

Perth Grammar School Parent Council

Chairs' Report 2023/24

It was quite an exciting start to the beginning of the 2023/24 with our first Parent Council meeting of the academic term. We organised pizza for the evening and several new parents attended both the main meeting and our AGM. Even more exciting was the fact that a couple of those new parents joined the Parent Council Board at the AGM – Roy McIntosh as Vice Chair and Alexandra McQueen as secretary. It's been great working with you both this year.

The first meeting was also a good chance to meet the new pupil leadership team (Archie Mitchell and Alasdair Dawes) and to hear the events they had planned for the year, including a winter ceilidh and disco, a Christmas Jumper Day and other fundraising events over the year. Save during prelims, at least one member of the Pupil Leadership Team was in attendance at our meetings and it was a good chance to be kept up to date with the pupils' initiatives and achievements.

With Covid impacting matters in one way or another over the previous 2 years the Parent Council bank balance was a little higher than we would normally like at the start of the academic year. Our treasurer Jenny Robertson had asked in our first meeting in September for faculty heads to come up with funding requirements within a general £250 per faculty budget. The uptake was good and over £2,500 of funds were used for items such as PGS logo t-shirts for the school's sports teams, musical instruments, geography field equipment and other items much needed to assist with the learning of our young people. Jenny has done an amazing job this year in ensuring that a sensible amount of our funds have been spent; the money is there to benefit the school and our young people.

Thanks to the support and votes of parents in the previous few months, the Parent Council benefited from a cheque from the Asda Community Fund last academic year which was used in the purchase of new sports equipment.

Our meetings have also been a good opportunity to hear what's happening in Scottish education; getting the heads up (and background) on what surveys and consultations are current.

In November we had a guest speaker from the School/Street Pastors in Perth. The School Pastor is an extension of a Street Pastor (who I'm sure you've seen in the city centre streets looking out for the safety of our young people on a Friday/Saturday night). The School Pastor's purpose, in partnership with the school and other local agencies, is to enhance the safety and emotional and social well being of our young people through caring, listening and helping. One of the many benefits of the School Pastor being a known face in the school is they are then also a known face on the streets if any of our young people are in need of help on a night out. The relationship and trust has already been built up.

Additionally, in November we had the chance to "meet the Depute", namely Greg Duncan who had taken up post in September 2023. It was an opportunity to find out his particular role in the school and to get a flavour of his plans for the academic year.

In January we met the new Principal Teacher of Health & Wellbeing, Cheryl McIntosh who had joined the school at the beginning of the academic year. She took the opportunity to set out her plans for formulating a Health and Wellbeing improvement plan in the school.

A key topic on Mr Duncan's agenda for the year has been attendance. A new policy was launched in early 2024 underlining that "Every Day does matter!" At our March meeting Mr Duncan talked us through the new attendance policy with the aid of 5 pictorial documents. The positive benefits associated with high attendance were outlined as were the ways to encourage our young people to invest in their attendance percentage – this has apparently spurred some on to avoid absence in order to keep their score high. It was also interesting to learn how many days are lost in a year just by being 5, 10 or 15 minutes late for any class. The negative effects on pupils arising from avoidable absences were also discussed.

There was also a very useful session in the March meeting when one of the other Deputes, Sam Lewis, ran through the preparations for study school during the Easter holidays. This runs in 3 hour long study seminars on different days in different subjects. It is a very valuable opportunity for the senior pupils to have extra access to a teacher and to brush up on areas of concern as they make that last concentrated effort to ready themselves for their Nat 5s, Highers and Advanced Highers.

The Parent Council was involved in the P7 Transition Night, taking the opportunity to make new parents aware of the "Parent Council" and to encourage involvement. Again, we issued our informative Parent Council leaflet. The Parent Council is there to represent you and your child through their secondary years and we are hopeful that the face to face reminder of its existence/function will have encouraged new parents to engage in the coming year.

Another key function of the Parent Council has been to share relevant information on our social media pages and, additionally, arranging for information to be put in the school bulletin where appropriate. Thanks to Alexandra McQueen for being brilliant at keeping our social media fresh and relevant. I know I've found it easier to keep on top of the key happenings in the school as a result.

After 3 years in the role as Chair, I am stepping down at this year's AGM. I am therefore especially pleased that we have had new blood over the last year and I am confident that through them the parents of Perth Grammar School will continue to be represented and enjoy a good dialogue with the senior leadership team in the school.

As in previous years, I would like to thank the other members of the Parent Council Board for their continued support over the last 12 months. I would also like to thank Miss Robertson and her senior leadership team, and some of the other teachers, for their attendance at our Parent Council meetings and for their updates during the year. I would additionally like to thank Baillie Aherne and Councillor Parrot for their regular attendance and keen interest at our meetings too.

I would just close by saying that I want to encourage more parents to become involved in the Parent Council. This is your school and these are your young people and if the Parent Council can actively engage with those educating our young people it can only drive forward the school agenda of pride, respect and ambition. I would really encourage you to get involved.