

Parent Council

TUESDAY 8 October 2024

Forrester High School

Present; James Hardacre (Chair) Stephen Rafferty (Head Teacher), Emma Spence (Treasurer), Sandra Donaldson (Secretary), Sam Hamilton, Kate Givan, Susan Stevens, April Forsyth, Francisca Akujobi, Sarah Batten (Maths)

1. Welcome/Apologies Laetitia Wilson, Mark Peart. Welcome to Sarah Batten – CL for Maths

2. Previous minutes/Action points.

- SR to put details of the JET programme on the school website – not such a big thing not to be on the website. Martin Ennis is in charge of this. Can be removed for future agendas
- SR to find out more about Outward Bound. Deposits have been paid. Staffing has been difficult. S6 are looking for a trip and are looking for a staff member to assist. There are issues around equity.
- SR to look into focus group or other solution for attendance messages. Office staff are stretched. The students have had warnings about being kept back which seems to be helping. The general consensus from PC was that the position had very much improved.

3. Head Teacher Update

Staffing:

Maths – There is a full complement of staff at present and the school is currently being supported by Jason McCord. However, we have not yet been able to secure Jason on a permanent basis.

CDT – There is currently a vacancy in CDT. The timetable has been re-distributed to take this into account. CL's for CDT and HE working together. Things are a bit better for HE.

Modern Languages – again, the timetable has been re-distributed – 2 for Modern Languages and 1 for PE.

English - There is a staff absence in English. However, Benjamin Talbot has been covering consistently. Mrs Collins will look to adjust the timetable, if it continues to be ongoing.

Art - There has been a long-term absence of our Curriculum Leader. However, we have an art teacher covering.

School office/school support staff – there are still only 2 members of the team – previously 3.5. We have also been unable to recruit School Support Assistants – one permanent and one temporary vacancies.

Attainment

Mr Rafferty has attended two City of Edinburgh Council Attainment Meetings at Waverly Court and was able to report positively on the attainment gains made this session. He is attending further meetings together with the Forrester Learning Community Head Teachers (previously known as Forrester Cluster).

Attainment is showing an improved picture. When the Inspectors came in February, we were not able to demonstrate consistent improvement over time. Unfortunately, receiving 'weak' for attainment also impacted on our grade for learning and teaching - graded as satisfactory. With improvements in tracking and monitoring, changes to our curriculum, and the appointment of two Learning, Teaching and Assessment Leads, we are seeing improvements in both these areas.

The previous S4 (now S5) has shown to be the strongest year group for some time, and results are currently above the Virtual, National and Local comparator (in terms of numbers of qualifications).

The school is also looking into providing more L6 courses or National Progression Awards (NPA). Mr Rafferty explained that courses with three units carry higher tariff as they have more depth.

The school is working with P7 teachers on school in-service days to ensure smooth transition and to improve continuity of experience from primary to secondary.

The current S4 are not performing as strongly. However, the changes to the curriculum should help to maintain levels of attainment. Improved tracking enables us to identify students who are not on track to achieve level 5 and make interventions and, where necessary, changes to coursing. For example, in English a group of young people who are not quite ready for Nat 5 English will be directed towards equivalent level 5 subjects such as Film and Media or Communication. Our S5 and some S4 learners have also been working on the level 6 First Aid award this week. There's a strong cohort coming through from Broad General Education (BGE) due to changes in the curriculum. Maths classes in S2 have been doing N5 past paper questions with good results, and our new Curriculum Leader is confident this will lead to a improved uptake right up to Advanced Highers.

SS queried whether the students will be separated into "ability groups". SR explained there are 2 columns for S1. S2 are in levels but these are more mixed. There are supported classes, which have been constrained by timetables. This is why it is essential to have good tracking in place to provide the right support, as S1s need to have the ability to flex to S2. Mrs Batten explained that S3 is more targeted, and the Nat4 course award will be in December with some students being presented in both N5 Maths and Application of Maths.

For Senior phase, the school is offering more subject choice, such as an increase in NPAs. For level 6, the number of these has increased from 22 to 440 (individual presentations). In Business, a new L5/6 NPA is being offered. This will result in additional qualifications. There are other subject choices also, such as music.

Attainment in Computing has been low, and our Curriculum Leader, Sarah Carnegie, is leading improvement in this area. She has been working with other schools and looking to introduce new and more relevant qualifications.

SR confirmed he will be leaving in December. However, there is a strong team in place to continue to drive improvements. PC input will be required for the recruitment process. SR suggested survey to parents? What attributes are important to parents? There is a 2 week advert, then one week for screening interviews. The appointment will be the same day as the

short-leet interviews, and there is usually an 8-week notice period for a new Head Teacher. Staff are concerned about the timeline and have been a bit unsettled.

The interview process will also include a student panel. The parents on the panel ensure the interviews are being run properly – 2/3 parents will be required for all 3 stages. First will be the screening interview on Teams. SR didn't know the dates for these. However they should be issued before the closing date for the post. SR will let SD know, to be circulated to the other PC members.

4. Treasurer's report

There is currently £900 in the account. The form has been completed for this year's funding, however the funds have not been received yet. May need to email Cllr Euan Hyslop as he helped move it along last year.

Referee costs - £30 per game. The senior years are OK, however support is needed for the younger ones. There are currently 2 teams at £30 per game and maximum 5 cup games. The contribution last year was £300. PC agreed to fund £400 this year.

Typically Easter Study funding is around £200 and a contribution is given to YPI and activities week.

Discussion around Leavers hoodies design. Linda is to put an email out to students. There might be something on the website about it. The S6 leadership team are organizing this.

Discussion around the Green Shoots Team funding application submitted by Sarah Ross. Agreed funding of £450.

5. Parent Evenings/PC Volunteers

A parent information sheet was previously given out. ES thinks she may have a copy of this. All agreed that the map previously distributed was very useful. SR will email John MacPhie to see if these can be printed for this year.

27/11/2024 - S4/S5/S6 – All can attend, however there are a few who have students there that night, but can help to mingle

09/01/2025 – S2 – SD & JH

28/01/2025 – S3 – KG and SD

12/03/2025 – S4/S5/S6 - All can attend, however there are a few who have students there that night, but can help to mingle

SR to confirm date for S1 parent's evening

The PC banner is a bit outdated and doesn't reflect new school colours. May need to consider getting costing for a new one. S6's have also helped out directing parents, serving tea/coffee at previous meetings also.

6. PC Activities

PC should be highlighting the work they do – could the students promote this to their parents about how PC help?

It would be useful if the PC could reach Primary cluster PC's to promote it so that they are aware of it before their children start at Forrester. KG can reach out to Carrick Knowe PC and AF can reach out to Murrayburn.

ES to send parent information sheet to SR so it can be sent to all parents.

SB said there is going to be a numeracy evening for S1's on 29 October 5.30 to 6.30. S1 parents getting an email this week. Is PC volunteer able to attend. None sure.

SD to have another look at the Connect website and promote courses of interest.

Comms channels and website to be reviewed.

FA asked whether it would be possible to provide additional tutoring? SR confirmed this is happening already after school. Maths support is provide every day. For example additional support has been given for a N5 assessment tomorrow. For Highers, there were 14 is supported study. SB confirmed there's lots of support provided daily.

The support is advertised on Teams, information boards and promoted by staff, however the school needs to look after the wellbeing of the staff too. Students have private Teams channels to teachers where the can ask for support.

7. Teacher recognition

Names put forward

8. AOB.

Queues at lunchtime – sometimes it's difficult to get food by the end of the lunch break. These are patrolled to make sure everyone gets a main meal.

Personal statements - help can be given to write these.

Tracking system – concerns raised about how disheartening these are due to the “working at” level. SB confirmed that the file assessments are for the work they have done so far, and therefore can't properly grade the work until the prelims as it's covering more topics. Therefore, teachers can't grade properly at this stage as they can't evidence A/B grades. The target grade is agreed with the student. Perhaps some comms around this needs to be given to parents. SR to work with J MacP around the narrative and perhaps have a meeting with parents.

AF asked about the Appeals. SR confirmed the appeals are in and students will be alerted of any outcome.

No common room for S6. SR confirmed they don't have one as there are too many students in the school. They have had to reclaim rooms from partners. The school may increase to 1050 students next year. It's going to take about 5 years to build other schools needed. There are rumors about a review of the catchment area.

KG asked about the inclusion review, as it sounds like cuts are going to be made. SR explained there is a centralized inclusion unit, for statutory requirements, such as English as a second language, and is not specifically local support. KG explained there is only a 40 day window for parent consultation as at 17 September, so time is running out. KG will send to SD to distribute the email.

Meeting ended 9.00 pm

Action points

- SR to let SD know interview dates once released
- SD to circulate dates for interview volunteers
- SR to email J MacP about MAP for parent's evening
- KG to raise awareness of Forrester PC to Carrick Knowe Primary PC
- AF to raise awareness of Forrester PC to Murrayburn Primary PC
- ES to send PC parent information sheet to SR
- SR to work with J MacP around the tracking reports
- KG to send email to SD about inclusion finding cuts for distribution

Dates of PC meetings:

10 September 2024 – James Hardacre

12 November 2024 – April Forsyth

14 January 2025 – Kate Givan

18 March 2025 – Susan Stevens

29 April 2025 – Laetitia Wilson

10 June 2025 (AGM) - Joint

Role of Chair

- Meet with HT to review draft minutes & agree agenda for next meeting
- Chair the PC meeting;
 - make sure meeting runs smoothly & efficiently
 - run in an inclusive & friendly way
 - effective decisions are made
- Monitor PC mailbox
- Liaise with school & treasurer over funding plans for PC money
- Point of contact for the school to raise/discuss any issues or proposed changes
- Assist with interviews/recruitment when necessary (generally management level)
- Give an annual report at the AGM