



HOLY ROOD RC HIGH SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL

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Chair: Suzanne McIntosh

AGM OF THE PARENT COUNCIL 26.4.21 ANNUAL REPORT

My Annual Report actually covers the period of office I have served as your chair from election at the September 2019 AGM until now 26th April 2021.

I have called this AGM as I can no longer commit to the level of work required for the post due to my own work/ business commitments and new office bearers and Parent Council members are sought to assist in the ongoing work of the Parent Council.

I would like to get new members in place before the end of the summer term so that they are fully up to speed by the start of next school year.

Over the period of late 2019 to now I have chaired: 4 (in person) Parent Council meetings and 3 (virtual) Parent Council meetings, as well as 2 virtual meetings of the bus/ active travel sub-group.

A number of us have participated in the recruitment and selection process for the Head Teacher and Deputy Head posts. We have also undertaken training on recruitment and selection processes with City of Edinburgh Council and specialist Parent Council training for Chairs from Connect. There are lots of resources provided for those who are interested in learning more as well as training, support and opportunities to connect with other Parent Councils.

As a Parent Council we have engaged on the parent body's behalf with Government, the Council, SQA, elected Members of the Council and officers, Sustrans, the Police, Lothian Buses and others.

I have sought at every opportunity to engage with Holy Rood's feeder primary school parent councils on your behalf with a view to them becoming interested in actively contributing to the Holy Rood Parent Council in S1.

A number of longstanding members have left us due to children reaching sixth year and moving on to university, college and the world of work. We thank them for their commitments over their years at Holy Rood.

We've been delighted to welcome Mrs Daly as our Head Teacher and I have engaged with her very regularly over the period on behalf of the Parent Council on all matters of interest or concern to parents and carers. This became especially important during the first lockdown from March 2020 until the August 2020 return to school and the plans put in place for that. We have spoken regularly on the phone over the entire time and provided support on many matters.

When I started this journey back at the first meeting I chaired in October 2019 we had high hopes of embracing new ways of doing things, meetings, sub-groups and being able to move things on in school – obviously Covid put paid to lots of our initial ideas.

However, I had a number of themes that I wished to focus on and these have each been pursued in spite of the covid restrictions:

- Communication between school, the Parent Council and the Parent Forum;
- Enhancing inclusivity and creating a Parent Council that represents our diverse community; and
- Promoting Active Travel to and from school.

We got off to a quick start with Communication. June Falconer and I worked on the Parent Council web pages of the school's web site, I set up a contact email for the Parent Council that hadn't existed before and with Mr Campbell's help we began promoting the Parent Council meetings on the school's twitter page and sending text reminders to parents. We managed all of that in the first month following that October 2019 meeting.

We tried to get new members on board and were successful in a number of new people joining us and showing interest in working with us on sub-groups dealing with specific issues. For those moving things forward for the next year further work is still required on social media platforms and Parent Forum communication. We had discussed developing a handout / virtual leaflet for parents to tell them about getting involved in the work of the Parent Council. We also wanted to be present at P7 evenings and Christmas Concert etc. With Covid things obviously changed and we have not been able to meet in person or have events in school. Hopefully this will change in due course.

In relation to enhancing inclusivity we actively sought new members looking first to the Equalities Committee that had been set up in school with parent representatives. This work is ongoing and will require to be prioritised. Diversity in representation on the Parent Council must be always be something we must be mindful of and increasing opportunities for people to engage with us through different channels,

platforms or types of meeting. Access to meetings and our door being open to all parents and carers must always be our priority.

The impact of the council's withdrawal of the Leith School bus for S1 and S2, adversely impacted on many of our Polish families, in particular. We were able to establish good links with our Polish community and liaise directly with families through a questionnaire and survey to assist our lobbying with CEC and Lothian Buses. The links with Lothian Buses have helped introduce an additional service to school from Leith at the start and end of the school day.

We were also able to use the data gathered to inform our response to the Scottish Government Consultation on young people's free bus travel with certainty as to what our affected families wanted to happen. This issue continues and we have established potential links to sponsorship assistance if the free travel passes are not forthcoming for all young people from Scottish Government.

Lastly, I took up the issue of the school car park access with the School's Police Officer and supported Mrs Daly and her team in trying to stop parents accessing and blocking the car park. Promoting active travel to and from school – by bus, bike or walking is a priority. We have been fortunate that CEC and Spaces for People have installed the bike lane outside school and removing parked cars on the roads will increase road safety for children using bikes and crossing the road. The situation once pupils return will require monitored and feedback to CEC will be required.

I have also represented the Parent Council on the National and Local Forum of Parent Councils in relation to the cancellation of 2021 national exams. This has comprised initially a webinar with John Swinney and latterly meetings with a Head of Education at CEC. I have written to SQA and John Swinney regarding the issues raised by families impacted upon by the evidence based assessment method now being pursued. This issue continues and the impact on the mental health of our young people of a disrupted year of education will no doubt be felt for many years to come. The Parent Council must continue to take a strong line on this and I would therefore suggest that the next steps must be prioritising mental health through a sub group looking at the impact of the pandemic on our young people's education.

Being part of the Parent Council has been a busy and rewarding experience however it is not without its downfalls. I have been honoured to be your Chair but have been disappointed that there are only a few of those parents who sit on the Parent Council who always support, can be relied upon to provide advice, action things and do their bit.

Sadly, the majority of others see it as a way of finding out what's happening in school rather than a way of how they could help make things better.

My challenge therefore to school is to always plug that gap and address what is a clear need from parents to know more about how things happen in school and how they can support their young people. The Parent Council will be continue to be happy to work with the Head Teacher and Year Heads to shape this. Ideas so far have included enhanced, focused, regular year group communication via eg a portal that parents can tap into to learn about the curriculum, aims, objectives and what they can do to help.

To the parent body please support and get involved in the Parent Council. We need a group of people who are each prepared to give a little bit of their time per term to join in the discussion, share their thoughts and ideas, speak to friends in their year group and help out with the work of the Parent Council through sharing their skills and knowledge. We look forward to welcoming you on board.

Thank you

Suzanne C McIntosh