

Blackhall Primary School

Parent Carer Council | Minutes of Meeting

DATE	Wednesday 9 September 2026
TIME / VENUE	7.00–8.30pm • Blackhall Primary School

1. Welcome, Apologies and Appointment of New Members

Apologies: Morag, P2 Representative.

PCC members present: Kate Walker (Chair); Chloe Riddell (Vice Chair); Colin Chisholm (Treasurer); Kate Chandler (P3 representative); Dawn Houston (P4 representative); Jane Browning (P6 representative); Catherine Campbell (P7 representative); Meg Sangster (ASN representative)

Also in attendance: Councillors Hal Osler and Max Mitchell; Kirsty Martin, Head Teacher; Anna Hazel-Dunn, Depute Head Teacher; and Lesley Wood, Business Manager.

New members Meg and Dawn were welcomed to the Parent Carer Council.

2. How to Engage with the Parent Carer Council

There was a brief discussion about when and how parents and carers should engage with the Parent Carer Council.

It was agreed that:

- Child-specific issues should normally be raised directly with the school.
- Year-specific issues may be appropriate for either the school or the Parent Carer Council, depending on the nature of the issue.
- Issues affecting the school more generally would normally be appropriate for discussion through the Parent Carer Council.
- Parent representatives are not expected to repeat all school communications to parents and carers, as it is assumed that families receive and read school communications.
- It is sufficient for representatives to ask parents and carers whether they have any issues they would like raised at each Parent Carer Council meeting, and to provide a brief summary following the meeting.

The Chair noted that a document explaining how to engage with the Parent Carer Council is available on the school website and agreed to share this with new representatives.

Action: Chair to share the Parent Carer Council engagement document with new representatives (update – closed on 14 September).

3. Priorities for the Current School Year

A. School Playground

The Council has undertaken considerable work to develop options for improvements to the school playground, taking account of feedback from parents, carers and children.

There is £150,000 available for the improvements, although the Council noted that not everything identified through consultation will be possible within this budget. Site drainage requirements also need to be taken into account – this is a key issue.

The current proposal is to:

- Install a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) with sand carpet base for ball games in the area between the new hall and the back of the school. This would be fenced off.
- Take a section of the existing playing field, prepare the ground and install a new play area. This is likely to include a large climbing frame, similar to that at Cramond Primary School, with potentially additional play equipment depending on the remaining budget.

The proposed improvements would provide two significantly enhanced areas for play and were viewed very positively by the Parent Carer Council. It is expected that the two main projects would use most of the £150,000 allocation.

The PSA account still contains some funds previously raised for playground improvements. It was suggested that these could potentially be used for smaller additional improvements, such as:

- painted tarmac play markings;
- seating areas for children who would prefer somewhere quieter; and
- hedging to create a quieter area, with hedges potentially available free of charge through the Woodland Trust.

The Parent Carer Council agreed that the proposals represented a positive way forward and supported the Council proceeding with the MUGA, with the hope that work could begin during the October holiday week.

The existing growing/allotment area will need to be relocated before work begins. Some disruption to the school will inevitably occur while the work is being carried out.

It was noted that the proposals have been informed by consultation with children, parents and carers.

Maintenance: The estimated maintenance cost for the MUGA areas was discussed, at approximately £1,200 every few years. It was suggested that this could potentially be covered through Parent Carer Council and/or PSA funds.

Possible sources of future funding were also discussed, including the Blackhall Children's Sports Committee, Council match funding and potentially Scottish Water.

B. Use of Technology in Schools

A question had been raised by a P6 parent representative about the impact of technology use in schools, particularly in relation to children's cognitive development.

It was noted that Empowered Learning is a Council policy and that there are many recognised benefits to the educational use of technology. The negative impacts associated with technology use more generally are not necessarily considered to apply in the same way to structured educational use within school.

However, the Parent Carer Council agreed that the specific question of the impact on cognitive development did not appear to have been fully explored and should be investigated further.

The matter will be raised at the next Consultative Committee with Parents. The Chair will attend remotely and report back to the Parent Carer Council.

Councillors indicated that, if a satisfactory answer cannot be obtained, they would be willing to consider raising the question at the relevant Council committee.

The Digital Reference Group of Edinburgh City Council also requires a representative from Blackhall. Emily Orr indicated that she would like to stand down from the role this year. Year representatives will therefore seek expressions of interest from parents and carers.

Action: Chair to attend the next Consultative Committee with Parents and report back.

Action: Year representatives to seek a volunteer for the Digital Reference Group (update – some expressions of interest from P5 following meeting).

Action: Councillors to consider raising the technology/cognitive development question at Council committee level if required.

C. Support for Low-Income Families

The number of families requiring additional financial support at Blackhall remains relatively low, but there has been an increase over the last few years.

The proposed Scottish Government free breakfast club provision for all primary and special schools was discussed. Details of how this will operate, including the role of the Council in administering the scheme, are not yet clear.

A draft action plan has been developed to support low-income families. The Head Teacher will undertake an anonymous parent/carers survey to help establish the level and nature of need within the school community.

A number of possible approaches were discussed, including:

- providing a discreet email address or Forms option through which families can request support;
- school uniform/clothing banks and swaps, with Blackhall already operating this at some level.
- a token system for events such as school discos, allowing families to receive support without stigma; and
- a hardship fund, topped up by the appropriate school body.

At Blackhall, it was felt that a hardship fund would be more appropriately managed through the PSA, rather than the PCC, given the restrictions on the purposes for which PCC funds can be used. Further discussion with the PSA will therefore be required.

It was noted that financial difficulties can arise from changing family circumstances, such as a loss of earnings, and that support should not be viewed solely in relation to the area in which a family lives.

The draft action plan has been prepared by the Vice Chair in conjunction with the Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher. PCC members were invited to provide further comments to the Vice Chair.

The Head Teacher will circulate proposed questions for the anonymous parent/carers survey for comment before the survey is issued.

Action: PCC members to send feedback on the draft action plan to the Vice Chair.

Action: Head Teacher to circulate proposed survey questions.

Action: PCC members to provide comments on the survey questions.

Action: Further discussion to take place with the PSA regarding a hardship fund (Vice Chair).

4. Head Teacher's Report

Slides provide further detail and are available on the school website. Highlights below:

The capacity of the PSA remains very stretched. Catherine Campbell (P7 rep) is joining the PSA team.

Questions raised by the P4, P6 and ASN representatives were answered during the meeting – see slides.

Attainment across the school continues to be very good.

Following comments from parents/carers on the School Improvement Plan in May, improved PE provision was identified as an area that would be beneficial. The school is now able to use the current dance teacher, Miss Robertson, as a PE teacher, which will support the provision of PE across the school.

5. Any Other Business

Craigcrook Park – Parking

Councillor Osler highlighted ongoing poor parking around Craigcrook Park and reminded parents and carers to park considerately and take care when using the area.

School Gardening Day – 20 September

The forthcoming school gardening day on Sunday 20 September, 2.00–4.00pm, was noted. Members were encouraged to support the event where possible.

Corporate Volunteering

The possibility of a corporate volunteering day taking place to paint further sections of the school exterior was noted.

Blackhall Community Council Sign

The possibility of sharing the Blackhall Community Council sign at the front school gate was discussed. It was noted that purchasing a separate, new sign specifically for the school would be very expensive due to Council requirements.

Excess Bread

A suggestion was raised about whether excess bread supplies from local sources could be shared with families at the school at the end of the school day. This was noted for further consideration.

NEXT MEETING**Wednesday 18 November 2026 – 7pm in the school***Meeting closed at 8.45pm.*