

1. Welcome/apologies:

Apologies;

Attending Catriona Cunningham (Chair) CC; Emma Martin (Vice-chair) EM; Ross McNaughton (Secretary) RM; Jo Tripp (Treasurer) JT; Morven Harrower (MH); Monica Thomson (MT); Andrew Donaldson (AD); Louise Reposo LR; Clara Walker (CW); James Gilbert (JG); Poppy ; Lynsey Hansen (LH); Astrid Walker (AW); Ethan Day (ED); Rubmary ; Jonty James (JJ); Gemma Campbell (GC); Fiona Moore (FM); Amy ; Cristy

John Donnelly Head Teacher (JD); Morag Fotheringhame Acting Depute Head Teacher (MF)

2. Minutes from last meeting on 22.04.24

Exhibited and approved

3. Mobile phone discussion - setting of date for joint School-Parent Council event

CC confirm she met with JD last week and discussed progress made at Scottish Government level and internationally since last meeting on 22.04.24; CC mentioned the proposed sub-group, and seeks members.

JD:- he discussed the 3 options that were being considered i.e. leave as is; keep in lockers (being the 'strengthen' option); outright ban.

This was surveyed but was inconclusive and was a small sample.

JD says that Scot Government guidance change will in due course trigger PKC policy and filter down to school.

CC & JD thought it a good idea to arrange a bigger discussion group/sample

AW – her daughter says phones are not always being used for research and are used inappropriately. She says fellow students have been taking pictures of her and sharing them.

JD – expected Scot Government policy was to ban phones and to provide devices for all; but this funding has not become available; so it has been hard to ban phones as there are not devices being provided to replace them;

MT – her child is in S3 & he is easily distracted and so finds phone use disturbing; he is not thinking about learning and is too busy thinking about his phone; MT thinks school policy should lead on this, as kids need this sort of guidance; MT would be happy to be involved in group and drive this policy;

AD – Referred to the book "The Anxious Generation" – he read this over the summer holidays; AD says this books presents an evidence-based approach looking at young peoples' mental health and phone usage since 2011; AD says this book shows the effects on young peoples' brains are worrying; this is driving mental health issues; AD would like to push school to ban smartphones; AD appreciates that there are practical implications; AD says there are information groups that will attend parent groups to provide evidence; AD will contact one of these information groups;

JJ – question to JD – how much do phones enrich learning and what is the cost/benefit as regards the disruption? His personal view is to ban. School should take lead as parents might take easy route.

JD – regarding the cost/benefit, this is a valid question. As regards use, they may be used for i.e. surveys, but does not need to be mobile device. As regards the 'Cost' – JD accepts that even having mobile on your person distracts you, as you are anticipating it buzzing. CHS has a robust policy, but it could be strengthened. It would totally require parental support though, as there will be conflict with pupils which would be undermined without parent support. Agrees with AD that expert views from a third party information group would be really helpful.

JJ – what would consequence be & what are the powers to enforce? JD – if your person received 5 demerits for mobile phone abuse, then phones are taken off the young person for a week. As regards numbers, this is in single figures. JD recognises difficulties for teachers identifying misuse, as things move so quickly. JD says as regards parents – if you propose a ban, then this will likely really encourage engagement; need numbers in favour to be in the hundreds; need to be honest as to the challenges being faced;

LR – enforcing the policy is so difficult for teachers; as soon as teacher's back is turned the phones are out; for that reason that is why she supports a total ban; appreciates that it is difficult;

JG – confirms he is happy to join a panel/subgroup - asks if there are other methods of gathering assessment materials?;

JD – says that there is a cross-section of views across teachers;

GC – her view is that parents put too much responsibility on the school; parents give the young people phones, so parents need to make unpopular decisions; GC view is that they can be used better but banning phones is not the answer; parents look at phones all the time too, realistic for young people to not have access to phones; thinks there should be a balance; parents have to make hard decisions regarding their children all the time and this is another example of this.

JJ – confirms he will go on to the panel/sub-group

CC – refers to the Morrisons Academy ban, notes that would be good to get some feedback from that school; JD confirms he has had sight of the Morrison's policy; however PKC say don't revise school policy until a decision is made at PKC level; JD says still good to have discussions though.

CC proposes a panel/meeting towards the end of September, asking if that would be sufficient time to do so. Just looking to agree date with MT, JG & JJ.

JD says PKC have a committee where parent council representatives from different schools attend to raise/discuss issues; AD would be keen to see some attendance from Parent Council.

4. Behaviours

This is a standing matter on the agenda as parents had raised concerns last year. Cristy asks about a 'no going to toilet' policy, thinks parents should have discretion as to whether this should be allowed. J.D says this is not a policy and that teachers do have discretion. However, the school does encourage toilet during break times so as not to miss out on learning.

AW says her daughter was upset as she was not allowed to go to toilet but when she did go the toilet was not great and there was a vape in one of the toilets. She also says that students are not allowed to use the publicly facing toilets.

JD – re vapes – some pupils have been vaping; where there is no CCTV, these toilets have been closed to prevent vaping and truanting; this does mean that the other toilets do get busy; Some pupils are truanting in the bathroom; Would it be helpful to have an open invite to parents to be walked around the school and see the pressures that the school faces?

JJ – a couple of questions just generally – is behaviour declining? And do teachers have the necessary tools to manage behaviour?

JD says he has been in position for 6 years: interventions due to behaviour have probably gone up proportionally. Reasons, may be caused by covid & lockdown or just generally changes in society. There are greater societal challenges, but JD's view is that generally this school is calm and behaviour is good. As to whether teachers feel they have the necessary sanctions – probably not for JD to say, it would be a question for the teachers. He asks if it would be helpful to have a teachers to come to a PC meeting, without JD?

JJ asks how much is put back on to parents to work on young persons' behaviour? JD – it's a mixed picture, some find it difficult to exert the influence on the young person, some do manage to bring about change.

5. Headteacher's oral update

SQA results are at a high level. S4 performed really well being the 3rd highest secondary school in PKC which is comparable to the covid cohort.

S5 – results are steady – 1 or 2% away from PKC average results, and so in keeping with average.

S6 – this was a very strong performance with the 2nd highest in PKC and the best AH results in PKC.

JD pleased overall, but appreciates that for some individuals there will be disappointment.

CC – any specific subjects that need looked at/improved on? JD – yes, there will be meetings to look at results, good & bad. Modern languages could be improved; history & Modern Studies is not good at every level; science usually gets really strong results, but is a bit down this year; English results are ok, but could be better;

CC – wanted to raise English, as she has had a few comments from parents, especially around experiences in the classroom. JD says he would be happy look at comments and will raise this with the team.

LR – says she has least contact with English department. – there has been no homework or assessments. She has seen no written work from the English department and in comparison to other departments there is a lack of communications;

Cristy – with reference to Mr Cairns, her son was devastated when he left, as he was a good English teacher and guidance teacher. JD agrees, but says he wants to be a principal teacher; Mr Campbell who was formerly on a temporary basis is now back permanently and many pupils are happy with this.

AW says that her daughter has described being allowed to listen to music in English. AW thinks it is another distraction from learning. JD says this is certainly discouraged, as earbuds are not a learning tool; there are permissions for young people who need to use them. JD thinks that the teacher was probably trying to make a positive learning environment but JD would be happy to raise this with the teacher in question.

LH – just backing up what AW says. She understands that young people did not do any reading as they were just listening to music. But she recognises that one size does not fit all and there are young people with additional needs. LH final point – English department – how are problems in dept, being rectified?

JD as regards earphones, he says that there should be a consistent message and he will get this across. As regards English dept. outcomes, he recognises that they are not as good as they used to be, but still not bad. So many students take English and this has a big outcome on results. JD says that it is a fully staffed English department and he is happy with replacement staff. Mentions Miss MacLeod from PHS, Mr Campbell who they know from supply. JD says that the school is looking for stronger attainments and he would be keen to hear about less positive experiences.

Clara – turnover at the school; is there a correlation between turnover and performance in the results – JD - says turnover is not disproportionate to other schools; school is fully staffed, not able to recruit a 2 days a week HE teacher; in the past they have not appointed just anyone and have re-advertised; Science – staff absence last year, maybe impacted on pupil performance but that was an anomaly. Clara happy with response – from parent/pupil perspective it can seem like there is an unusual amount of turnover; JD points out to the higher level of retirement at end of last year.

CC – overriding thing is to contact JD if any issues.

Gemma Campbell – her daughter is having a great experience following a less positive experience at primary school, everything is new and she just wants to highlight the positive experiences she & her daughter have had.

CC -just wants to formally minute the sad news about Mrs Basford and the positive influence she had had on her daughter

6. AOB

MH – UCAS events – can S4 attend these? JD does not really have an answer, he will raise it with MF. MH says that S5 pupils had a very positive experience.

7. DONM – TBC

Crieff High School Parent Council

Minutes of the meeting 5 September 2024

CC - This should also be our AGM and so we should do it in person. CC plans to stand down as Chair, and so asks if anyone else wants to be chair. DONM to be 28 October, 630 at the Crieff High School. JT will also be standing down as treasurer.

CLOSE