

Aberdeen Parent Council Forum  
Meeting for Parent Councils

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2018  
Town House, Aberdeen

## Minutes of Meeting

PC Reps: Margaret Davidson (Chair, Aberdeen Grammar), Colm O'Riordan (Aberdeen Grammar), Ian Mearns (Cults Primary), Rick Samson (Cults Academy), Louise Bruce (Brimmond Primary), Karen McClymant (Loirston Primary), Kelly Gordon (Loirston Primary), Catriona Allan (Harlaw Academy), Ian Stewart (Scotstown Primary), Mike Dalziel (Skene Square Primary), Sarah Christie (Kingswell Primary/Bucksburn Academy), Adele Ashton (Bucksburn Academy) and Sarah Hunter (Dyce Primary)

Co-opted: Tony Rafferty

Other: Alison Thompson (ACC)

Apologies: Erica Taylor (Ashley Road Primary), Aurelie Irving (St Joseph's Primary), Eric Aasterud (Aberdeen Grammar), Victoria Oumarou (Airyhall Primary), Angela Wigham (Ferryhill Primary) and Lynn Scanlon (ACC)

### 1. Sederunt and Apologies for Absence

For apologies see above

### 2. Announcements

There were no announcements

### 3. Intimation of Any Other Competent Business

There were no intimations of AOCB

### 4. Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

### 5. Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes were approved without alteration. They were proposed by Ian Mearns and seconded by Colm O'Riordan. It is noted that the Chair of the last meeting was the seconder as himself and Ian Mearns were the only 2 PC members at the meeting who were also present at the previous one.

### 6. Outstanding Actions/Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

- Amendments to the minutes of the APCF's May Meeting - amendment made and minutes issued to all PCs - Action closed
- Northern Alliance Shared Initiative - Colm advised that Aberdeen City schools have implemented the Emerging Literacy initiative from Highland (James Cook lead). Action closed.
- APCF Accounts - have been signed by Margaret and submitted to Donna Cuthill at ACC. Action closed.

- Nominations for primary rep for the EOD Committee – no expressions of interest or nominations. Margaret asked if there was any interest in the room and there wasn't– Action carried forward.

## 7. Aberdeen City Council Update

Alison Thomson provided the following feedback:

- **Scottish Standardised National Assessments**

The council is currently implementing S3 assessments and will continue with P4 and P7. Awaiting clarity around P1 and will update as and when we have information.

- **Pupil Equity Fund – an Update**

£1.6 million underspend was reported in April 2018. The service carried out an audit to identify how much of this was down to late invoicing and was committed spend. This figure then reduced to £710,133. The money allocated for 2017-2018 is now spent and schools are busy working on 2018-2019 spend.

- **Further discussion on improving engagement with parents**

Lynn is working on this with Donna Cuthill although she is currently on leave. If the group has any suggestions, please let Lynn know. Ian M advised that Cults Primary found the leaflets issued by Donna Cuthill very helpful. Margaret offered that Aberdeen Grammar is now using the Secondary School App to get messages to the wider parent forum directly and it seems to be working well. Some schools using Expressions and Rick advised that Cults Academy are receiving mixed reviews on it – possibly teething problems. Some primary school are still using Class Dojo which is good for direct communication between teacher and home. It does not support communication between parent council/school and the parent forum and there are some issues with it relating to GDPR (data regulations).

**Action:** To ask headteachers to discuss their experiences of the different communication apps with a view to determining which is the most effective – Lynn Scanlon.

Next termly ACC meeting will be on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2018

- **Poverty proofing the school day**

Secondary sector- the council has information regarding the costs and are looking at ways to reduce the cost to parents. There are some great resources which the council received from NHS Scotland who recently launched its short film 'The Cost of School' and CPAG (Child Poverty Action Group) Scotland's Cost of the School Day Toolkit. There is information on the CPAG website focusing on how schools across Scotland are addressing the financial barriers faced by children and families on low incomes. The first in the series focuses on what can be done in schools to support children and families with school uniform. It presents the wide range of interventions and approaches going on across the country and the impact this can have on children, families and on the school.

- Watch the new short films on the NHS Health Scotland website:  
[http://www.healthscotland.scot/population-groups/children/child-poverty/local-actions-to-reduce-child-poverty/child-poverty-in-schools/examples-of-local-action-on-cost-of-school?utm\\_source=Email&utm\\_campaign=CostOfSchoolFilms&utm\\_content=Emails](http://www.healthscotland.scot/population-groups/children/child-poverty/local-actions-to-reduce-child-poverty/child-poverty-in-schools/examples-of-local-action-on-cost-of-school?utm_source=Email&utm_campaign=CostOfSchoolFilms&utm_content=Emails)
- Read the uniform practice insight on the CPAG Scotland website:  
<http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/cost-school-day-practice-hub>

Commented [AT1]: This information was not an update from ACC therefore not sure if it should go in this section?

**Action:** Request that ACC provide advice to Headteachers and PTAs regarding the fundraising activities they can undertake. There is a lot of confusion over what can and can't be done in light of the new poverty proofing guidelines and fundraising is being affected by this - Poverty Proofing is an item on the agenda for the Head Teacher meeting 15<sup>th</sup> November 2018 where Head Teachers will be given the opportunity to share approaches and interventions- Lynn Scanlon ACC

Commented [AT2]: Remove this

Commented [AT3]: Replace with this please

- **Promotion of free school meals registration**

Ongoing and campaign currently underway around this throughout the city and in our schools. A parent present asked if the leaflet was available in a variety of languages. It was confirmed that it is.

- **School information dashboard**

This contains information around SIMD, building condition, Free School Meals, school size etc. Much of this information was available previously on ParentZone and in individual School handbooks. It is important to note that Curriculum for Excellence results should not be used as the only measure for how well a school is doing as all schools are unique and are achieving in many different ways not noted in the dashboard.

- Please click on the link below for the dashboard-

- <https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/Dashboards>

- **Period Poverty campaign**

All packs are now in school in line with the campaign

## 8. Staffing

**Action:** To request Lynn Scanlon provide up to date figures for the number of teaching vacancies in Aberdeen broken down by primary and secondary as well as HT/DHT vacancies. – Alison Thomson

Cults Academy PC (CA) has analysed teacher pupil ratios across Aberdeen City and nationally using publicly available data. Very large differences between schools in the city. East Renfrewshire appears to have more SIMD 0 pupils but much less difference in pupil-teacher ratio across the local authority. CA believe the number of teachers assigned to schools across Aberdeen City is driven by a spreadsheet which no-one understands. Their representative advised that they have asked ACC to explain what the criteria is for allocating teachers to schools but have not had an explanation. The response so far is that ACC is looking at the formula and that public consultation on the issue will take place in early 2019. Suggestion made at the meeting that Cults use Freedom of Information Act to get more data/access to spreadsheet.

A discussion on why teachers are leaving the profession and why the council is having difficulty recruiting took place. Margaret offered that the cost of living in Aberdeen is much higher than Central Belt, but teacher shortages not just in Aberdeen, but nationally. Colm advised that more teacher training places were available than had been taken up. Higher English now a requirement for teachers (making it harder to become a teacher). Push to increase STEM teachers - £20,000 bursary in place to attract people. Tony Rafferty offered that the General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS) has been working with English Universities to try to increase the pool of potential teachers. Also GTCS working with Highland Council to reduce time of training to see if that makes it more attractive as a profession. Teachers trained in Ireland are automatically eligible, but were brought in to Aberdeen to fill vacancies and were given additional financial support for two years. After that period most left. Margaret noted that potential candidates need experience of working with children/young people before they get accepted. School

age work experience opportunities in schools is now much reduced and it was mentioned that staff in schools don't have time to support someone on work experience. Mike Dalziel suggested that if Aberdeen were seen as doing 'cutting edge' educational methods perhaps it could attract teachers. ACC have tried 'mainstreaming' but general perception is that the policy is not working and that is also having an impact. **Action:** Ask Lynn Scanlon for a list of the initiatives the council has tried/is currently trying as there are a lot of new parents engaging with the APCF who have not attended previous meetings where this was discussed. - Margaret

#### 9. Election of additional APCF Committee Members

Margaret asked if anyone present was willing to become an APCF committee member as there are vacancies for all but Grammar ASG. Clarification of the role of committee members was provided. Representatives are representing their Associated School Group (ASG) at the APCF, not their own personal view with 2 reps per ASG. As of this meeting there are only three committee members, two from Aberdeen Grammar, one from Bucksburn. Rick Samson (Cults Academy) proposed and agreed to become a new APCF committee member  
Margaret will keep the issue of committee membership open to try to get more/better representation. The turnout at meetings is good but it is proving difficult to get PC members to commit to APCF membership. Concern was raised that some Parent Council Chairs may not be passing on information from APCF chair to their PC members. Margaret advised she recently spoke to a couple of PC members who had been on their school PC for years but never heard of the group. APCF members do not have to be office bearers so membership may suit a PC member rather than the Chair.

#### 10. Education Operational Delivery Committee Update

Colm advised that main subjects being discussed are reports on education Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), update on free school meals and recommendation on way forward for move of St Peters school to Riverbank.

**Education KPIs:** These KPIs are national KPIs and some issues in first year of reporting (2017). Aberdeen data reported was not consistent with other local authorities. Some improvements in some areas, overall Aberdeen generally below national average in KPIs but catching up. Way forward to close gaps is laid out in Aberdeen City's National Improvement Framework (NIF) plan. Gap closure plans within each school should be identified in the school improvement plan.

**Update on school meals:** ACC still looking at ways to increase uptake across the city (for example although 75% of pupils in Torry are eligible for free school meals, only 25% registered). Additional funding available for school for each pupil registered for school meal

**St Peters school move to Riverbank:** Although many parents at St Peters want a new school, ACC will propose move to Riverbank, with investment to upgrade Riverbank to A status (St Peters is C status). Colm advised that this is the option that ACC, the Head Teacher and Parent Council want the committee to select. The work could start as soon as Riverbank is empty. **Action:** Ask Lynn Scanlon what is happening with Hazelwood School - Margaret

#### 11. Treasurer's Report

Tony advised that there was no expenditure to report and that partial refunds had been received in respect of PC/PTA Insurance for Kincorth Academy and Torry Academy. No money received from ACC yet. PCs present confirmed they have not received any money yet either.

**12. National Parent Forum of Scotland Update**

School Empowerment Steering Group (remit includes looking at how to get parents more involved) has been set up. The group includes the Chair of the NPFS, Gayle Gorman (HM Chief Inspector of Education and Chief Executive Education Scotland) and an EIS representative. Relationship between Deputy First Minister (DFM) and NPFS nationally very good. Tony read out letter from DFM outlining his desire to change the perception of National 4 qualification and raise the perceived value and status of the N4 qualification. Should be seen as part of the senior phase pathway. If any parents have suggestions on how to improve perception of N4 qualifications, please forward to Tony.

A discussion took place on N4. It was suggested it would be better if they were more aligned with N5 (not relying only on teacher assessment and having some external verification) to gain credibility from colleges/employers. SCQF qualification have more perceived value than N4 qualifications. Universities still looking for Highers etc. in one sitting, not embracing Curriculum for Excellence.

**13. AOCB**

None

**14. Future Meetings**

14 January 2019

11 March 2019