

Bruntsfield Parent Council Meeting 4 September 2024

Attendees:

Parent Council Members (Office Bearers and Co-opted): Jay Feeney (Parent Council Chair), Jenni Fuchs Madine (JFM), Dan Gerrard (DG), Kirsty McIntosh, Ali McCallum, Marilena Papadopoulou, Stefan Santjer, Alison Redpath, Catriona Penny, Moria McQueen

Ordinary Members: Elma Charalampidou, Jerome Veyret, Petros Wallden, Richard Szabo, Valentina Guerrieri, Hamish Matheson

Parent forum members: Piotr Wojtczuk, Elena, Catrina Arbuckle, Afrooz Arjan, Katya, Kathleen, Luz Miller, Svetlana Schepel, Ros Claase, Maitrayee, Vanessa Meadu, A Evans, Gill West, Lina Marin, Anna Wojtczuc, Zsofia Garai-Takacs, Sree, Tracy, Andy Hall-Ponsele, Katerina Marinelli, Hannah, Anna Forsyth, Ana H, MP, Ana, Lewandowska, Nan Zhang, Sophie, Anneka, EG, JV

Staff: Stephen Gilhooley, Lesley Lamond

Apologies: Lucy Henderson

1. The chair opened the meeting (JF):

- The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting especially new P1 parents.
- JF introduced himself - he has been involved in the Parent Council (PC) for a number of years having joined when his first child was in P1. He took on the role of Chair last year.

2. The role of the PC (JF)

- The role of the PC is to bridge the gap between parents and School ensuring that issues that matter to parents are communicated to the School.
- The PC also plays a role in raising money through fairs and other activities. These funds enable School to support things that aren't covered by local authority funding.
- These additional funds will become increasingly important due to proposed local authority funding cuts.
- The PC also funds spaces and activities for children whose families may need financial assistance.
- It coordinates one of the City's largest after-school club programmes.
- It runs a range of interest groups that steer and support several key areas (more information below).
- Finally, the PC holds open meetings for parents and carers twice each term - mainly on zoom, but occasionally in person.
- The chair highlighted that he was keen to encourage more people to become involved with School. No prior knowledge or experience is required – just energy and fresh ideas.

3. Format of the PC (JF)

- The PC is formed at an AGM each year and is bound by a legal constitution.
- It is made up of 25 members (including co-opted members, office bearers and regular voting members).
- The format of the PC is now changing to make it more manageable and sustainable.

- Office bearer roles are being slimmed down where appropriate and special interest groups / working groups are being expanded.
- Each working group will involve a group of parents, plus one / two teachers.
- Office bearer roles are elected roles that must be voted in at each AGM. Each has a term restriction.
- Co-opted roles are more relaxed – they require fewer members to vote them in and they have no term limit.

4. Parent Council roles

- The Chair highlighted that some PC roles will be continued this year and others will become vacant – if any of the roles highlighted are of interest, please get in touch: bruntsfieldchair@gmail.com

Chair: Jay Feeney

- Jay's role is to lead the Parent Council.
- He is the primary point of contact between the PC and School.
- He chairs all meetings, setting dates and agendas.
- Jay oversees all funding applications ensuring compliance with guidelines.
- He acts as an initial point of contact for external organisations and members of the community.

Vice Chair: vacant

- Jay highlighted that if anyone would like to support him, it would be great to have a Vice Chair.

Events Treasurer: Catriona Penny

- Catriona reconciles the bank account for all Parent Council events. She counts the money and arranges floats. Catriona also ensures that School receive PC funds to support projects as and when agreed.

Secretary: Kirsty McIntosh / Marilena Papadopoulou – vacancy

- Kirsty and Marilena have been sharing the role of Secretary. Kirsty is standing down at the AGM in October which leaves a part-time role vacant.
- The role of Secretary is to take minutes at Parent Council meetings, book space for events (eg. Summer/Winter Fair etc) and to support with the handling of any funding applications requiring PC members to vote.
- If anyone is interested in joining Marilena in the Secretary role, please get in touch.

Communications Team (5 roles)

- For many years, the communications team has consisted of a Communications Officer and a Class Reps Coordinator. However, given the scale of the Comms Officer role, the team is being split into five smaller and more manageable roles. Jenni Fuchs Madine has held the Comms Officer role for 7 years and is now stepping down. A vote of thanks was given to Jenni (via zoom chat) for her significant contribution to the Parent Council over a number of years.

- **Email and newsletter: vacant** – This role will involve keeping on top of the PC mailing list and sending out newsletters. Newsletters may be sent directly (via MailerLite) or via the School Office using ParentPay. Some experience of using a bulk email system would be useful.
 - **Website: Moria McQueen** – This role involves updating the PC website which is a wordpress site. The website is updated if there's an event to promote or a meeting coming up and after the annual AGM. Some experience of using wordpress would be beneficial.
 - **Facebook: vacant** - This role involves looking after the PC Facebook page and the Buying and Selling page. It includes moderating posts / removing any spam and letting people join the group. The PC have their own FB profile so there is no need to use a personal profile.
 - **Graphics: vacant** – No graphic design experience is required to fulfil this role, just some knowledge of either Canva or Photoshop. This role involves creating graphics for posters or for the website to promote events and other activities.
 - **Class Reps Coordinator: Ali McCallum** – Ali is responsible for all PC communications with Class Reps.
- If anyone is interested in any of the vacant roles mentioned above, please get in touch.

5. Working groups

- A representative from each working group then gave an overview of each group's aims and remit.

Playground Group (Lesley Lamond)

- The Playground Group meets every eight weeks, typically at 6pm on a Monday evening. Some members of the group have a particular skillset, others enthusiasm. Both are welcome.
- The work of the group links with the School Improvement Plan. The group has a set of both short-term and long-term goals for improving the playground.
- The playground group is responsible for the planters in front of School and a subgroup looks at gardening. This year, all classes will be involved in gardening within some capacity.
- More members are very welcome to join the group, please contact Lesley Lamond through the School admin email: admin@bruntsfield.edin.sch.uk
- The Chair highlighted that the Playground group is a great example of a group that's joint with parents and School staff. It has provided an example for the PC to model other groups.

Sustainability group (Elma Charalampidou)

- The Sustainability group was formed a couple of years ago and aims to create a community of practice.
- The group includes parents and carers with a passion for sustainability. The group aims to encourage behaviour change.
- The group participates in activities for children at many of the Parent Council events (Summer / Winter fair).

- Additionally, the group has begun a close collaboration with teachers co-developing activities to promote STEM and the use of art as a tool to promote sustainability concepts.
- Please get in touch if you are interested in joining the Sustainability Group. They have a whatsapp group and an email address: bruntsfieldsustainable@gmail.com

Active travel group (Ros Claase)

- The active travel group focuses on how to ensure children and young people get to and from school safely and actively.
- The group advocates for lollipop people to reappear and focuses on ways to make crossing points safer.
- They also liaise with Merchiston Community Council – the School’s local community council.
- The group generally keeps in touch virtually via whatsapp.
- Finally, Ros highlighted that the group are unsure which teacher will be their contact and asked that Mr Gilhooley please get in touch to confirm.
- If you would like to get involved, please contact: bruntsfieldsaferoutes@gmail.com

Clubs group (Stefan Santjer)

- The aim of Clubs is to give children the opportunity to enjoy a range of extra-curricular activities after school.
- Clubs supplement school education with languages, instruments, creative arts, sports and other activities.
- They help foster friendships and a variety of other skills.
- Most children at BPS are benefitting from clubs.
- Hamish Matheson has recently joined the Clubs group as Clubs Treasurer and Clubs will be looking for more parent volunteers soon.
- There are a handful of Clubs places remaining, please take a look at the booking website if interested.
- Please email: bruntsfieldclubs@gmail.com for any specific Clubs questions.

Events group (Ros Claase)

- A new working group is being created for events. Currently there are 4-5 parents involved, plus two members of teaching staff – Miss Doig and Miss Knust.
- The group will help disperse the organisation of events across a wider group of parents.
- There will be an overview of events that take place during the academic year, this will include events normally run by School and those run by the PC. Key sporting activities will be added and the group will aim to be considerate with planning and scheduling.
- The group will aim to have in-person meetings, early evening. These won’t be too frequent. Outside of meetings, the group will keep in touch via email.
- If you’d like to get involved, please contact bruntsfieldevents@gmail.com

Fundraising group (Jay Feeney)

- The Chair then talked about the Fundraising Group which is brand new and still launching.
- Mr Wood will be co-leading this group and it will explore a wider range of fundraising activities (outside of events).

- In the past there have been art fairs, charity fun runs, calendars, Christmas cards and tea towels. There are lots of exciting ways to raise money beyond traditional events.
- Anyone interested in getting involved, please get in touch with Jay in the first instance: bruntsfieldchair@gmail.com

Additional Support for Learning Group (Dan Gerrard)

- Dan highlighted that the group is being created in response to conversations with staff and pupils.
- It will provide a space for information and support.
- DG stated that he wasn't an expert in ASL, but is the parent of a child with AS needs.
- More information will be sent through class reps re. opportunities to meet up.

International "Roots" Group (Lina Marin)

- This is a new group that aims to shine a light on the rich diversity of the school, bringing families together through events.
- The group will celebrate different cultures and help create a community where all children feel they belong.
- The group are still thinking about how they will run, but would welcome help from parents and teachers.

St Oswald's Group (Hamish Matheson)

- St Oswald's is the church adjacent to Bruntsfield Primary School. The building was previously used as an annex to the old Boroughmuir High School and has now been taken on by a charity who raised money to buy it.
- It's an exciting space with lots of possibilities. The building was in poor repair when it was acquired, but a significant amount of work has been done.
- In order for the building to run, it will require a lot of input and fundraising.
- A new board is now being appointed. Everyone is welcome to attend the AGM in September at the Eric Liddell Centre.
- The team plan to canvass the local community (BPS and other local Schools, people living in the area).
- The purpose of the new working group is to have a connection with the School and keep alignment with what we want to do.
- To find out more, become a member, or just join the mailing list visit <https://stoswaldscentre.org/home/get-involved/>

6. Head Teacher's update (Stephen Gilhooley)

- P6 recently had their overnight camp at Bonaly. Two groups attended and they took part in activities including archery, low ropes, climbing and more. Camp is a great opportunity to build teamwork skills and boost confidence and perseverance.
- P5 will soon have an extended day trip to Bonaly doing similar activities.
- SG enjoyed meeting P1 parents at Teddy Bears picnic. Thanks to those involved in organising the event.
- A storm at the turn of the year caused a tree to fall and bring down a wall in the rear playground. The tree has been taken away, but the wall has been left damaged. Repairs

will take place mid-October. SG hopes to have the full playground accessible by the end of Oct.

- School crossings remain an issue with a lack of crossing patrols. SG has contacted the Road Safety team at the council, however they are facing major recruitment problems. SG asked parents to spread the word if they know anyone who may be interested.
- P6 skiing has been a tradition for many years. Mrs Ramsey, who previously organised skiing has recently pulled back from many activities. However, skiing is proving difficult to organise due to safety. Volunteers need to be group leader trained and first aid trained. Mrs Ramsey has agreed to run skiing again this year, however we will need to scope it out for future years.
- Meet the Teacher – SG is looking forward to seeing everyone next week. He will hold two talks at 4pm and 4.30pm. Families then have the opportunity to visit their child's classroom and ask any questions.
- Funding cuts to Education have been in the news again. SG advised keeping an eye on the media to see what comes out. Lobbying may be needed. However, he felt it was not worth exploring further until we know more.

Question: Is it possible to get to know more about the following School initiatives: Curriculum Lead year strategy; Progression Plan for Meta skills; New Writing Programme; Interdisciplinary Learning. Thank you!

SG: More information will be provided at the Meet the Teacher event.

Question: Before summer we discussed changing events from being on Wednesdays as this can prove difficult for parents / carers to attend. Friday was proposed as an alternative. However, again, most events this year seem to be scheduled on Wednesday. Can we vary the days of events?

SG: Fridays are tricky because we don't have much time with School finishing at lunchtime. We can have another look at hosting some of the shows on a Friday. We will consider piloting this.

Question: Staggered finish times can be challenging as many with younger children wait outside for 20 minutes for older age groups to finish. Can we be imaginative about when people exit School? Could we stagger by 5 minutes instead of 20?

SG: This is an ongoing discussion. For health and safety reasons it's good for staff to get young children out and match them up with parents. Additionally, getting 600 children out of two exits can be fraught. However, SG is willing to discuss this further. Changing start and finish times requires consultation and he will need to consider knock-on effects in terms of learning time. We can look at it this session and see if a solution can be found that will be safe and suit more people.

7. Skiing (Stefan Santger, Clubs Coordinator)

- SS asked to return to the topic of skiing.
- He highlighted that skiing is unique at BPS. It takes place during the school day and children benefit from a longer time at Hillend than could normally be arranged.
- SS stated that there are currently no afterschool skiing slots at Hillend and there are long waiting lists.

- For skiing to continue, it does require a member of school staff to attend because it's run during the school day.
- SS stated that ensuring parent volunteers are Group Leader trained and first aid trained will not be an issue - the PC has the resources to ensure this takes place.
- SS is confident that recruiting new parent volunteers (required to support P6 skiing on a Friday morning) will also not be an issue.
- He noted that other schools would love to grab the slot that we have and once relinquished we would be unlikely to be able to get it back.
- He also highlighted that skiing used happen for P7s and that has already been cut.
- The PC funds families that can't otherwise afford to pay for this activity.
- SG stated that School will need to consult with parents and carers to ensure that everyone does want skiing to continue. He also highlighted that counter-balances need to be considered eg. lost learning time on Friday mornings.

8. Road safety at the Polwarth roundabout (Vanessa Meadu)

- Vanessa Meadu, a member of the Active Travel Group and also Merchiston Community Council then provided an update on the Polwarth roundabout.
- VM highlighted that the Polwarth roundabout is considered unsafe among communities with vehicles travelling at high speed and high volume.
- Following surveys, data and pavement reports, Merchiston Community Council have recommended that another pedestrian crossing be created and a T junction be used instead of a roundabout.
- City of Edinburgh Council have accepted this proposal and allocated funds. The junction will be redesigned to improve safety. This will be a 2-3 year process.
- Here's the link to the Polwarth Pavements report and to sign up for updates <https://merchistoncc.org.uk/projects/the-polwarth-pavement-project/>

9. AOB (Piotr Wojtczuk via Zoom Chat)

- Bike club is running! Wednesdays after school till 5pm, soon to open up for booking via Active Schools - there will be an email from Tony Segall.
- The club is 100% parent/carers volunteer run. Currently we have parents from P3-P5 involved and we will open for bookings from this class range. We would love to reinstate P1-P2 which is where we started - we need parents from these classes to enable us to run it.
- No prior experience is required. If you or other parents in these class are able to get involved every 2-3 weeks on Wednesday 3-5pm, please get in touch piotr.wojtczuk@gmail.com .

10. Close

- The Chair noted that the meeting had run over time. He thanked everyone for attending noting the high turnout and closed the meeting.