

Hawick High School Parent Council

Minutes of meeting – Tuesday 23rd January 2018

Hawick High School Staff Room at 18:30

- present Andy Maybury (Chair), Keith Morgan (Vice-Chair), Carna McDonald (Treasurer)
Becca Anderson, Elizabeth Watt, Gillie Macdonald, Andrew Dobbie, Scott Amos, Julie Richards, Neil Richards, Anna Drabner-Graham, Paul Graham, Susan Scott, Alison Short, Brian Casson, Cindy Stirrat, Steven Johnson, Steph Johnston, Angela Lindsay, Lisa Oliver, Susie Hodgins, Alison Haig, Laura Melville, Sheila Clyne, Lisa Welsh, Susan Darcy, Sean Page, Fiona Carlile, Lyndsay Hodgins, Jane Wilson, Chrisy Robson
Vicky Porteous (Head Teacher), Lesley Munro (SBC), Catherine Thomson (SBC), Michelle Strong (SBC), Steven Renwick (SBC)
Duncan Taylor, Graeme Cockburn
Cllr Ramage, Cllr Marshall, (Cllr Richards)
- apologies Helene Jaffray, Susan Green, Ailsa Green, Sue Anderson, Susan Coltman, Kerry Mitchell, Karen Copeland, George Turnbull

Welcome

The Chair welcomed the members and attendees and reminded everyone that those with individual concerns should speak to their child's guidance teacher or Vicky.

Update on behaviour Action Plan

The action plan is being implemented and improvements are beginning to be seen but it is acknowledged that there is much work to be done and there needs to be a change in culture within the school. This will take time.

Home-School Link Workers

There are to be two additional youth workers employed to provide improved liaison with the parents of children in the school so as to address issues holistically. These will be review in February.

Specialised learning packages

Some pupils are engaged in bespoke learning packages designed to fit their needs and abilities.

For some, this includes vocational placements and these have been set up in collaboration with Developing the Young Workforce (DYW).

There is an idea to set up a hairdressing salon on site for training purposes.

Outdoor learning has been identified as an important area to develop.

Broader aspects

There was a police presence in the school prior to the Christmas break.

There is a drink culture in town. This is being tackled by the Healthy Hawick Initiative.

There is additional management support from SBC. Liz Wharton and Catherine Thomson have been assigned to the school for the time being. This has helped cover the long-term sick leave of a Deputy Head Teacher (DHT).

SBC has now agreed to five DHTs and interviews are scheduled for next week.

A Principle Teacher (PT) of Guidance will be the link with the DYW team. There is a program with Esh Border Construction.

Social Work are providing additional support where appropriate.

Training

Various professional training is in place for teaching staff, all of whom have been trained in 'de-escalation'. Guidance and PTs will be trained in advanced de-escalation techniques.

Inclusion base

An 'inclusion base' has been set up in the old school office. This is a place where disruptive children can be brought to help address their issues.

Vision

Vicky will use the in-service day in February (9th) to explain to the whole staff what her vision for the school is. The aim is for an inclusive school that provides appropriate support for all young people according to their needs.

Rewarding positive behaviour

A series of assemblies was held to recognise those pupils who consistently do what is asked of them. Certificates were given to those who were nominated by teachers resulting in the vast majority of students being recognised. Criticism has been levelled at the low threshold for inclusion and the fact that the pieces of paper were not personalised. Vicky recognised that it had been implemented quickly and had not been as she would have liked, especially in terms of putting names on each certificate.

Chris South the PE PT is very keen on developing the House identity within the school and using this as an incentive for good behaviour and a mechanism for recognising such.

There is a need to develop a policy regarding positive behaviour. Vicky suggested establishing a working group for rewarding positive behaviour. Any parent interested in being involved with this working group should contact Vicky or Andy, the PC Chair.

Summary

Significant improvements have been made but it is recognised that there is much to be done, including a change in the culture within the school, which will take time to achieve.

Parents want to know that their children are safe while at school and this is not always the case. It was felt that the school had missed an opportunity to reassure pupils during the pre-Christmas assemblies regarding their safety in school.

There should be regular updates for parents but it was unclear how best to effect this.

Staffing

Dan Fox starts after Easter.

Interviews are being held for a permanent Guidance Teacher.

A preferred candidate has been identified for the post of Business Manager.

SBC has committed to providing a 'grow-your-own' Home Economics teacher and an experienced teacher to support this NQT next session.

They have also agreed to a 'grow-your-own' Business Studies teacher.

The technical studies department is suffering from a member of staff being on long-term sick leave.

There are vacancies in the Maths and Computing departments and the posts are currently being advertised.

School Estate Review

Lesley Munro from SBC gave a presentation (which will be circulated) about the 'school estate' review being carried out currently by the Council. Many of the secondary schools in the Borders have been rebuilt over recent years and Jedburgh has recently secured funding for a new, all-age campus on a green-field site in town, incorporating the two primary schools and the grammar school as well as providing space for tertiary and adult education. The four remaining secondary schools are in need of major renovation or rebuild and a decision will be made later in the year as to which one or two schools will be next. It was highlighted that the Jedburgh campus was expedited because of the strong community backing for the proposals.

A technical review of the fabric of the current premises was carried out in 2016. It is clear that certain parts of Hawick High school are beyond their design life and unfit for purpose. Water leaks are evident, particularly where the buildings have flat roofs.

What could a new Hawick Campus include? In what ways could it provide more than just secondary education? Could it have more of a community element? What facilities would be useful to the wider community? If there were opportunities for youngsters in the new buildings, could the problems of teenagers hanging out in the Howegate or the number of youth travelling to other towns for entertainment be reduced?

A wide-ranging community discussion needs to be had so that everyone is supportive of any plans that are developed and proposed to SBC. To this end, SBC plans to hold community workshops in each of the four affected towns during February. The Parent Council is keen to stimulate interest in the community and will look to hold its own workshop before the SBC workshop so that everyone is well prepared to bring ideas to the SBC workshop. Invitations will be sent out to community groups and clubs.

Time is short and we need to stir up interest and involvement from any groups that each of us is a part of.

Constitution

The current draft was circulated for discussion but no comments were forthcoming. Parents are encouraged to read the document and suggest changes. This is an area where a small working group could be effective. Anyone wishing to be involved should contact the Chair.

Website

The PC currently has its own website, set up a couple of years ago at significant cost. No one has time to keep it updated and it has never been the communication tool that it was intended to be. The school has offered space on its website to host some pages for the parent council. After a brief discussion, it was decided to scrap the existing website and put some basic information on the school website.

Vicky will inform those responsible and enable access for the PC to update information on the PC page(s) on the school's site. Any will investigate the possibility of redirecting from the current website (hhspc.org) to the main PC page on the school's site.

Other business

Concerns were raised about comments from parents and pupils on the HHN Facebook page being deleted. Vicky said that she had no knowledge of what happened as she has no connection to it but she would look into it further. Also concern was raised about a fire that had been started within the school in a waste bin. Vicky was initially unsure about the incident but on reflection was able to give some insight into the event, which was contained quite quickly.

Next Meeting

18 April—please note change

The next PC meeting will be Wednesday ~~21st March~~ 2018 at 18:00 for 18:30.

Wednesday 21 March is now the date for the new campus consultation. 14:15–20:00