



CHARLESTON ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

Minutes of Parent Council Meeting held on 30th August 2016

Present: Gordon Stewart, Depute; Helen Hunter, Depute; Lyndie Cameron, Teachers Rep; Kate Morris, Chair; Phil Clark; Julie Riddle; Fiona Malcolm; Moira Finlayson; David Gillies; Rona MacAskill; Andrea Paterson.

In Attendance: Chris O'Neill, Rector; Maureen Gallie, clerk.

Apologies:

1.	<p><u>WELCOME</u></p> <p>Kate welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the new academic year. Apologies were received from Katrina Morrison, Ciara Flugel, Lindsey Stout, Christian Wittke</p>
2.	<p><u>APPROVAL OF MINUTES</u></p> <p>Proposed: Julie Riddle Seconded: Andrea Paterson</p>
3.	<p><u>MATTERS ARISING</u></p> <p>None</p>
4.	<p><u>Rector's Report</u></p> <p><u>Staffing</u> – At the end of the last session the council's voluntary redundancy scheme, along with the 1% required staffing cut meant that several members of staff had left the school. We had previously been slightly over-staffed according to council guidelines but had been allowed to run with this. Mr O'Neill stated that he had attended a meeting on Monday at Area Office where it had been decided that due to current – and forecast – intake, the decision was made by the council to go back to the 'old' arrangements regarding staffing – it would seem that we are going round in circles.</p> <p>New staff have been appointed in Art – Miss Shona McGibbon; Biology – Ms Lauren Davey (this is to cover Mr MacLeod's absence as he is currently on sabbatical teaching in China); English – Dr Greg Campbell (3 days a week); Geography – Janice MacDonald; Music – Ross Fairfield; Languages – Kirsty Bremner (4 days). Mrs Bremner is qualified to teach both French and German and there is a possibility that German may return to the curriculum at Charleston in the future.</p> <p>Mr O'Neill stated that he is delighted with the new appointments and the high calibre of the staff.</p> <p>An appointment in Maths is still pending – interviews are to be held Wed 31st August. A new appointment should have been made at Easter but the school were advised that it was to get a new teacher on compulsory transfer – however this fell through and we are only now being allowed to appoint. There is a lack of Maths teachers throughout the Highlands and although the school has managed to get supply teachers in the short term some are not specialist Maths teachers. Other authorities are providing incentives to maths specialists to remain in their area, Highland Council do not and this makes it more difficult to appoint. Mr O'Neill said – in reply to a question – that the Maths teachers rotate between classes and that work is prepared in advance for all supply teachers. He stated that while Morven Grubb, PT Maths, was managing the situation extremely well the situation was unsustainable in the longer term.</p> <p>Mr O'Neill updated parents on the ongoing situation involving the EIS union's workload campaign regarding the SQA assessment marking. A meeting was held with John Swinney last week but no</p>



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progress seems to have been made and the union's advice to teachers is that the campaign will continue. It is not clear at the moment what impact this will have but Mr O'Neill will keep all parents up to date with developments.

Exam Results – Mr O'Neill stated that all schools compare their results against other schools and that it will not become clear how we have performed against similar schools until figures are released in September. Attainment is closely related to poverty/deprivation within a schools catchment area and the Scottish Government currently has a campaign to close the attainment gap. At Charleston Academy 40% of pupils come from the bottom 20% of the most deprived. The figures should therefore be compared with schools with a similar population.

In Maths 28 pupil passed with an A, B or C grade – this equates to 21% of pupils on the roll. Higher than the Highland area average of 17%

In English this figure was 56 pupils – equating to 41.5% of the school roll. Again this was higher than the Highland average of 36%.

22 pupils attained 5 highers at A, B or C – Mr O'Neill said that in the main this was down to the drive and determination of the individual pupils.

The number of pupils gaining 3 or 4 highers at these grades was slightly down on previous years.

A question was asked regarding the impact of the mixed S4/5/6 classes. This was put in place following the change to a 33 period week which has allowed the school to maximise teacher contact time and allow a greater mix of subjects to be offered to students. Although it is early days Mr O'Neill said that it was working well and Mrs Cameron agreed that the students were rising to the challenge and performing well in the social subjects which are most affected by this. Mr O'Neill praised all the staff involved.

House assemblies are taking place this week and the pupils are being told about the success of the Botswana trip which took place in the summer. There is a report on the website along with photos of the trip. Ms Sutherland is hoping to run the trip again in 2018.

Other trips coming up include Peru, USA, Spain, Belgium and France.

The school calendar is available to view on the website and parents are encouraged to have a look at this with particular regard to Parents Evenings. For S5/6 pupils there will be combined parents evenings over 2 days in March after the prelims. This will allow all parents to see all their child's teachers.

A question was asked re the decision to allow pupils to sit just 6 subjects for National 5. Mr O'Neill said that the burden on both pupils and staff of the internal assessments required for these qualifications meant that 6 subjects was what the vast majority of pupils could cope with. There were no figures readily available to compare whether the results had improved following this decision. Some parents felt that this is too narrow and that able pupils are not being challenged.

5. Art Exhibition

Kate advised that the annual Art Exhibition, run in partnership with the Parent Council and the Art Department would take place in November. Art work from S1 pupils will again be displayed along with various stalls for craft work. Anyone wishing to volunteer to help with this event should contact Kate.



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6.	<p><u>Finance</u></p> <p>Ula has resigned as treasurer as her child has now left Charleston. The Treasure's role will now be taken by Ciara Flugel.</p> <p>Kate advised that the current balance is £2688.80.</p> <p>Some funding is received from the council and the rest is from fundraising by the members of the Parent Council. If anyone has any fundraising ideas they should contact Kate.</p> <p>All monies raised by the Parent Council are ploughed back into the school through funding requests from various groups/clubs within the school. The request forms are available through the Clerk or from Kate.</p>
7.	<p><u>Any other business</u></p> <p>Helen asked if there would be any interest in a uniform recycling scheme. Old school uniforms could be handed in to the school and washed and sold on for nominal sums at Parents Evenings. There could also be a contact number/name on the school website for parents to use to both hand in used uniforms and purchase second hand items.</p> <p>Mr O'Neill mentioned that the lost property could also be recycled after a period of time if it had not been claimed.</p>
8.	<p><u>Correspondence</u></p> <p>none</p>
9.	<p><u>DATE OF NEXT MEETING –</u> <i>AGM at 7pm on: Tuesday 27th September 2016</i></p>