



ABERLADY PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL

Annual Report: 2016 – 2017

Introduction

Welcome to the Annual Report of Aberlady Primary School (APS) Parent Council (PC). The PC is intended to be the **voice of parents** to those managing the school. We work in close partnership with the Head Teacher, Principal Teacher and other staff to help shape, appraise, and improve various aspects of school life.

Parent Council Function

Our primary function is to represent all parents and carers of school children, collectively known as the '**Parent Forum**'. Any forum member can volunteer to become a PC member or, alternatively, just input via other channels, should they wish. The **role of the Parent Council 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;
- **Liaise with other PC groups** as required (eg at East Lothian-wide level); and
- **Operate within the principles and practices** of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act.

Parent Council Membership 2016 – 2017

The members and roles during the past year are listed below (page 6 refers to future membership):

- Chairperson – **Angus Black**
- Vice-Chair – **Kathy Allan**
- Secretary – **Lesley Kennedy**
- Nursery – **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**

This was my final year as Chair and **Kirsty Usher, Mo de Mowbray, Jane Hendry** and **Jen MacPherson** are also standing-down as members. Our sincere thanks goes to each of them for their invaluable contributions. They offered real enthusiasm and energy in their quest to support the continuous improvement of Aberlady Primary School.

We are also grateful to Lesley Kennedy for her on-going dedication to providing secretariat support coupled with her contributions as a Parent Forum representative – we are pleased that Lesley has offered to continue in her role in 2017/18.

Parent Council Meetings 2016 / 17

There are **six meetings** of the PC each year, not including the AGM (held early in each school session). All **parents or carers are actively encouraged to come along to any of our 'open' meetings**, whether to raise an issue or to listen or to contribute to discussions. We welcome as much parental input as possible.

All meetings in 2016/17 were well attended by members who raised a number of matters including specific issues of concern shared by the Parent Forum, general queries and proposals on how to improve the educational experience or attainment of pupils.

Mrs Currie, Head Teacher (HT), attended all PC meetings and presented a comprehensive HT report on matters such as: staffing; recruitment; teacher training; education policy and practices; educational attainment; health and safety; school events; budgets; and building maintenance etc. Mrs Peaston also attended the PC meetings in her capacity as a staff representative.

Our meetings were also 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 influential input and continued support that Cllr Goodfellow gave the PC over the last year.

Thanks to all who have been involved in supporting the PC and the school in any capacity during 2016 – 2017.

Annual Overview

As in 2015/16, the school team faced various challenges including: a number of staff changes; shifts in the education policy landscape (at central and local government levels); continued financial constraints; plus other pressures relating to the general running and maintenance of the school.

This year, the second year in post for HT, Pamela Currie, was a particularly busy session for both the staff and PC members. However, the PC has benefited from the trusted and constructive partnership-working that is well established with Mrs Currie and Mrs Peaston. We would, therefore, like to acknowledge the commitment, professionalism and enthusiasm demonstrated by them, and the entire staff team. It is evident that this passion is founded on a real determination to continually enhance the education and wellbeing of all children at the school.

Collectively our focus is on **putting the needs of all pupils at the forefront of PC activity**. This is exhibited across a range of work relating to national, regional and local issues impacting on our school as summarised below.

At a **national level**, the PC worked with the Head Teacher to evaluate and respond to the Scottish Government's '[Governance Review: Excellence and Equity in Education](#)', which was a consultation on 'how education in Scotland is run'. This is a prime example of how the school, with PC input, had to react quickly to understand, evaluate, confer, agree and respond to a significant new national education initiative within a short timescale of just a couple of months.

At a **regional level**, the PC was heavily involved in reviewing and responding to the consultation process for the **new housing planning application by Cruden** (107 new dwellings in Aberlady – see page 5).

At a **local level**, we were involved in pioneering a **Composite Class Charter** aimed at ensuring that any potential detrimental impact on pupils (separated from their year-group) is managed well. A key

focus is maximising the way in which we can give children the same opportunities (e.g. access to the same trips / events and increased chances to mix with their own year-group during the year).

Meantime, important work aimed at closing the **attainment gap** between children has continued to be a priority – whilst ensuring that all school policies are appraised to make them as fair and robust as possible. We also began the year by assessing how we could improve the PC itself. As a result, we **re-structured PC meetings**, adopting simple changes to ensure that key ‘pupil-related matters’ were prioritised and given protected space at meetings. For example, the minutes of all **Pupil Council meetings** are now shared and reviewed upfront at every PC meeting and Mrs Currie introduced a helpful **new streamlined Head Teacher report**.

Central to all continuous improvement, is a genuine desire by both the Head and Principal Teacher to consult, but also to be challenged by the PC when school performance is appraised or new school policies or practices are being developed or implemented.

On behalf of the Parent Forum, I’d like to thank the PC for their dedication, support and passion demonstrated throughout an extremely busy 2016/17. As highlighted in this report, the PC completed a significant amount of work in researching, evidencing and formulating its formal consultation response to the Cruden new housing planning application, shared with the Parent Forum earlier this year. This activity was one example of a major team effort, but also saw some PC members investing a lot of personal time and energy.

Activities Supported by Parent Council

A summary of key activities that the PC was involved in during 2016/17 is below:

Core School Matters

Improving School Communications – The PC appraised the effectiveness of communications between the school and parents following constructive feedback from parents. We acknowledged that the school had a big challenge when managing many different communications on different subjects for different classes simultaneously. Yet, sometimes short notice or mixed messages from children created difficulties for busy parents resulting in unnecessary phone calls to the school office. Solutions included:

- the creation of a **new e-school calendar** on the website that shows key dates or events (P7 ‘digital ninjas’ were tasked to develop and administer the calendar);
- a new **school Facebook page** was piloted to help improve communications (Lesley Kennedy & Alison Walker are administrators who post key information such as meeting details, important items of interest and live consultations);
- increased **use of text messaging** – the school continues to press East Lothian Council (ELC) to arrange enhancements with supplier ‘Groupcall’ to expand texting and e-mailing capacity to more than one (parent) at a time;
- a commitment that **children would not be relied on to pass-on important information**; &
- different **coloured paper introduced for school letters** so they are easily identified.

Scottish Education Governance Review – This PC activity related to the Scottish Government’s (SG) 2016 proposals to change how schools are managed and funded across Scotland. The theme was ‘[Empowering teacher, parents and communities to achieve excellence and equity](#)’. The **consultation ran from 13 September 2016 to 6 January 2017** and PC members and staff attended a briefing event held by the Head of Education for East Lothian Council on 8 December.

The PC worked closely with the Head Teacher and Principal Teacher to appraise the impact of the SG’s proposals and we briefed the Parent Forum on developments and encouraged participation in the consultation process and our formal response. **Aberlady Primary was commended for submitting a ‘pupil response’ to this consultation.**

The **SG published the results on 15 June 2017**, '[A Governance Review – An Analysis of Consultation Responses](#)'. On the same date, it also published '[Education Governance: Next Steps](#)' setting out its reforms – these present another significant change that our HT and staff will have to adapt to in the coming years.

School Improvement Plan – The mandatory School Improvement Plan (SIP) details specific targets for improved performance. Mrs Currie regularly consulted PC on the plan as it is developed throughout the year and we welcome the offer to become closely involved in shaping future SIP's. The successes and highlights are outlined in the Standard and Quality report submitted to ELC each September – it was circulated to the Parent Forum (and published on the school website). A more 'parent-friendly' approach is planned for the 2017/18 session.

School Infrastructure – Following the temporary classroom unit being condemned in Spring 2016, repair works continued with the school, challenging ELC over lack of progress. Works were completed in late 2016 and options were explored to allow relocated pupils to remain in the main building. The benefits included feeling less isolated and it was warmer in winter.

Composite Class Charter – Following a review of school policy surrounding composite classes instigated by a PC member in early 2016 (aimed at supporting pupils, making the composite arrangements as equitable as possible and limiting potential difficulties experienced by pupils), a new charter was agreed and introduced at the end of last year. The Charter was shared with other schools as an example of good practice and is to be regularly reviewed – it is available on the school's website and now features in the School Handbook.

Learning Journals – The school introduced a new method of evidencing pupils' work and progress by issuing individual learning journals / profiles to parents (replacing traditional school reports that are time-consuming for teachers to produce and used solely for end-of-year summative feedback and to support parental consultations.). This new approach was appraised and supported by the PC, based on wider parent forum feedback and persuasive evidence presented by the Head Teacher.

Anti-Bullying Policy – A parent and a group of pupils met ELC to review an updated policy. This forms part of the school's 'positive relationship policy' and will be communicated to the Parent Forum in the 2017/18 session.

Student Evaluation of Experience Survey (SEE) – The PC reviewed the P6 and P3 SEE results and these will be factored into next year's planning activities – Aberlady scored comparatively well compared to the North Berwick cluster and the local authority as a whole.

ELC Poverty Commission Report – the PC considered the findings and the potential impacts on school children from low income families. It issued advice to parents and children, for example, on the different non-monetary ways to say 'thank you' to teachers at the end of term. It also agreed how best to promote free places for 'Active Schools Programme' activities plus funded transport.

Staff Development – As part of the Head Teacher's report, the PC were updated on the continuing professional development of staff, which we believe is vital component of maintaining high-calibre teaching and delivering sound school governance. Examples included: attending conferences, such as the Visible Learning Conference (focusing on how to maximise the learning of children in schools); 'Engaging Parents in Numeracy' research; training in numeracy skills, Nature Nurture, cluster moderation plus Governance Review training; Head Teacher observations in classes; food hygiene skills for nursery staff; and the Principal Teacher produced a new 'Developing the Young Workforce' strategy for Aberlady etc. It is commendable that **Edinburgh University has recognised the school as an exemplar of good practice** in its support and development of teaching students.

Pupil Learning – A provider 'Able' delivered workshops over 6-weeks to Primary 6 pupils as part of their personal and social learning. The aim was to teach them strategies to cope with unfriendly behaviour. It was agreed that, to maximise the 'learning benefit', P6 children would offer peer-to-peer training to P5 pupils so as to share their knowledge.

PC Training – Kathy Allan and Helen Bradley completed East Lothian Council’s ‘Recruitment and Selection’ training that qualifies them to take part in school staff recruitment processes.

Scottish Attainment Fund – The school secured funding for the ‘Attachment Ambassadors’ project. The funding comes from Scottish Government, but only 3 schools out of 22 in East Lothian were successful – thanks to Kathy Allan who was instrumental in this success.

Internet Safety Training – Following some Internet Safety training and awareness raising undertaken by PC members last year, it explored joint Internet Safety sessions with Gullane Primary in 2016/17. An Internet Safety talk was delivered in Aberlady on 28 March for our Parent Forum and parents from Gullane Primary.

Bikeability Training – Level 2 training for P6 pupils commenced in Autumn delivered, with our thanks, by Mrs Peaston who devoted her own personal time to do this. Feedback showed this was a huge success and extremely popular.

East Lothian Association of Parent Council Members (ELAPCM) – It was not possible for a representative to attend every ELAPCM meetings this year. However, PC did attend most meetings to feed-in our views on regional education matters and to share best practice – we regularly reviewed ELAPCM minutes to keep abreast of key developments.

North Berwick Coastal Area Partnership (NBCAP) – Due to the significant workload that PC was involved in this year, it was not possible for a representative to also attend regular NBCAP meetings as well as ELAPCM events. However, the PC did monitor and, where appropriate, feed-in or discuss key matters relating to regional activity or opportunities. PC was also briefed on key issues by Councillor Jim Goodfellow.

Wet Weather Policy – A new ‘Wet Weather Policy’ was updated and published by the school on its website, which clarifies arrangements before school and during breaks plus the role of P7 helpers.

Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) – The PC discussed this with the school and supported its suggestions on how best to spend the PEF including extra literacy support for targeted pupils, a fund for families to access out of school opportunities.

Correspondence – We receive a wide range of correspondence from numerous sources all of which is responded to in good time.

Community Matters of Interest to School

Whilst specific school related issues 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 and the local community. Examples include:

Cruden Housing Application in Aberlady – The PC were heavily involved in appraising the impacts of the planning application, which included school numbers and capacity, road safety and development opportunities that might benefit pupils of the school. We engaged with various stakeholders and attended community planning events, analysed school building and pupil requirements – we liaised with bodies such as the Aberlady Community Association (ACA), parents, Gullane Primary, East Lothian Council, local elected officials and representatives of both the developer and the land-owners.

The PC submitted its consultation response by the October deadline, sharing this with the Parent Forum. It also analysed the Planning Committee evidence and final report. The **Cruden Planning Application was approved on 29 March**. The PC noted that the application site is located within the school catchment areas of Aberlady Primary / Nursery and North Berwick High School.

However, both the primary and high schools do not have the capacity to accommodate projected pupil increases. Financial contributions of £8k per unit towards the primary and nursery provision, and £7140 per unit for NB High School (total of £1.6m), were confirmed. Unfortunately, the

evidence presented by the PC in its consultation response, illustrating why such funding was insufficient, was not addressed. Neither were various other concerns such as the lack of community safety appraisals or the real need for new road safety measures.

Ballencrief Cycle Path – Work continued with ELC to push the case for a new safe route to link the village with Ballencrief that would provide a safer passage for children and families. Different boundaries and possible routes were explored, but key barriers remain with the land-owner(s) who do not support cycle access. So, viable options seem restricted to areas alongside the A1837, but funding is also required. The PC will continue to pursue this proposal with ELC.

Parent Council Meeting Dates 2017 – 2018

The proposed dates for next session's PC meetings are: **27/09/17; 15/11/17; 17/01/18; 14/03/18; 02/05/18; and 20/06/18**. Meetings are normally held in the school's Coffee Room at 7pm. Please check the PC slot in the school newsletter and e-calendar on the website for confirmation. The agenda for each meeting will also be circulated in advance via the school e-mail.

Proposed Membership for 2017/18

The proposed membership for the coming year below is to be validated as part of the AGM:

- Chairperson – nominee(s) sought.
- Vice-Chair – **Kathy Allan**
- Secretary – **Lesley Kennedy**
- Nursery – nominee(s) sought.
- P1 – **Alison Walker**
- P2 – **Anna Holland**
- P3 – **Helen Bradley**
- P4 – nominee(s) sought.
- P5 – nominee(s) sought.
- P6 – **Hilary Matthews**
- P7 – **John Smart**

Supporting the Parent Council

How can you get involved?

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.**

If you cannot take on membership of the council, you can still attend any of our meetings. All meetings are 'open' and parents are welcome to attend, although only members of the PC can vote on any issue. You can also email the Parent Council at: parentcouncil@aberlady.elcschool.org.uk

If we are to represent all parents, we need your views and opinions or suggestions for discussion topics. An opportunity to do this is given in the regular school newsletters and we would encourage you to use this (and the above e-mail channel). Alternatively, please use the attached sheet (below) and return it to the school office or to any PC Member.

Thanks again to everyone involved in helping to govern and support our school over the last year.

Angus Black

Chair

September 2017

REQUEST TO HAVE AN ITEM RAISED AT PARENT COUNCIL

All parents/guardians are members of the Parent Forum and, as such, you are always welcome to express your school-wide views, concerns and issues at Parent Council meetings.

If you would like to see any of these on the agenda of a future Parent Council meeting, we encourage you to contact us by e-mail: parentcouncil@aberlady.elcschool.org.uk. We will then be able to respond to you directly after your issue has been discussed.

If, however, you would like to raise something anonymously, you are welcome to do so using this form. Please provide as much information as possible and deliver the form to the school office.

Item to be raised on my behalf:

Thank you!