

Blackhall Primary School Parent Carer Council
Meeting – 15 January 2025
Minutes

Members Present

Kate Chandler	P1 rep	Jane Browning	Chair
Julia Pearson	P3 rep	Kate Walker	Vice Chair
Emily Orr	P5 rep	Colin Chisholm	Treasurer

Other Attendees

Kirsty Martin	Head Teacher		
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1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Hal Osler and Max Mitchell, Depute Head Teacher Anna Hazel-Dunn, Amy O'Brien (P2 rep), Chloe Ridell (P4 rep), Sine Munro (P6 rep) and Caroline Irvine (P7 rep).

2. Approval of minutes and action points from last meeting

Minutes of the last meeting were approved. It was agreed that various action points had been or could be closed. Remaining action points are as follows:

- a. Wording to parents/carers regarding making donations to or volunteering to help in school:

Action: Head Teacher to put something in latest newsletter (*update - closed on 20 January 2025*);

Action: Chair to add something to website describing various opportunities to help the PSA and PCC.

- b. Mobile phones/internet safety

Action: PCC to work with parents/carers to work up a policy position and supportive materials around mobile phones/social media use

3. Parent Carer Council priorities

a. Playing Field

Further discussion had taken place between PSA and PCC representatives before Christmas. A few further grant opportunities had come to light; however some of these required conditions which we couldn't meet at present – eg the area being redeveloped being open to the public at all times outwith school hours. Further funding from Blackhall Children's Sports Committee may be possible. The PSA are planning to hold a race night fundraiser to help with costs. We are very close to being able to fully fund all of Phase 2 of the work (bark chips area next to the new hall). The PCC Chair is trying to arrange a meeting with Edinburgh City Council to discuss plans for the development of the remaining part of the field. A draft update on progress would be issued to parents/carers shortly.

Action: Head Teacher to check in with PSA Chair regarding timescales for ordering materials for Phase 2.

b. Council budgets/finance

It was noted that this PCC meeting had been scheduled for earlier than usual in the New Year to try to discuss the City Council's consultation on budgets for 2025/6. Unfortunately, very late notice had been received that the consultation was to close at lunchtime on 14 January. The current options all looked challenging for schools – for example with money being taken away from ASN support. It was agreed that the poor communication regarding the consultation should be raised with local Councillors.

Action: Chair to raise this with local Councillors.

c. Merger of Parent Staff Association (PSA) and Parent Carer Council (PCC)

The possibility of merging the PSA and PCC into one parent/carer body or forum was discussed. The potential benefits of this would be that there could be one lead committee (akin to PCC) and then sub-committees (either temporary or permanent) to lead on other issues eg fundraising, football, travel etc. There were mixed views about this; however it was agreed that creating more resilience around the work of these two bodies through having a wider pool of volunteers – who could help out only for the lifetime of a particular project rather than on an ongoing basis – would be a good thing. There were some points regarding how the model would work/charitable status which needed to be checked.

Action: Chair and **P1 rep** to speak to PSA Chair about this

d. iPads

Parents/Carers of P6 and 7 school pupils with Council issued iPads had been notified regarding issues with firewalls and security. There had been reports of children across the city being able to access harmful content. The issue did not appear to be fully resolved yet as the Council had agreed to investigate the matter. The Head Teacher reassured members that teachers can and do monitor content of what is being accessed in school. It was not known if the issue affected classroom iPads for other year groups. The PCC was concerned that this matter was not being taken seriously enough by the City Council and that it should be raised with local Councillors.

Action: Chair to raise this with local Councillors.

4. Head Teacher Report

The presentation is available on the school website. The following points provide additional information to the slides.

School roll/staffing

The current roll is 370; the predicted roll for 2025/6 school year is 352 – this is very close to the threshold of 350. If numbers drop below 350 there is a budgetary/resourcing consequence for the school.

It is hard to cover PSA absence in the school. It is easier – but expensive – to cover teacher absence. The school is just about keeping within budget for staffing.

Recent Events

Attainment meetings with teachers had taken place. There had been a small shortfall in meeting the costs of the school pantomime trip in December; however the PSA had kindly met this.

Upcoming events

- World Book Day on 6 March
- ASN Coffee mornings would resume on Fridays soon
- Parent Carer Consultation dates were changing to Thursday 27 March evening and Friday 28 March afternoon.
- Community Garden Day – date TBC

Homework

Following the meeting with parents and carers last year, homework has now resumed with a “no new learning” approach ie the homework would cover what had been done in class the previous week.

Finance

New smartboards had been purchased for P1 – these had been paid for in part from a generous donation from a school family of £10,000. The school wants to order more PE equipment. The school had recently obtained some items at no extra cost – books (excess from Bonaly PS), bike and scooter racks (available through Council funding) and new carpets in two classrooms (as these were a health and safety issue). A tender had been put out to try to get the Wonder Woods redone.

The Finance Committee would meet on 17 January.

Parking

The Council had been asked to supply road cones to help mark off the zig zag area but had said this stock was not available. They had, however, offered to send out attendants to monitor parking and issue penalty notices as appropriate.

Action: PCC to email Council back with times when to attend (*update – closed on 16 January*).

Other

A number of sporting activities were lined up for pupils, mainly P5-7 – this included P6/7 Netball club.

Following parent/carer feedback, the school photographer would be changing from Tempest to Clear Photography.

5. AOB

The “Junior Duke” scheme was discussed – this was similar to Duke of Edinburgh for primary school pupils (although not affiliated with the main scheme). It was agreed this looked like a good opportunity that was worth exploring and further information would be provided in due course.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 2 April 2025 in school – all welcome.