

Ellon Academy Parent Council Meeting – 12 March 2025

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1. Welcome and apologies

2. Action Note from Previous Meeting

AuchterEllon Bus Proposal: Following investigation James Simpson reverted back to say that there is no Council /Private support to progress this and that the Director of Education has confirmed that those within the 2-mile distance from school must walk / make their own way.

James Simpson attended the Aberdeenshire PC Meeting with Director of Education with queries raised about:

Budget: Further information yet to be understood following Council Budget in February

Janitor Cuts / Workforce Cut plans: Further information yet to be understood following Council Budget in February

Reduction in teaching contract hours: Further information yet to be understood following Council Budget in February

Reduced Week: There will be no change to the school week.

Curriculum Costs: Supplies for Home Economics / Woodwork: These will continue to be funded by the schools.

Action: James Simpson (Chairperson) informed us that Parent Council have a vacancy for a Secretary. He will put a post out on the PC Facebook and invite parents/carers to get in touch with him.

3. Treasurer's Update by Ruth Leuchars

All cheques and income cleared and accounted for.

Balance at (11 March 2025): **£2093.71**

There has been one transaction for £155.88 paid to Mrs Karen Gray for the Zoom Licence Renewal on 3rd March.

No further payments are outstanding.

Aberdeenshire Council Funding:

Anticipated in March. Ruth asked if there there been any email requests for information to release funding for this academic year? Last payment was for £545.25 in March 2024

Action: James to check for emails/reporting requirements.

3 D printer update:

Notification has been received to advise that the Shell Grant application was unsuccessful.

I have now completed an application for an Ellon Rotary Grant requesting £500.00 towards the cost of the Bambu Lab P1S 3D Printer which is currently priced at £509.00. This will allow EAPC to fund accessories and filament bundles. Closing Date for Fund is 31st March.

Action: Ruth to finalise Grant Application with recent data and submit. Submitted 20/3/25 and receipt to acknowledge received.

Mr Sherrington mentioned that Jamieson Quarries may be worth approaching for funding.

4. Parent Council Fund Discussion

- Graphic Design | School Values: Exec Team have been collaborating closely with Staff and are currently in process of confirming values and value statements for 3 Values:
Community
Ambition
Respect
Mission Statement: Excellence for Ellon

The Exec Team are working on Logo's.

Action: Ruth to introduce a parent who has offered to help with guidance and graphic design input.

- Mr Sherrington noted that 2 Head Prefects presented findings during a Council Performance Review receiving great feedback about their leadership on this project. The goal is to launch the Values and Logos before the S6 team leave school in June.

5. Head Teacher Update

Staffing update:

- A new Business Teacher has been appointed who is a former student who will serve their probation year in the school.
- A PT Development role is being created with Jo Murray appointed. This role is to support young people who are at risk of non-attendance with staff working across the welfare team to build an appropriate curriculum around these young people to improve their outcomes and engagement.
- A 6th Guidance Teacher role is being created and is awaiting authorisation. This will reduce the caseload for current Guidance Teachers. It will be advertised as a 23-month contract initially with Title of Principal Teacher of Guidance and Pupil Tracking. The current plan is for a phased build as follows:
Year 1: 1st – 4th Year
Year 2: 1st – 5th Year
Year 3: 1st – 6th Year
Classes will be kept together during the transition but it is possible that some families may have children in different houses as the transition progresses. Work is being done to look at best options to minimise disruption with the aim to keep future siblings in the same house.
- A question was raised about Flexi Schooling for ASN pupils. It is proposed that Guidance staff will have additional capacity to focus and support attendance after the new Guidance post is filled.

Prelim Feedback

- This year the school made the change to have no study leave during the prelim diet. While there are pros & cons, on balance it was felt 2 weeks out of a 40-week term results in the loss of too much learning support and there is greater benefit to keeping young people in school.
- S4's on track. 50 – 55% achieved 5 at Level 5. Recognised that there is always an uptick in final exams. Finals last year - 59.5%. Aberdeenshire average 51.8% Scotland Average 54.4%

Access to Insight data suggests that there is an attainment gap when measured against a Virtual Comparator. (64% last year with insights modelling).

Mr Sherrington raised a discussion about whether the current prelim format is creating an artificial 2-week window of stress. SLT to explore widening the assessment window from December – March so that young people can be assessed when ready with the curriculum. Potential to design Assessment Roadmaps mentioned to ensure cross faculty sequencing with assignments and assessments. Parents felt that it would be important for a consultation to happen next term if changes are to be brought in for 2025/2026 academic year so that pupils are clear about how it will be structured for their subjects. It was also felt that Pupil Voice is important in relation to future change.

- **Learning Development**

Mr Sherrington is developing a 3-year strategy for the School Improvement Plan

Year 1: Focus on Purpose of Learning and Effective Questioning. Training delivered to share good practice and this has involved Teacher Observation sessions with a further 2-week block.

Year 2: Focus on Assessment and Pace & Challenge within a lesson

Year 3: Feedback & Autonomy. Supporting pupils with ability to question feedback on learning and work submitted.

The aim is to ensure these 6 themes (John Hattie) are embedded in every lesson to underpin learning.

Increased Teaching Hours for Highers

- Transition to timetable of 5 columns with 6 periods per column.. This will mean that for those studying 5 Highers there will be no study periods. As a cohort, young people aren't reaching their potential. Mr Sherrington & staff believe the best resource is time in class with the teacher. This means that there will be 40 extra periods / 8 weeks of extra teaching time. Staff will be able to use their expertise to use this time effectively e.g. Extra time for assessments in some subjects or focus on topics that require extra support.

Discussion points about self-directed learning and importance of this especially for young people targeting further education.

6. Parent Queries

Comms between Hub and Wider School/Accessibility

- Discussion to consider creating a sub-group of parent council for parents of young people in the Hub to represent ASN inclusion in the school. Issues were raised about the following:
 - Accessibility to the sunken social area is very restrictive for wheel chair users which has resulted in them not being able to fully participate in school activities. There is a lift available but requires access to a key and keyholder.
 - Google classroom communication issues were raised as a result of young people being absent early in the school year. Mr Sherrington advised that he has taken action to rectify the process for this for the future and apologised to young people and families concerned.
 - Difficulties for parents to navigate information and policies to understand support available for their young people.
 - A question was raised about preparedness for an increase in numbers of ASN young people anticipated in 2-3 years' time.

- It is felt that representation on the parent council would assist with giving a voice to families, assist with knowledge sharing and create a stronger sense of community.
- **Action: James to reach out and make connections to move this forward with everyone in attendance being supportive.**

Parent Evenings

- Mr Sherrington has conducted a poll about Parent Evenings and preferences for Virtual/online Only, In-person only or a mix of both. There were 80 responses with approx. 80 % preferring virtual/online parent evenings. It was agreed for the poll to be extended and added to the parent council Facebook page to encourage further participation. Mr Sherrington expressed that there were pros and cons to both and that while teachers preferred in-person events there were logistical benefits to online events. An alternative option that could be considered is for parents to be invited into the school for a pupil led tour of their subjects/classes and the opportunity to check over their classwork and speak to teachers. This format could enable teachers to spend more time with groups of parents & carers going through the curriculum, study techniques etc.

Next Meeting 10th June (In-person and zoom available)