

# Minutes of Marr College Parent Council Meeting

## Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018



**Present:** Hilary Ramage – Chair, Timothy Wight – Vice Chair, George Docherty – Acting Head Teacher, Kate Dunn – Treasurer, Neil McLean – DHT & Katherine Woodhouse – Minute Secretary

**Council Members:** Alan Blackwood, Clair Milne, Julie Cotter, Kaye Matthews, Lindsay Campbell, Mark Fitzpatrick, Katie Atkinson, Lindsay Connell, Cllr Bob Pollock & Cllr Peter Convery

**Forum Members:** Arlene Milligan, Joy Paul & Laura McGarrity

**Apologies:** Ady Allan, Angela Malcolm, Duncan Beckwith & Lisa Rossi

	<b>Action</b>
<p>1. <b><u>Welcome and Apologies</u></b> Hilary welcomed those in attendance and apologies were noted from those unable to attend.</p>	
<p>2. <b><u>Captains Report</u></b> Charlie, Rosie and Caitlin provided a presentation about their recent activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundraising – S6 bakers raised £243.96 for Ayrshire Hospice at a recent parents' evening and £583 was raised for former pupil Jack Strang's community work in Kenya.</li> <li>• The S1 and S6 Halloween disco, organised by the S6 Leadership team, was a great success with prizes awarded for the best costume.</li> <li>• The theme last week in Personal Support was Wellbeing and this week it is Remembrance Day. As part of this the captains will be attending Troon's Remembrance Day service on Sunday and taking part in readings.</li> <li>• Marr Radio broadcast its first pupil playlist recently. They also helped at the Halloween disco and are now looking to help with Children in Need.</li> <li>• The House Twitter competition was won by Welbeck who managed to get the highest number of followers. House events will be organised with the help of Mrs Madden and Miss McNeil. The house crest competition is still ongoing.</li> </ul>	
<p>3. <b><u>Approval of Minutes and Matters Arising</u></b> The minutes of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2018 were approved by Lindsay Campbell and seconded by Julie Cotter and the outstanding actions reviewed as follows:</p> <p><u>Matters Arising</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malawi – Stuart Harris has been busy with other projects therefore Alan has not managed to speak to him yet.</li> <li>• PALM project – George has organised a business breakfast on 30<sup>th</sup> November led by Stuart McNeill to link up with business partners as a long-term strategy. Stuart will also be visiting Wallace Hall Academy to find out how they run their project. It is hoped to introduce this around February in preparation for students leaving. Hilary felt it would be beneficial to link this into the Careers evening and will send out a message in this respect.</li> <li>• George confirmed that all is in hand for the SIP visit in 2 weeks' time. The focus will be on learner feedback, i.e. how do staff feedback to students about their learning, in particular at BGE stage and for 3<sup>rd</sup> years going into 4<sup>th</sup> year.</li> <li>• Careers evening will be discussed at a meeting with Hilary, Alan and Stuart McNeill on Friday at 11.30 am and anyone is welcome to attend. The intention is to put together a list of tasks which can be sent out to everyone so that they can assign their name to a task, i.e. contacting certain categories of industry or further education institutions.</li> <li>• Music lessons – George provided an update on this as there has been some reduction in music service provision across the authority. Head Teachers have been asked to</li> </ul>	<p>AB</p> <p>HR</p> <p>HR</p>

<p>work with PTs to identify any young people who would benefit from financial support and advise the head of music at SAC, so this is being addressed in school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Colours – George had an e-mail from Rae which outlined that 200 applications had been received for colours before the deadline date which are now in the process of being evaluated. The next round is January 2019. Badges and ties will be provided free of charge to pupils using funds from the Marr Trust which means that only those in S5/6 would need to pay for embroidery – the current quote for this was £38. Hilary asked whether there were any obvious candidates for colours who have not applied. George agreed to take this back to the group.</li> <li>Christmas concert – the date has been agreed as Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> December.</li> <li>School calendar – Tim asked about the possibility of making this available on-line so that it can be imported into other calendar formats. Neil agreed to investigate this from a Group-call or Glow perspective.</li> </ul>	<p>GD</p> <p>NMCL</p>
<p>4. <b><u>Finance Update – Kate Dunn</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kate advised that the current balance at the end of October was £1837.51 which has not fluctuated much since last year. There is a cheque outstanding from SAC for £750 which has not yet been received and Hilary agreed to follow up on this. Tim advised that at the last Parent Council Chair’s meeting he was under the impression that the Parent Council could apply for more funds if there are valid reasons for doing so.</li> <li>Alan asked whether the constitution had been updated in its entirety following the amendments required to change the bank account. Hilary confirmed this had been done and the new version was available on the school website.</li> </ul>	<p>HR</p>
<p>5. <b><u>BGE Reporting – Neil McLean</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neil had hoped to discuss the launch of a new format of BGE reporting, however the Authority has decided to initially pilot this with one school only.</li> <li>The proposed change is to replace the current way of reporting, i.e. developing, consolidating and secure and define this in more depth so that it is now across 4 levels. This will happen in the future but not for this year. Instead the frequency of reports and tracking reports will increase as well as a move towards a more concise report that will be more informative, focusing on a student’s strengths and what they need to do to improve.</li> <li>Tim attended a presentation on this a few weeks ago and was under the impression the school had the option to substitute parental meetings with a written report. Neil confirmed that there is no plan to substitute the parental meetings at Marr and, in addition to these, there are also learning review days.</li> <li>George advised he will be working with staff on their report writing and language in the different stages of the level and will come back and consult with parents in February. The decision on whether test results will be mentioned in the new style reports will also form part of the consultation. This is the format that the senior phase reporting will take as from next month, so it will be useful to have feedback at the next meeting.</li> <li>Kate felt the more in-depth reporting would help students with their option choices, particularly in 3<sup>rd</sup> year.</li> </ul>	<p>GD</p>
<p>6. <b><u>Homework – George Docherty</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistency of homework had been raised at a previous meeting. George had spoken to student focus groups and asked every department about what they issue in terms of homework. Some departments were quite prescriptive, and some were less frequent. He now has a working document which states what departments are currently doing which he hopes to convert into guidelines. The responses from young people were quite mixed with some saying they got an hour a week with others saying they got maths homework every night.</li> <li>Hilary had received an e-mail from Shona Elder about consistency of homework across classes particularly in the senior phase and she also suggested an online app called ‘Show my Homework’ which is used at other schools. George agreed that it is a very good system, but the cost is prohibitive at £6200 for a 2-year contract. The computer department is looking to see if there is something that can be done through Glow but not all homework will lend itself to this format and it does not have any parental access. If the school could consider funding the app through other means it</li> </ul>	

<p>would be of interest, for example, homework diaries cost £1200 per year so this cost could be offset against it. George suggested organising a visit from Show my Homework to find out more information about the app and how it works. Everyone agreed with this in principle if it could be funded. Cllr Pollock advised that he now sits on the Marr Trust and this may be something they could consider funding to move with the times, however they only meet 3 times a year, so it is difficult to put changes through quickly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other suggestions were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ having homework on Twitter pages (some departments already do this).</li> <li>○ Opening up the study skills evening to younger students to get them in the right mindset and teach them how to study. George felt there was some work to be done in how students learn and thought it would be beneficial for 6<sup>th</sup> year to share their experiences with younger students.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Tim pointed out that the Marr e-mail address issued to each pupil qualifies them for discounts for Microsoft Office and other software. Neil advised they can log into Glow Home and one of the options is to download MS Office. He also advised that the students get unlimited storage through their educational address on OneDrive. Hilary felt it would be a good idea to tweet this information to let parents know.</li> </ul>	<p>GD  Cllr P          HR</p>
<p><b>7. <u>Communication Group Update – George Docherty</u></b></p> <p>George summarised the outcome of the Communication group’s meeting, focusing on the results of the survey that had been received back from parents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Website</b> – resounding feedback was that it needs to be updated. Tim felt that it needed constant updating and more people should be involved. Hilary advised that Catherine Owens is happy for the Parent Council to control its own page on the website. George will investigate whether the office staff could have an involvement as currently everything is done through Catherine. She has also provided him with the names of 6 students who would be willing to be involved.</li> <li>• <b>E-mail, Group-call and text</b> – it costs £35 to send out a whole school text. 93% of parents are signed up for e-mail however George would like to increase the use of the Expressions app through Group-call. Only 100 people have signed up so far, so a lot of people are waiting for further instructions from the school. For those who are using it there was some doubt as to whether their messages were getting through – George will ask the office whether they are checking messages that come in via Group-call and will send out another letter on this as the wording in the first letter was ambiguous. He would like to set a cut off time after which only the Expressions app will be used to communicate with parents and e-mail can be phased out sometime next year.</li> <li>• Need to think about how to promote the Expressions app and this can be done whenever parents come into the school and could form part of the transition process next year.</li> <li>• Yvonne in the school office has undergone additional training on Expressions with the Group-call rep, although this only showed how the system worked from the school’s perspective. Neil suggested it would be beneficial to have a parent come in to show them what the app looks for them. Lindsay volunteered to do this.</li> <li>• Wording and tone of texts to be discussed at the next communications meeting.</li> <li>• <b>Newsletter</b> – feedback was positive. The group spoke about how to get this out in the community, i.e. TCC, library, etc.</li> <li>• <b>School phone service</b> – overall it was considered a good experience although some mixed reviews. George met with staff communications team and is going to create a guide for staff about communications strategy, a draft of which he will bring to the next sub group meeting in December.</li> </ul>	<p>GD          GD       LC GD       GD</p>
<p><b>8. <u>Next Month’s Agenda Items</u></b> Items for discussion at next month’s meeting were decided as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on SIP visit – GD</li> <li>• Communication group update</li> </ul>	

<p>9. <b><u>AOCB</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Troon Community Council</b> – Cllr Convery gave feedback on last night’s meeting and was delighted with the behaviour and attitude of the Marr students who came along. George advised that 3 students from 3<sup>rd</sup> year attended as part of Remembrance week.</li></ul>	
<p>10. <b><u>Next Meeting</u></b> The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018 at 7pm.</p>	