



Aberlady Primary School Parent Council Annual Report – 2015/2016

Introduction

Welcome to the Annual Report of Aberlady Primary School Parent Council (PC). The PC is intended to be the **voice of parents** to those managing the school. Our primary function is to represent all parents and carers of children at the school, collectively known as the '**Parent Forum**'. We work in close partnership with the Head Teacher and staff to help develop and progress many areas of school life.

Members of Parent Council 2015/16

The members and roles for the past year were:

- Chairperson – **Angus Black**
- Vice-Chairs – **Kathy Allan** and Mo de Mowbray
- Secretary – **Lesley Kennedy**
- Nursery Representative – **Jane Hendry**
- P1 Representative – **Niall Bradley**
- P2 Representative – **Kirsty Usher**
- P3 Representative – **Mo de Mowbray**
- P4 Representative – **Hilary Matthews**
- P5 Representative – **John Smart**
- P6 Representative – **Jen MacPherson**
- P7 Representative – **Maureen Verrall**

Our sincere thanks go to **Maureen Verrell** and **Niall Bradley** who are both standing down after many years on the Council. Both have made major contributions during their tenures. Maureen has supported the PC during nine years or so including a number of these as Chair, before completing a final year as P7 representative in 2015/16. She has been an integral part of the schools evolution and its continuous improvement over this period. Niall, as well as being a longstanding class representative, also invested significant time representing our PC on the North Berwick Coastal Area Partnership (NBCAP). We are very grateful to them both for their time and invaluable contributions. Thanks also to **Mo de Mowbray** who acted as co-Vice Chair last session. Mo remains on the PC and we thank her for her continued involvement and support. Finally, thanks also to **Lesley Kennedy** for the excellent secretariat support that she has provided in addition to her individual input as an active representative of the Parent Forum. We are very pleased that Lesley has offered to continue in her role in 2016/17.

Meetings of the Parent Council 2015/16

There are **six meetings of the PC each year** in addition to the AGM (usually held early in each new school session). All meetings in 2015/2016 were well attended by members who raised a number of issues brought to them by parents/guardians, both those with specific issues and those wanting more general information. Mrs Currie, Head Teacher, attended all the PC meetings and gave her Head Teacher's report at each one. Mrs Peaston also attended all PC meetings in her role as Principal Teacher.

Our meetings over the last year have also been regularly attended by Jim Goodfellow, one of our local councillors who takes a lead interest on behalf of all three local councillors. We are very grateful for the input and support Councillor Goodfellow has given us over the last year.

Thanks to all who have been involved.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Parent Council

The Parent Council is a representative group of parents and carers who are selected to represent the Parent Forum. The Parent Forum consists of all the parents or carers of children at the school. If you are a parent or carer of a child at our school you are automatically a member of the Parent Forum. The **role of the PC is to:**

- *Provide an **opportunity for parents to express their views** on matters affecting the education and welfare of pupils.*
- *Be active in supporting **parental involvement in the school** and generally support the school in its work with pupils.*
- ***Promote partnership** between the school, its pupils, the Parent Forum and the wider community.*
- *Be ready to **help with any relevant issues brought forward to the PC** by the Head Teacher or by parents and carers.*
- *Be **accountable to members of the Parent Forum** and report regularly on PC activities.*
- ***Liase with other PC groups** as required (eg at East Lothian-wide level)*
- ***Act within the principles and practices** of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act.*

Overview of 2015/16

This year was the first year in post for our Head Teacher, Pamela Currie. The PC has developed a strong and productive partnership with Mrs Currie, whilst benefiting from the continuity provided by Mrs Peaston at PC meetings. We have welcomed the enthusiasm and energy that Mrs Currie has demonstrated from day one, her willingness to consider thoroughly all proposals or concerns raised on behalf of the Parent Forum, and her readiness to consult the PC and other parents/carers on key school matters or policies.

We also commend the professionalism, commitment and leadership that Mrs Currie, and all staff, exhibited during an eventful first year. This unveiled key challenges including staff changes, coupled with on-going financial constraints, and the unforeseen emergency closure of the detached (temporary) classroom building during Easter holidays, which resulted in major and lengthy building repairs. This was followed by a big infrastructure project to replace all school windows during the summer recess.

It is testament to Mrs Currie, Mrs Peaston and all school staff that teaching has been maintained with minimal disruption to pupils. This was due to contingency measures being implemented to relocate pupils to ensure they had a safe and suitable learning environment. However, it also

required a great deal of hard work and dedication including time on-site at the school during holidays. This commitment and passion for improving the school was demonstrated in a positive way by staff and volunteers involved in creating the fabulous 'Woods of Wonder' and Play Pod – just two examples of creative and innovative initiatives empowering pupils last year. We know that the wider Parent Forum is grateful to everyone involved in these initiatives.

Summary of Activities Supported by the Parent Council

Some of the key activities in which PC has been involved this year include:

Core School Matters

- **School Infrastructure** – Following the temporary classroom unit being condemned during the Easter holidays, the PC liaised closely with the Head Teacher to seek assurance about contingency plans; focusing on pupil safety, continuity of teaching, plus swift and essential repairs. Options for a new/replacement were explored, but only repairs were deemed viable by the local authority. In addition, the PC was consulted on the project to replace school windows during the summer and obtained reassurances about timescales and completion risks etc.
- **Outdoor Classrooms and Risky Play** – The PC were supportive of the creation of the Wood of Wonder, the initiative to incorporate the 'Run a Mile' into the school day, as well as the school's development of risk assessment in play by children and the creation of the new Play Pod. All staff received risky play training and pupils received guidance on using the pod in May.
- **Composite Class Best Practice** – The school's policy surrounding composite classes was reviewed in order to assess potential areas for improving the pupil experience, supporting children's social isolation and making processes more equitable. Areas explored included: enhancing opportunities for pupils to mix with their peers from the same year group (e.g. school trips, sports or woodland nature activity); using a composite impact assessment on key initiatives; creating a composite feedback pupil group to learn lessons; and producing a 'Composite Charter'. A new charter will be produced by early 2016-17.
- **Archaeology Project** – The PC supported and promoted the involvement of the school children in the Aberlady Angles archaeology dig and the school successfully secured extra resources from Historic Scotland.
- **Reporting to Parents** – The PC considered proposals to change the format of pupils' reports towards a more incremental approach during the year. It supported in principle an approach based on learning journals/profiles, rather than the traditional and time consuming written reports produced solely for Parent's Night. The school agreed to engage with the Parent Forum on proposed changes.
- **Fire Safety Checks** – The fire alarm system was fully checked and improvements made in the temporary classroom unit following concerns raised about it not being loud enough.
- **School Improvement Plan** – It is a requirement for every school to have a School Improvement Plan, which details specific targets for improved performance of the school. The PC has been consulted by Mrs Currie on the plan both as it is developed and throughout the year. The successes and highlights are outlined in the Standard and Quality report that is submitted to the local authority by September 2016.
- **School Travel Plan** – The school travel plan has continued to evolve with the aim of ensuring safer routes to school and our pupil JRSOs have continued their enthusiastic participation in this work. Whilst new parking restrictions around the school have helped to improve safety for

children trying to cross the road around the school gates and crossing points, the JRSOs wrote to PC in January expressing their concerns about people parking dangerously on the new double yellow lines. The PC wrote to each JRSO acknowledging their concerns and confirmed action, which included arranging for our local community police officer to visit the school to enforce restrictions and to engage with parents and pupils. PC has continued to liaise with partners to explore options for speed-calming measures, for instance relating to traffic coming into the village from the Longniddry direction and the option of a 20mp speed zone.

- **School Handbook** – A new School Handbook was introduced at the start of the year and is has been made available on the school website.
- **School Evaluation** – The PC participated in an evaluation task facilitated by Mrs Currie to input into a 'How Good is Our School' evaluation exercise. This focused on leadership of change and raising attainment and achievement.
- **Revised Meeting Structure** – The PC restructured its meetings to ensure that 'Core School Matters' were given appropriate time and focus, by tabling these items earlier during the meeting. As part of this refocussing, a review of Pupil Council minutes was added to the agenda of each meeting.
- **PC Health Check** – A health check exercise to review and evaluate the operations and governance of the PC was undertaken to ensure best practice. The PC Constitution was reviewed and it will be presented for sign-off at the AGM.
- **Internet Safety Training** – This year Kirsty Usher attended an Internet Safety course and shared key learnings with the PC to ensure that the school were aware of the latest concepts. The PC will explore potential joint Internet Safety sessions with Gullane Primary in 2016/17.
- **Parental Questionnaire** – This was carried out in March and this year focused on homework, information to parents about their child/children's strengths and weaknesses, and accommodation. While the results showed a continuance of the general upward trend in positive responses a discussion in PC focused on whether, as a group we should be pressing more on issues of upgrades to accommodation. We know the school makes the most of what we have but perhaps we need to be more active in seeking improvements. We will continue to pursue this in the next year. Parents wanting any issue to be pursued on their behalf can raise it with any PC representative.
- **Representing Parents at regular meetings of the East Lothian Association of Parent Council Members (ELAPCM)** – This allows us to share best practices with other Parent Councils and keep abreast of developments in education across East Lothian, for example on the education budget and allocation of school budgets, e-safety and school catering, including the new dedicated e-mail address for comments and questions on school catering.
- **PC representatives taking forward Parent Forum questions and issues** – We have had a number of issues and questions from parents to address through the Parent Council Forum. We welcome this input and would encourage all parents to take up any matter of interest with us as we would not otherwise know of issues or concerns.
- **Correspondence** – We receive a wide range of correspondence from numerous sources all of which is responded to in good time. Thanks go to Lesley Kennedy who has taken on the role of Secretary this year and who has managed all correspondence coming in to the Council with great efficiency.

- **Other items:**

- Review of Parent Survey results.
- Input into public consultation of East Lothian Children & Young People Services Plan 2016 – 2019.
- Review of North Berwick Cluster P6 Survey Results 2014 – 2015.
- Summer camp planning.
- School budget and financial constraints.
- Class sizes and composite classes.
- A PC representative attended the P1 transition day on 23rd June and spoke with parents/carers about the role of the council.

Community Matters of Interest to School

Whilst specific school related matters are the priority, the PC also consider wider community related matters that either have an impact on the school and its pupils or are in the interests of the school. Examples include:

- **Regeneration of Pleasance Swing Park** – Following the unexpected removal of the swings in the park opposite the school, the PC, with support from Councillor Goodfellow lobbied the local authority and succeeded in obtaining agreement to replace the swings. This amenity was argued to be a valuable asset for all school children and their families. PC consulted with members of the Parent Forum regarding the chosen equipment prior to installation in early 2016. Special thanks go to Angus Black for his contribution in this area.
- **Cruden Housing Application in Aberlady** – The PC are liaising with other community groups and representatives to share views, particularly in relation to the potential impact on school roll and capacity, road safety and development gain opportunities that might benefit pupils of the school. Further engagement has been happening over the summer break with a view to coordinating responses to the planning application, the deadline for which is 3rd October (extension of response deadline by ELC).
- **New Cycle Path** – The suggestion made by the PC last year for development of a cycle route between Ballencrieff and Aberlady has now been identified as a short-term priority by the 'On the Move' NBCAP sub-group. The PC will continue to pursue this project.
- **Feasibility study for an all-weather pitch** – This was commissioned in partnership with ELC and the NBCAP to consider options for new facilities that both the school and wider community could use.

Proposed Parent Council Meeting Dates 2016/17

The proposed dates for next session's PC meetings are: **28/09/16, 16/11/16, 18/01/17, 15/03/17, 03/05/17** and **14/06/17**. Meetings are held in the School's Staff Room at 7pm. Please check the PC slot in the school newsletter for confirmation. The agenda for each meeting will be issued via the school e-mail.

Proposed Membership for 2016/17

The proposed membership for the coming year was validated as part of the AGM:

- Chairperson – **Angus Black**
- Vice-Chair – **Kathy Allan**
- Secretary – **Lesley Kennedy**
- Nursery Representatives – **Kathy Allan and Alison Walker** (new member)
- P1 – **Jane Hendry**
- P2 – **Helen Bradley** (new member)
- P3 – **Kirsty Usher**
- P4 – **Mo de Mowbray**
- P5 – **Hilary Matthews**
- P6 – **John Smart**
- P7 – **Jen MacPherson**

How can you get involved?

All parents or carers are actively encouraged to come along to any of our meetings, whether to raise an issue or to listen to our discussion. **We welcome as much parental input as possible.**

We always need to recruit new members to the PC. You do not need any particular experience, nor do you need to take on any specific council role. All you need is an interest in the school and a willingness to work alongside Mrs Currie and her staff team to achieve the aims of the school. Please talk to any Parent Council member if you would like more information.

Parent Council aims to represent the views and opinions of the entire Parent Forum of Aberlady Primary School. To do this we need your involvement and your views and opinions. Please feel free to approach us in the playground, come to any of our meetings or e-mail us on parentcouncil@aberlady.elcschool.org.uk. If you would like to raise something anonymously, please leave a note, addressed to Parent Council, in the school office.

Angus Black

Chair

September 2016