

Graeme High School

Parent Council Update

Virtual Meeting

Wednesday 7th October 2020



PRESENT AT OUR MEETING:

Sian Balfour (Chairperson), Karren Morrison (Vice Chairperson), Gordon Brown (Treasurer), Lesley Carroll (Headteacher), Margo Marshall (Business Education Teacher), Anne Louise Hayden, Margaret Wilson, Mhairi Smith, Nicola Jenkins, Zoe Turkington, Councillor Binnie, Councillor Kerr, Marie Snow (Clerk)

APOLOGIES:

Hazel Beattie

SCHOOL INSPECTION REPORT

In March 2020, a team of 14 inspectors from Education Scotland visited Graeme High School and the feedback from this inspection was very good. Lesley Carroll is very confident that the report is a true reflection of the school.



During the visit, the team closely worked with the Senior Management Team and staff members. They also spoke to parents/carers, pupils, Parent Council members and school partners and they observed around 90 lessons.

The inspectors were very complimentary of the Graeme High School pupils and stated that they were consistently courteous, highly motivated and proud of their school. Almost all pupils were well behaved in classrooms and around the school. Miss Carroll shared with the Parent Council some areas of improvement that the school would now take forward as part of its School Improvement Plan.

Parent Council members offered their congratulations to all staff and pupils on the report and stated that everyone involved in the school should feel very proud – well done to all.

COVID-19 UPDATE FROM MISS CARROLL

The majority of pupils are complying with the increased health, safety and hygiene measures introduced to the school due to COVID-19.

Last week, our School Captains undertook a pupil survey via Microsoft Teams on pupils' experiences and thoughts about being back at school and coping with the new COVID measures. 171 responses were received and the feedback was mostly very positive and showed a level of understanding and commitment from pupils to put into place the measures that are required. The main points are as follows:



- 95% of pupils surveyed said that they wear a facemask when required. The Senior Management Team are present in corridors during breaks and period changeovers and can confirm that the majority of pupils are complying with this.
- Only 7% of pupils felt anxious about attending school.
- Pupils are disinfecting their work spaces most of the time but not always at the start and end of a lesson. The Senior Management Team will be reminding staff that this must be carried out.
- Pupils were mostly concerned about SQA exams, the impact of lost learning, catching up with work and being on school buses with other young people.

The captains will be feeding back the results of the survey. Any concerns individual pupils have raised have been shared with Deputy Headteacher, Ross Queenan, and the pupil's Deputy Head of House to follow up on. The Senior Management Team will also be writing to parents in the future to gain their feedback.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION BETWEEN PARENTS AND MISS CARROL

Is the school planning on facilitating supported study sessions this year?

Supported study can still go ahead but schools may use some of this time to catch up on missed work.

Teachers Working Time Agreement includes 21 recovery sessions across senior phase subjects to catch up on gaps in learning. Pupils will be identified and invited to these sessions, which will take place prior to the Christmas Break.

Some departments are working on support catch-up documents to upload to Microsoft Teams. This will allow pupils to work through the key elements identified for catch-up in their own time. Other areas are offering face to face learning on specific topics.

Additional support will be available after the Christmas break for pupils sitting Higher and Advanced Higher exams.

At this time it is unknown if the Learning Café can take place due to pupils from multiple classes and year groups attending these, which is take pupils out of their bubble groups. Other alternatives are being looked at to replace this.



Is there any information on prelims such as when they will be held? Will this be as previous years or are there any plans to bring forward?

Prelims for Higher and Advanced Highers will take place after the Christmas break. These may be slightly different than normal due to social distancing. The location of these exams is also currently be looked at due to the upstairs gym halls being used as PE changing rooms to allow for social distancing.

What is happening in School with regards to practical classes?

PE will continue to take place outdoors and there is no indication of when the swimming pool or indoor gym halls can be used for PE. The upstairs gym halls are currently being used as changing rooms and each pupil has been allocated a marked area to use for track and trace purposes.

Pupils are currently unable to cook in Home Economics due to the increased face to face contact and sharing of equipment. We are looking at measures that can be introduced to allow for cooking to recommence in a planned and gradual way with priority being for National 5 pupils. In the meantime, classes have been concentrating on theory work during their class time.

One of our HE teacher left the school just after the summer holidays and the other is now on long term absence due to a serious out of school injury. We have just recruited a very experienced teacher and she will be taking on all of the Nat 5 courses as a priority. Other classes are being covered by a consistent health and wellbeing teacher and learning is progressing.

Are their plans to hold parents' evenings and if so what will the format be?

Face to face parents' evening are currently unable to take place.

We have been looking into the possibility of holding virtual parent meetings. Our Senior Technician has been liaising with Larbert High, who have been testing an app on a number of different devices, which the meetings will be held through. The feedback has been very positive and we are confident that, once the app has been thoroughly tested by our school and permission is granted from Children's Services, we will have this option should face to face meetings be unable to take place.

Will target reports be issued as normal?

Yes, these will be issued as normal and full written reports will be issued as normal.

The full written reports were not issued last year due to COVID-19. If any parent/carer is concerned about whether their child is on target they can contact their child's Depute Head of House.

What if any, information is available to establish what percentage of pupils have access to digital devices to enable them to access learning and teacher support.

The Scottish Government is funding a device for pupils without access to a device and we have identified over 70 pupils who should receive this support. Some of these pupils will also receive internet access due to not currently having internet access. The Connected Falkirk strategy, previously discussed, will see every pupils in Falkirk High schools receive their own iPad hopefully by Christmas.

Is there a designated teacher or person who can offer emotional support to pupils and more so, in the event of a further Full Lockdown

All pupils have a Depute Head of House (DHH), who is available for help and support in the Support Hub. DHH's and bespoke Personal Support teachers kept in regular contact with vulnerable pupils via phone and Microsoft Teams during lockdown. They made sure that they spoke to the pupils themselves throughout lockdown and not just their parent/carer. Should we require to enter temporary lockdown again, or a vulnerable pupil is self-isolating or tested positive for COVID, these teachers would remain in contact again.

Is there anything in the pipeline for the previous year's 6th years – particularly in light of other High Schools in the area holding an event recently?

We are currently looking into the possibility of holding a virtual Leavers Ceremony. We have asked the IT Department to keep last year's S6 Team live in Microsoft Teams to allow us to communicate the plans once they have been arranged. We are also currently looking into the possibility of holding Virtual Prizegiving Ceremonies.

Within the past couple of weeks, S4 pupils particularly, have had a host of class tests and multiple homework tasks, all within the same short timeframe – which has made revision and covering homework difficult and stressful for some pupils. Whilst appreciating there is lots to catch up on and that the teachers need to know where pupils are, could things be spaced out better to cause less stress for pupils?

Due to National 5 exams being cancelled in 2021, classroom tests are more important than ever and will take priority over homework. If a pupil is struggling to complete their homework due to revising for a test, they can speak to their teacher or DHH regarding an extension to their homework due date.

Can pupils use their lockers if they have one?

Lockers cannot currently be used due to the increased cleaning over the whole school currently taking precedence over the cleaning of lockers. Pupils will be informed when they are available to be used again.

ROLE OF THE PARENT COUNCIL 2020-21

NEW S1 PARENT/CARERS

Due to the cancellation of this year's P7 Information Event, we were unable to introduce ourselves to the parents/carers of the new S1's and hand out information regarding the Parent Council. Sian Balfour is going to draft a letter to send to all S1 parents/carers introducing the Parent Council and let them know what we do.

Action: Sian Balfour

AGM

We are currently looking at options for this year's AGM. One option would be for groups of individuals to meet and then feedback to the whole group. Another option would be to do the AGM by a Virtual Meeting.

Lesley Carroll is going to read the constitution to see if something formal is still required or if this can be postponed.

Action: Lesley Carroll / Sian Balfour

Q&A SESSION

A suggestion raised was for the Parent Council to work with the SMT on a Q&A Session for parents, which would be filmed and uploaded to the Graeme High School Website. Another suggestion was to have a Virtual Q&A Session by Zoom, where parents could log in live to watch the Q&A Session. Both options to be explored by the Parent Council and SMT.

Action: Lesley Carroll / Sian Balfour / Karen Morrison

AOB

Congratulations to Graeme High School Parent Council member, Margaret Wilson, on her new role as Chairperson of the National Parent Forum of Scotland.

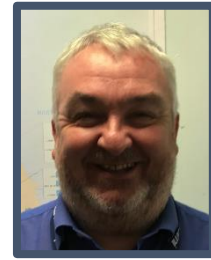




Sian Balfour
Chairperson



Karren Morrison
Vice Chairperson



Gordon Brown
Treasurer



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Please forward any queries, feedback or issues you would like raised by the Parent Council to
GHSParentCouncil@falkirk.gov.uk