system in use across CEC schools and we are in liaison with a colleague at the Local Authority about whether reports can be sent directly from other schools to parents and carers. We will communicate the response as soon as we have it.

For those pupils who are studying Heritage Languages, the course tutor will contact Mrs Sloan directly and Mrs Sloan will liaise with parents and carers.

For those pupils signed up for the Computing Science with the Hebridean College, pupils receive feedback directly from the College, rather than through school. Please contact Mrs Sloan if there are any questions about this (shona.sloan@drummond.edin.sch.uk).

In most instances pupils will sit their prelims or assessments in the host school, though pupils can request to do their prelim here at Drummond and this will be arranged where possible. Host schools will contact Mrs Sloan to liaise about Alternative Assessment Arrangements. If pupils want to sit the final exam at Drummond, then they can request this and we will submit a 'Sitting At' Request Form to SQA to allow this to happen.

5. When S6 pupils sign up for subjects outside Drummond, is any info provided to pupils or parents on the practical arrangements?

Mrs Sloan has worked with individual pupils this year to agree travel arrangements to the school they are attending. Based on feedback from parents, we acknowledge that standardised information should also have gone home to parents and carers and will improve this going forward. If any parent or carer requires additional information this year, please do not hesitate to contact us (shona.sloan@drummond.edin.sch.uk).

6. How does the school prepare pupils for Higher Education? What happens to help them prepare their personal statements? What happens about UCAS applications? Is there guidance for parents?

We have input from LEAPS (<https://www.leapsonline.org/>) with all S4-S6 and S5-S6 pupils are then entitled to further information to aid with Higher Education pathways. We have also had representatives in to Drummond to speak to S6 PSE classes from the University of Edinburgh and Glasgow Caledonian University and we take interested S6 pupils to an annual UCAS (<https://www.ucas.com/>) event at the Royal Highland Show Centre every September.

Mr Paley has provided information regarding personal statements in PSE and by email to S6.

We will ensure that our school website is updated to provide support and further information to parents and carers

7. What can be done to ensure parents get correct information on ParentPay about what their children are choosing to eat and drink? The ParentPay report often seems to bear little relation to what is actually purchased.

I am meeting with the Amey Catering Manager at the end of next week and will raise this with her at this time.

8. The dates for the recent bronze DoE sessions and weekend activities were only confirmed to parents with 10 days notice. Why wasn't more notice given to allow time for other activities to be rescheduled?

We regret that these arrangements were confirmed at late notice. On this occasion, Mr Barrie (Lead Teacher for DoE) was unable to support the expeditions and so we were constrained by the availability of CEC staff that we procured to take his place. Dates were confirmed by our partners at short notice and the information was shared with parents the following week. It is our intention that those participants who were unable to attend will have another opportunity in 2025 (at a time that does not impact on their SQA exams). Planning will begin for this in the New Year.

9. Why wasn't the Parent Council consulted in advance about changes to the approach to prelims (senior phase assessments)? And is there an opportunity for feedback and a review of the impact now?

A letter regarding senior phase assessments was sent to all S4/5/6 parents and carers on 23 September 2024, outlining our proposals and rationale for changes to assessments and inviting questions at that time. There will be a review of the impact of the changes to assessment timelines as we go through the year and information gathered will be used to inform decisions about assessments as we move into next session.

10. Are school toilets still locked during class time and - if so - can this be reconsidered?

The junior boys' toilets were locked for 3 days prior to the October holiday while they were refurbished following fire damage. They were reopened after the holiday and remain open, along with all other pupil toilets around the building.