



TURRIFF ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

TUESDAY 7th November 2017

7pm at Turriff Academy

PRESENT:

Lee Menzies - Rector
Jane Bissett - Deputy Head & Teacher Rep
Lynn Chambers - Chairperson
Carol Walker - Vice Chair
Sam James - Treasurer
Susan Pirie - Secretary
Irene Birtwhistle - Parent Rep
Carol Allan - Parent Rep
Sandy McCaskill - Community Rep
Cllr Alastair Forsyth

Pupil Reps - Kayla and Sophie S4 pupils, both World of Work, (WOW)
Ambassadors

PARENT COUNCIL MINUTES

1. WELCOME

Lynn welcomed all attending the meeting tonight and welcomed and introduced the new Secretary for the Parent Council, Susan Pirie, and also Cllr Alastair Forsyth who is attending for the first time. The committee members introduced themselves.

2. APOLOGIES

Alan Chalmers, Cara Clark, Cllr Sandy Duncan, Cllr Forsyth informed the committee that Cllr Ann Stirling was at Fyvie and Cllr Ian Taylor was at Monquhitter.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING - 12 June 2017

Jane handed round copies of the previous minutes from 12 June 2017. Lynn asked the committee to have a quick read through to remind everyone what had been discussed previously, as last meeting was before the Summer break.

Lee mentioned on the second last page of the previous minutes, that had been typed by the previous Secretary Karen, that the top paragraph has a line mentioning that the Parent Engagement Group were really struggling. This is incorrect and should be amended to read that the Aberdeenshire Parental Group are looking at ways to continue to develop an increase in parental participation.

Lynn said on the last page of previous minutes, under Correspondence, it mentions that Lynn is attending Oldmeldrum Academy to sit in on a Parent Council Meeting, it's actually an Aberdeenshire Council Training meeting not a Parent Council one, this will also be amended.

Carol Allan said that she was not marked as being present in last minutes but she was there as she proposed the last minutes so her name is to be added to attendees.

Carol Allan proposed the minutes and this was seconded by Carol Walker.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM LAST MINUTES

Lynn said matters arising from last minutes will shortly follow in Lee's report.

5. PUPIL'S REPORT

Lynn invited Kayla and Sophie up to do a presentation for the committee. They are both World of Work (WOW) Ambassadors. Jane said that Kayla and Sophie are two of fifteen WOW Ambassadors. They have taken on the biggest job and have talked to every first year pupil and they have been working at parent's nights as well, so they have taken on a lot of work.

The girls started by informing everyone that all the S1 pupils have had a talk and they all got a magazine to take home to their parents. All pupils from S1 to S6 are encouraged to have a login for the website. The website can be found at www.myworldofwork.co.uk. It has support and information for the pupils and their parents, carers, families and friends. There are, as already mentioned, 15 WOW Ambassadors who are all in S4. They went to a workshop with their Careers Adviser and learned how to make PowerPoint presentations, work on confidence building etc. The website is designed to help you develop career management skills, to choose your career pathway, there are a number of quizzes to help you. There are three main areas in the webpage they are, Career Options, Learn and Train and Getting A Job. The first option helps you get a better idea of what type of career path you may want to take. Learn and train gives you suggestions of courses and training that may be of interest to you, this allows you to sign up for volunteering courses that are interesting to you and it gives advise for possible University courses. You can type in key words and search. The final option, getting a job, allows you to find jobs and modern apprenticeships. The website also helps you to create a CV, interview skills is another area that is included. The girls had spoken with Guidance Teacher, Mr Martin, who thinks giving pupils advise on what to include in a CV is great as a lot of the pupils are unsure what to put into their CV. Pupils can access the website from the school library or at home. It is free and is great at identifying your strengths, gives helpful advise on careers, training and further education. The website is not only for pupils but for anyone in the community to use.

Cllr Forsyth asked Sophie and Kayla if they had prepared the PowerPoint presentation themselves, the girls said that they had, he said he highly commended them for their excellent presentation as it was good experience for them and not easy to stand up in front of a room of people and talk. The rest of the group agreed that they had done really well.

Carol Walker asked if the Ambassadors will come to meetings regularly. Lee said it would be nice to have different groups attending our meetings such as Aberdeenshire Pupil Participation and other groups who can come in to discuss varying themes.

6. RECTOR'S REPORT

There were a number of things that Lee wanted to raise with the committee.

The first one was regarding parental volunteering, she said at Primary School parents often came in to help in the school, but it's not something that many secondary schools engage with. She explained that with the continuing tightness with staffing it is becoming increasingly more difficult to allow the pupils to attend things that normally staff would accompany them with. Lee wanted to ask the opinion of the committee on how they felt about some parent helpers assisting instead. This wouldn't be a parent taking an entire class somewhere but could perhaps be additional support for teachers. An example would be, a member of staff may attend an event with pupils and it's the pupils that are participating with for example Aberdeenshire Council running workshops, leaving the teacher to just be there observing when they could of course be back at school teaching instead, so in a similar case a parent volunteer could attend in a chaperone role in place of a teacher. Transport would be arranged to take them in and return them after the event. Lee wanted to know if it's worth putting out notification to the parents to gauge interest, she didn't see it as an onerous task as they may be asked to assist once or twice a year. If this went ahead then Aberdeenshire Council's volunteering application would have to be completed, proof of identity and a PVG check would need to be done. Carol Walker asked how long that would take to process, Lee said it can vary but generally it takes a few weeks. They could possibly do applications as a batch say at perhaps at the start of a year everyone can be informed that applications would need to be in before the Summer holidays and send off so they would be processed during the Summer holidays. At the moment there are a couple of ex teacher helping out in this capacity. Mrs Bakine is helping out with the Higher Geography trip to assist them. Lynn agreed it would be worth asking the parents. Carol Walker raised concerns that pupils might feel uncomfortable if it's not someone the children are not familiar with, however, she was assured that the parents would mainly be used to accompany other teachers to events and not be with the children on their own. It was discussed perhaps having a database of volunteers. Lee confirmed that information about this will be put out to parents and applications will available to complete online.

The trip to Catalonia next June has had to be changed, following on from the terrorist attack in Barcelona, a risk assessment had to be looked at and just before the October holidays there was further news of nationalistic uprisings. Lee met with Michael Forsyth, the trip leader and two members of Aberdeenshire Council, to discuss whether or not the trip would still be viable.

At the time it was thought that the risk was too high, not so much for things happening but more for disruption. For example if you are trying to get from A to B and there is a crowd demonstrating it means delays for the group. Mr Forsyth contacted the travel company to explain the situation and has now been able to change the trip to a different one. Its different but still very good. They are now going to The Alps, flying into Geneva. It is still the same price. Instead of Coastal Geography it will be Glacial Geography, visiting glaciers and caves. There will be white water rafting and there is a trip to a spa, these are just some of the activities they are taking part in. Some parents had been asking why there was not parental consultation on the trip. Lee said it was a decision that just had to be made really quickly so there was no time for consultation due to time constraints as the group may have missed out on an alternative trip being arranged. There a couple of people who now can't manage but Lee hopes to fill these places. The decision was not taken lightly to change the trip.

Lee said there was a meeting, also tonight, and Aberdeenshire Council representatives are there in terms of risk management, as Mrs Sivewright is in the process of looking at planning a trip to Zambia and Botswana for 2019. As safety of the pupils is paramount parents will be advised if the trip is cancelled the school will not be held responsible for any financial loss of deposits as this is not covered under the insurance unless the foreign office advises that it's not safe to travel and this wasn't the case with the Catalonia trip.

Since the AGM, a number of the 5th years were away to Safe Drive, Stay Alive today which is the programme designed to educate young people about safety in particular when they first get their driving licence. Lee had hoped to run the Driving Ambition programme, which they had last year for the 6th years at the same time, but it didn't quite work out in terms of timescales so w this is still trying to be fitted in between now and when the 6th years leave. It's a very useful programme on safety and basic car maintenance, keeping your car winter proof and so on. It is run by DAB who are ex police and professional driving instructors who give their services voluntarily. The benefit of not doing it at the moment is that more of the 6th years may have their provisional licences if we do it later in the year, which means they can have a go with a professional driving instructor as well which would be good.

We had a group of Politics students away at RGU yesterday, involved in political debates to assist them with their Politics courses.

There is also Advanced Higher Biology sessions booked in for the next 2 or 3 weeks where they go and work in a lab situation rather than a school situation. One of them will actually be going to Huntly and there will be a professional scientist coming in to work with them.

The 1st years had an assembly last week and we have a slide-a-thon booked, where they can go up and down slide a raise money for leprosy. This charity has been supported by Turriff Academy pupils for a number of years.

There was a come as you please day just before the October holidays and this raised just under £400. There are nominations from the young people where they would like the money to go to. This will go out to a vote soon.

Children in Need will take place a week on Friday. Where pupils can wear something spotty. There will be a surprise visit from Pudsy!

There are a couple of young people going to Auschwitz this week. Youngsters from all over the UK go and they learn about holocaust. When they come back they will then do an assembly and a presentation for the Parent Council about their experiences.

Poppy Scotland are having assemblies on Friday just before break time for S1 to 3 and just after break for S4 - 6. There will be a 2 minute silence during each of these sessions for the pupils to reflect.

Today we had the Mitty Foundation in with the 3rd years doing an Engineering challenge. The WOW Ambassadors were there developing their World of Work skills looking at communication, time management etc. Interestingly both in the morning and afternoon session, there were challenges that were won by the girls, they are the girls into energy cohort who are doing work with North East College and in Partnership with Shell in Engineering. So what they are learning with them seems to have given them an advantage over everyone else.

The SPTC website (Scottish Parent Council), where Aberdeenshire are corporate members, Turriff Academy don't appear to have a login to access the website. There are a number of online training courses that may be useful. Cllr Forsyth asked if this was through Aldo but Lee said no it's through Scottish Parent Teaching Council website. Lots of tips on finance, constitution, trying to engage with parent community etc. Lee will email Donna Watson to get the login and password.

Lee asked if anyone had heard of SNSA? It's the Scottish National Standardised Assessment. Lee passed a handout round. She told the committee that it's relatively new and they haven't used it yet. This will go out to parents and carers soon. Baseline assessments are already used in schools, those have now changed and this will replace it, it will focus on aspects of reading, writing and literacy. It's not a what you will achieve type test. The assessment looks at where they are now and looks at where gaps are its a diagnostic tool. Carol Walker asked if its online, Lee confirmed it is but they can be modified according to the ability of the child, everyone doesn't do the same test. The assessments start off quite straight forward to help with their confidence and the levels gradually get harder. It will only be for the 3rd years and Debbie Ewan will be leading on this, starting in end of November/December. Carol Walker asked if it gets fed back to the teaching staff or if it's fed back to the pupils as well. Lee said it doesn't get fed back to the pupils but it can be useful for parents to discuss with the guidance teacher looking at strengths. It is just for literacy and numeracy and more a support for the pupils.

Staffing - having Been fully staffed at the end of term, unfortunately, we are not fully staffed at the moment. We had employed a member of staff in the English department but they have decided to go to Mauritius rather than Turriff. An advert will be going out for an English teacher, it has been advertised twice already, unfortunately, although there were some applicants, they were not suitable. The advert has been changed to make it less generic and make it more focused on Turriff. All English classes are being covered some by supply teachers.

In the Modern Studies Department, David Maclean is going to Skye to take up a Learning Support post, he left at the end of term. This post was also advertised, there were some applicants but they didn't interview anyone and the post will be advertised again. All classes in Modern Studies are being covered and there are very experienced members of retired supply staff.

After Christmas we will be looking at probationers for next year as well.

Irene asked what type of things that make the applicants unsuitable for the teaching posts. Lee said it can be a number of things from lack of experience, they are not GTC registered. People apply from all over the world but we can't employ them if they do not have GTC registration, they don't have the correct qualifications, it can be that they can't communicate well enough what they want to do in the classrooms, it's a whole variety of factors. There are a lot of challenges filling job vacancies throughout Aberdeenshire. Lee said

there are some good students at the moment particular in physics, one in particular who has taught in the past, he has come from industry. Lee emphasised that there are green shoots out there, we want to get the best staff rather than just employ for the sake of employing.

Kathleen Riddoch is retiring at Christmas time and we have appointed a DHT, we have appointed Mr Martin. There were nearly 20 applications for the post. This was narrowed down to 8 then a shortlist of 4. Once Mr Martin is in post Lee wasn't sure if he would be continuing with his PTA role. He will be continuing with pupil support DHT in the meantime and has agreed to continue to help the 6th years. Lee confirmed he is continuing with the 6th year head role for continuity. The advert for his post has been approved today for his replacement so this should be out in the next couple of days.

The last item is regarding the PTA (Parent Teachers Association), some of you here are on PTA as well as Parent Council. Lee felt that we need to have a look at the PTA constitution, copies of this were passed around the group. It's something that has not been looked at and refreshed in quite a while.

There is a PTA meeting on Thursday night so this will be discussed in greater detail there. One of the issues with it is that although it's called a PTA there's not very many teachers involved in it. There is supposed to be 16 members 8 parents and 4 teachers over 2 terms, also 4 Senior Pupils. What's happening at the moment is in breach of the constitution so we need to do something. Lee thinks be unlikely to have 4 teacher reps on this committee just because of the various stresses and strains with National qualifications etc. Lynn said they need to arrange an (extraordinary general meeting) EGM, to fully discuss to see what needs to be changed. The focus on Thursday will be to do this and any proposals for this will go to the whole parent body and the staff body. Lynn was asked to circulate copies of the constitution to the rest of parent reps involved in the committee before Thursday's meeting. Lee will send it out to the staff. Thoughts were would it remain separate or perhaps become a sub committee of the Parent Council. Try and include some more young people involved which could help with the fundraising aspect. There was a discussion around tea being served during parents night as a number of parents come straight from work, that would be something the youngsters could help out with. There could be a donation box.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION - Sandy MacCaskill

Sandy informed the committee that the next two events happening in Turriff are the Christmas Lights switch on which is on Sunday 26 November from

1pm until 5.30pm at The Square and then the Turriff Winter Wonderland event on Saturday 2 December down at the Haughs from 4pm until 9.30pm.

Sandy reported that there had been vandalism down at The Haughs with banners and posters for Turriff Winter Wonderland and The Boating Pond being destroyed. The wooden slats have been pulled out of the bench down at the grassy burn, it is off to be repaired. The committee expressed its disappointment at this happening.

Internationally the rotary commits to helping young kids make their way from the transition from school into work. They offer their services to provide mock interviews. There are rotary clubs in other areas assisting the schools with this but it has not been done within Turriff Academy so far. Sandy went on to say that the rotary club also have a number of contacts at the end part of WOW once they decide where their careers may be focused by sitting them in front of a professional, such as vets, farmers etc. They also do mentoring, after the pupils have left school, we can provide someone from a particular skill or background like the oil or farming industries to help them and coach them.

There is a Rotary Young Leader award. They are looking for a boy and a girl from Turriff Academy and send them away for a week, all expenses paid . They do a week of various challenges, outward bound stuff and problem solving tasks and they find this of great benefit. There were no pupils last year from the Academy, which was disappointing, so they had a boy from the Air Cadets. They were unable to get a girl. Lee said if he came along to the Senior Parents evening events on 7 and 12 December, both 5 until 7pm, this may be a more successful way of finding some interested parties. He can set up a laptop with a video playing for parents and pupils to give them more information on it.

They also do International Student exchange programme, if there is a pupil in their final year, the Rotary will send them to one of their sister Rotary clubs overseas. They have a club in Denmark and Norway that they are twinned with. They will pay all the expenses and find them suitable accommodation. The idea would be to have a pupil from Turriff Academy sent abroad with a student from abroad coming to stay in Turriff. Sandy suggested maybe the pupil of the year. Lee said the problem may be who they are living with abroad if they hadn't been PVG checked. Sandy said family would be police checked and would perhaps be a teacher.

Sandy said they had been approaching the primary feeder schools about Rotorkid this is a rotary club run by pupils, the rotary do t run it the children do. They have been doing a trial at Fyvie Primary School for a couple of years now, and this year they blew us away! They decided they wanted to fund a shelter box, a shelter box is a big green box that contains everything in it for a family of 8 or 10 people . With items such as a tent, a stove,pots and pans etc and they raised £650 to fund this. Now they are tracking online where their box is, which disaster area it has gone to. The Rotary were so enthused by this that they have asked all the other feeder Primary schools would they like to do the same thing. 8 out of the 9 schools have agreed to start. Nothing from Turriff Primary School so far.

The rotary have also sent out 275 shoe boxes, these are sent out and filled with essential items by the children and then the boxes are sent into the community where they are needed and this is working well.

Rotoract is for the more senior pupils and they can still be involved as a rotoractor after leaving school right up to the age of 25. Sandy also wondered if he could promote this to make the pupils aware of the group. Lee asked if the rotary group transitioned from primary school straight into secondary school, but Sandy said no at the moment there is a gap. He thought it would be good to try and get the first and second year pupils involved with Rotoract, Lee suggested that it may be a good idea to involve the pilot Fyvie Primary School as something they can develop into first and second year. Sandy feels there may be more interest and involvement as the other primary schools come on board.

Polio and eradicating it from the world is something the Rotary Club have been heavily involved with for many years. The Rotary started an inoculation programme round the world. Twenty years ago there were 300,000 cases per year, this year there has only been 12 cases. Almost there but not eradicated until there are no cases for 3 years. The Rotary wants to plant purple crocus bulbs for the eradication of polio. He would like to see pupils plant the bulbs in the Springtime. Lee and Jane said at the moment there are lots of empty planting tubs in the quad, so it would be a great way to involve the children and help the Rotary.

The Haughs Redevelopment partnership have a shelter down at The Haughs, near Beattie's Walk. It's always being vandalised so the group would love to turn it into an art project for the pupils and have them decorate it. They can provide materials and they would be happy for any themes to be considered for painting it. He added that if it gets vandalised once it's been decorated it

could then be decorated again under a new theme. Lee said we have a new faculty head in expressive arts who is keen to showcase the arts at Turriff Academy in a variety of ways. This is something she may be interested in getting involved with. Lee felt it was more likely to be from Easter to Summer when the weather gets a little better but it's definitely something the school could get involved with.

BUSINESS MATTERS

7. CORRESPONDENCE

Lynn said there was no correspondence tonight.

8. TREASURER'S REPORT

Sam put round November's Treasurers report to group and Lynn confirmed there were no other expenses to be included.

9. MATTERS TO BE DISCUSSED

Nothing from Lynn.

Irene raised that she has been made aware through the Facebook page today re the S3 event. She queried why not all third year pupils were invited to take part. Lee said that all pupils in 3rd year had been. Jane confirmed that there had been mention of the event in the news bulletin that is read out to all of the four houses in class and the information is also available go read on the website. Lee offered to discuss this matter in greater detail out with the Parent Council meeting.

Lynn thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting and thanked Cllr Forsyth for coming along and she hoped he would be able to attend again. He said that all the councillors have discussed between them that they will try to attend as many meetings as they can between them all.

Lee asked Cllr Forsyth to mention to his fellow councillors that she would like to invite them all in for tea and mince pies before the festive season. She said if they could perhaps suggest a couple of days that they would all be free as she appreciates that they are kept busy with their various commitments. Cllr Forsyth said that he would like to have one of the Councillors attend the PTA

meeting on Thursday evening to give support with the developing of the constitution.

10. Date of Next Meeting - Monday 11 December 2017 at 7pm