



**The Gordon Schools Parent Council
Minutes of AGM meeting held on Tuesday 7 June 2022**

Attending: Phil Gaiter, Alan Johnston, Joyce Reed, Helen Kings, Mary Turner, Colin Currie, Rachael Ashley, Gwyneth Petrie, Paula Sangster, Catherine Lamberton, Marianne Lipp, Madie Whittaker

Apologies: Carol Bristow, Sarah Robinson, Eleanor Shurmer, Sissel Hovstein Olsen, Kathryn Wilson

Chairperson's report

Thank you for coming along tonight to support PiP. At the AGM you will hear from myself as Chair, Mr Gaiter, Rector, Rachel Ashley, Fundraising Sub-Committee and also Mary Turner as Treasurer in what we have been doing and how PiP has been supporting the school with this year. We have navigated a tricky year but have managed to keep PiP up and running throughout the pandemic with online teams meetings. Lots of funding has been raised with a number of big projects funded for the benefit of the pupils in TGS, I will let Rachel explain more but I would really like to give a huge thank you to Rachel Ashley and the fundraising group for their tireless work! We sadly had to say goodbye to Laura Thomson as secretary at the end of term 3, many thanks to Laura for her support and her time and we welcomed Madie Whittaker onboard as secretary in a paid capacity as she was keen to support the Huntly community and the school in this role.

Looking forward into next session we will be appointing a new treasurer as Mary Turner will be moving on after the summer, as she will no longer have children at TGS, many thanks to Mary for her support. If you think you would be able to help out in this role then let us know at the end of the meeting or email the PiP email address and we can set up a meeting with Mary to talk you through what the role involves. We will be hoping to appoint someone by the end of the first meeting in term 1 of next session so that gives anyone interested plenty of time to consider the role and find out more.

Learning and Teaching

Over this year we have been starting to look at the Learning and Teaching policies with the leadership team, supporting them in their review of these policies by providing a parent's voice.

1. Mobile phone policy review and key facts document written and distributed to teaching staff – being adhered to more consistently across the board by teachers and pupils. Mr Gaiter has been updating us on this.
2. Promoting positive behaviour policy review – focus group held, and the results of this discussion now gone to the leadership team to be implemented into the policy.

School menus and offering

On behalf of the PiP group, I wrote to Ian Paterson in the Aberdeenshire catering services department about the school menus, with a number of concerns parents had raised about the quality of the offering given at TGS. Parents were concerned about the number of processed foods and fizzy drinks on offer in school. We got a very comprehensive and prompt reply stating that the menus are all centralised and in line with Scottish government guidance on the nutritional requirements for children. If anyone wanted to take forward further, I feel now that it would be a case of forming a lobby group to local and national government to tackle this further and if anyone was interested in taking this on then I can put you in touch with Christine McLennan, Parent Engagement Officer for Aberdeenshire council for guidance on lobbying.

Planting a tree for the Jubilee

I attended the ceremony with a selection of pupils and staff with Lord Deputy Lieutenant of Aberdeenshire Major Grenville Irvine-Fortescue, to plant the weeping birch tree for the Queens Jubilee in front of the school. I must say the Pupils represented the school very well, congratulations to them! Hopefully everyone saw the picture in the Huntly express.

Pupil Voice Representatives

In Term 2 we welcomed 2 pupil representatives to the PiP meeting as part of the pupil voice, I would like to thank them again for their valuable input to that meeting and would encourage reps to be present at PiP meetings in the future in the spirit of shared working to support TGS.

PiP Communications

PiP email address is piggordonschools@gmail.com please do email to get your address added to the distribution list. This keeps you up to date with meeting dates, agendas and minutes, and also any training that Aberdeenshire council are offering parents to support their school.

Many thanks to Rachel for adding information to the PiP Facebook page as well, this is also a good source of information for meeting dates and links. We have also been adding useful links to things that the parent body might find helpful; I hope to increase this over the next year too.

Helen Kings and Mr Fleetham have been working on the PiP section of the TGS website so that up-to-date and historical minutes and agendas can be found here, so that anyone can access these to see what we have been working on. There is also a section on contact details and committee members.

National Parent Engagement Strategy

I have recently been asked to form parts of a larger strategic group on how the council moves forward in engaging with parents. A national Scottish Government document is currently being created, based on findings of recent parent surveys. I will form part of the working group to move this document forward at a council and hopefully national level, making sure that secondary school parents' voices are heard. Once again, if anyone has any ideas or thoughts about how parents can be reached then please do email the PiP address and title your email "national parent engagement".

For next year:

- We will continue with the hybrid format for meetings moving forward as this has really improved accessibility for those with younger children or other commitments.
- We will be looking to appoint a new treasurer at the first meeting after the holidays, so please do come forward to support PiP in this role if you felt you would like to.
- We will continue working together with the school on the Learning and Teaching review, homework and how to support pupils at home with this now that we are in a digital age is something that has been mentioned in addition to this.
- We will continue to support the fundraising team with their amazing efforts and look forward to getting more engagement from events.
- We will look at communication of information to the parent body and how best to reach people.
- We will look at any additional lobbying for school menus if anyone would like to take that forward.

Rector's Report

Another year in the life of The Gordon Schools has come and gone with many positives to report, in spite of Covid-19 casting its shadow over daily life for everyone. From the outset, I'd like to record my thanks and best wishes to all of our families and parents for what you have done to support our young people through all of the challenges over the past two years. Your support, challenge and feedback has really been important and valued by us as we strive to create the right environment and put the right interventions in place to ensure that health and wellbeing, together with learning are at the centre of what we are doing every day.

We have had a focus on health and wellbeing this year, with all pupils having access to 24/7 online support via two different Aberdeenshire Council contracted mental health and wellbeing charities. As a school, we have employed three Pupil Support Workers and continued our partnership with MCR Pathways, to support a range of different social and emotional needs for vulnerable pupils. Our Care Group has been nominated for an Aberdeenshire Council Cultural Award after their film was projected on to the walls of Huntly Castle. Some of our S6 pupils volunteered and were trained-up by SAMH to be mental health peer mentors for our younger years. We also have a School Counsellor in place for half of the week. Aberdeen Football Club Community Trust has been working with all of our S3 pupils to promote positive and growth mindsets. Aspire from Aberdeen

University has begun working with targeted pupils to try and widen pupil access to College and University education to give pupils renewed hope for their futures.

A new initiative for pupils this year allowed them to experience 'participatory budgeting', where pupils propose a themed project (health and wellbeing this year) and pupils across the Huntly Cluster in both primary and secondary schools vote for the projects they would like to see in place. An S1 pupil successfully secured funding for a community-school support group for pupils with autism and ADHD, and other pupils gained monies to develop our SAMH mentoring programme further, with S4 and S5 mentors to now be recruited.

Recognising young peoples' voices has also been prominent this session with our Pupil Council returning to full strength, four representatives on the Aberdeenshire-wide Participation Forum, Digital Champions, Arts Leaders, Sports Leaders and all pupils learning about what the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child means to them. We've also had a great input into the Huntly Town Team as they create a vision for renewing Huntly and the Square in particular. Pupils have had great opportunities to voice their opinions for the future and are being very involved in decision-making moving forwards.

The return to a 'new normal' has not been without its challenges and while we missed out on a School Show and Christmas Dances, we did begin to enjoy a taste of what makes School life memorable! We have recently and gradually started to host and travel to other local schools for sporting events (literally heard that today, The Gordon Schools has won both the Junior and Senior National Schools Cricket Championship!), attend the Grampian Book Awards, see the sights of Edinburgh's history and it was fantastic to have our Sports Day back, with Fraser House coming out on top! Over the coming months auditions and rehearsals will begin for the School Show this coming December – 'Grease' is the word! Particularly for our younger pupils who have missed out on so much, we really hope to be able to offer a more rounded and fun School year in session 2022-23.

We are excited next session to be introducing Music Technology into our curriculum for S3 and S4/5/6 pupils. A huge thanks to the fundraisers in Parents in Partnership body who secured around £10,000 funding to allow us to purchase the hardware for this new avenue of learning. Other faculties and subjects have also benefitted from generous PiP donations and much as we might think that local and national government should be funding many of these things, sadly that is not the reality, so please know that all of your help does make a real difference to learning and pupils' opportunities whilst they are here!

Recruiting teachers is a huge challenge in particular subjects so we are using this as an opportunity next session to introduce Creative Design & Technologies courses for our S1,2 and 3 pupils. An increasing number of our S4, S5 and S6 pupils are also engaging with Foundation Apprenticeships as a part of their learning. We have been able offer qualifications at various levels in Social Services & Health Care, Children & Young People, Construction Skills and Automotive Skills. We will also have around 40 pupils who spend a day a week at North-East Scotland College in Fraserburgh pursuing a range of vocational and practical courses.

In terms of staffing, this session marks a watershed with five colleagues retiring who have nearly 120 years of combined service to The Gordon Schools between them! We thank Pat Emslie (Guidance), Jeremy Whittet (Technical), Val Ross (English), Sandy Forrest (Maths) and Pat McWilliam (Biology) for all their service and wish them well for pastures new! At the other end of their careers, it was refreshing this session to have three Probationer teachers whose specialisms are English, Music and Physical Education. All three have successfully completed their Full GTCS registration and two are continuing their journey with us as permanent members of staff.

We were delighted earlier this year to be joined by Maureen Swan and her family when we officially opened the John Swan Atrium, a tribute to a great former Rector (1991–2006). Located in the central part of our School beside Technical, the area is now a great outdoor/indoor social space for pupils, together with a refurbished technology room that has also become home to our 'Coffee Coven', for pupils studying a barista qualification.

As we finalise our plans for the new session, we hope for a year when we can really begin to learn and make memories again both inside our School as well as in the local community and further afield. We plan to have many more regular events next session and beyond inside of the building, involving families and parents in the life of the School so we can continue to support our young people together. Thank you to all families and parents who have and are contributing to our collective growth and wellbeing, and I hope as many of you as possible are able to be actively involved with The Gordon Schools over the coming months.

Fundraising subgroup report from Rachael

Unfortunately, there has not been a chance to run events so the group has looked to other sources and applying for grants. We were eligible for funding for music technology and received £9000 for MacBook's and £2000 from Glens of Foudland and almost £4500 for 20 plastic recyclable benches for both primary and secondary schools. There were requests from staff when they had a shortfall for equipment/books, and we have been able to draw money from PiP funds directly but money is needed for science and technology. It is important now that we get events running.

A fundraising suggestion was for photography sessions and to get families into the school and contribute to fundraising, another suggestion was for a coffee morning in Stewart's Hall. It was highlighted the need to be hygiene qualified and potentially the school could help to organise training or NHS partnership could potentially help with this. Pupils will have qualifications following practical food and economics but there will need to be a number of adults present at an event such as a coffee morning and as PiP we would need disclosures and it was noted that this could be expensive.

The subgroup meetings have not been happening and we need to start those again. Joyce will talk about Rachael's fundraising subgroup to 1st year parents at the Transition even on the 23rd June. We do need to look at training for our Parent Council for fundraising and who we send for training. Thanks to the fundraising team and we do hope to get together soon and do events, applying for funds is fine but would be better to get everyone together.

Financial report from Mary

Accounts have been verified by Marianne. At the start of June 2021 we opened with a balance of £3584.11 and a closing balance of £2987.94. We received cheques from Strathbogie Community Council, Mary Salmond Trust, Mother's Day Hamper, Wreath Making, Glens of Foudland Wind Farm Trust, unfortunately £1000 received from Aberdeenshire Council was in error and had to be transferred back. Outgoings were mostly secretary, funds to the school and to Sarah Robinson for litter pickers but we have done very well considering we have not gone out to fundraise. We need to check whether we are eligible to claim back 25% due to fundraising and charitable status. It would be worth doing this because the financial climate is going to be harder. Joyce will discuss with Christine MacLennan.

Action: Joyce to discuss with Christine MacLennan regarding charitable status

School Meals

There is work ongoing with education and a plan for committee to visit (awaiting forming of new council) but they are more than happy to come to Huntly. If anyone would like to take anything forward they can send comments/suggestions to Councillor Gwyneth Petrie, or partner with Gwyneth who could help with menu lobbying. Joyce can also contact Christine MacLennan.

PiP Communication

There is now the new email address and we are encouraging more parents to email into this account so they can be added to the distribution list and kept updated and also be informed of any training that the council are offering. Thanks to Rachael for adding information to the Facebook page. Staff can now take on role of administrator and do go round faculties for information to be added. The plan is that Twitter and/or Instagram will be incorporated and hope this will be around August/September. Thanks also to Helen and Colin for keeping the website up to date and adding historical minutes and agendas.

National Parents Engagement Strategy

Joyce is working with Christine MacLennan, Parent Engagement Officer and are looking at putting together a group looking at how the council moves forward with engaging parents. There have been a lot of surveys looking at parent engagement, and from those results they have started to put together a Scottish Government document and all councils are to do a separate one for each council area. Joyce has been invited to be part of the working group, from an academy point of view and will also be looking at other areas such as how does it fit for secondary school pupils that are more rural. If you do want to feed into this please email PiP, headed as 'National Parents Engagement Strategy' and Joyce will take those ideas to the group.

School Money Recoveries

Mr Gaiter informed the group that the school are not planning to charge any recoveries on art, technical or home economics, not in current climate. Scottish Government removed charges during lockdown, but this has now ended. There is residual money left in the system and ironically the money from Scottish Government didn't cover it all but represented more money from parents, but some parents cannot pay, some choose not to pay, and it can be

difficult to get that money and there is no legal requirement to pay. We need to look at ways of trying to absorb that money.

Health & Wellbeing

We plan to have more meetings in school next year and Joyce could attend if helpful from PiP point of view.

Homework/Learning and Teaching Policy Review

Joyce will lead the group to continue with input to the learning and teaching policy review which will also look at how to support parents/pupils with homework in the digital age we are now in, the do's and don'ts and what is ethical.

Action: Homework/Reporting to be added to agenda

Depute Rector Interviews

Huge thanks to Colin and Rachael for helping with the interviews at such short notice. Julie goes on maternity leave this week and Matt will start in August.

Future Meetings

The vision is to continue with a hybrid format. It was felt this has worked well and has doubled engagement for the last two meetings which is great and for those with younger children this is working well.

Future Meeting Dates:

Tuesday 6 September

Tuesday 8 November

Tuesday 17 January

Tuesday 14 March

Tuesday 25 April

Tuesday 13 June (AGM)