

Portobello High School Parent Council - Report and Accounts - August 2022 - April 2023

The Parent Council is a mechanism for parents/carers to hear what is happening around the school and to get involved in their child's education and is an important forum in which to involve all members of the school community in issues that affect students.

The members of the Parent Council and associated volunteers are all parents /carers of young people at Portobello High School. They all give their time for free to support the whole school. A big thank you to all of them for the time and work that they put into the Parent Council last year, and to everyone who has contributed in terms of participation at meetings, donating prizes or supporting fundraising efforts throughout the year.

We would also like to express our sincere thanks to the Head Teacher and her team for the hard work that they have undertaken throughout the year.

What does Portobello High School Parent Council do?

The Parent Council are volunteers who seek to represent the views of parents and carers in the school community. The Parent Council members manage the secretariat and funds of the Parent Council.

As a Parent Council we aim to:

- Represent the views of parents /carers in the running of the school.
- Promote communication between parents /carers and the school.
- Support the school and the welfare of its students.
- Fundraise to support the school and its students.

How can you get involved?

All parents /carers of students at Portobello High School can get involved in the work of the Parent Council. There are a variety of ways that you can take part - by becoming a member of the Council, helping to organise fundraising events, taking part in the recruitment of senior staff, and attending Parent Council meetings with the Parent Forum. You can use your skills to enhance the experience of your children and you can meet other parents /carers and have fun while you are doing it.

To find out more:

- Email us at portyhighparents@gmail.com
- Join us and Message us on Facebook: <https://bit.ly/3mCaOoh>
- Contact the school office and share your details to be shared with us
- Visit: <http://portobellohighschool.org.uk/school-info/parent-council>

The work of the Council 2022 - 2023

Parent Council / Parent Forum meetings

This year saw the move back to “normality” following the pandemic, with school being open to all once again. However, following the poll that the Parent Council undertook in 2021-22 (which showed that the preference of Parent Council / Parent Forum attendees was that 70 % of respondents would like a mixture of in-person and on-line meetings; 20% would like only on-line meetings; and 10% would like only in-person meetings) the Parent Council moved to a mixture of in-person and on-line meetings through the year. Attendance has dropped considerably from the attendance at the on-line meetings held during the height of the pandemic, and there is a slightly higher attendance at on-line meetings than those held in person. However, the level of discussion and input from attendees at the in-person events is greater than on-line. The Parent Council will continue to monitor this and will seek further views from parents / carers on the format of future meetings during the next session.

Throughout the year we have taken a focused approach in responding to themes of comments /concerns and positive action being raised with the Parent Council. We have hosted guest speakers in relation to topics of interest from the parent / carer network and for on-line meetings used the MS Teams chat function to enable

questions and, where possible, discussion between the school and parents / carers. We are conscious of the limitations presented by MS Teams when supporting open dialogue between the parent / carer network and the school team and will consider this as we progress into 2023-24 delivery.

Topics that have been covered at Parent Council / Parent Forum meetings include:

- School improvement plan
- Maths – Numeracy at Home
- Subject choices and pathways through school
- School reports and how they should be interpreted.

Parent Council – Other Activities

The Parent Council (PC) has undertaken a range of other activities during the year as follows:

- It raised concerns directly with the City of Edinburgh Council in relation to issues the school has experienced with IT, pest control and window maintenance. The Parent Council has appreciated the support of our local Councillors in helping to progress solutions with the Council.
- It supported the establishment of the school clothing bank, which is now being run by a couple of volunteers.
- It arranged an “in-person” session with parents / carers to contribute to the National Discussion on Education. It also facilitated ways in which the views of parents / carers could input to the review electronically. The participation in the in-person event was disappointingly low, and the Parent Council will reflect on this in considering future events.
- It has supported the recruitment of a number of senior staff by organising volunteer Parent Representatives on the interview panels.
- PC representatives attended the S1 Parents’ Evening that was held in school in March in order to meet with parents / carers and hear directly about the experiences that the parents / carers and pupils had had of the school and to hear any suggested areas for improvement.
- The PC explored the option of moving to charitable status (utilising knowledge and expertise from Connect, the national body that provides guidance and best practice advice to parent councils) but determined that there was little benefit in this approach at the moment.
- A couple of members of the Parent Council, along with the Head Teacher, attended a session with representatives from some of the cluster primary schools and the City of Edinburgh Council Quality Improvement Officer, to explore ways in which it would be beneficial for the Parent Councils to work together. The Portobello High School Parent Council is keen to continue to engage with the primary schools, particularly in relation to helping support the transition of pupils from P7 in to the High School, and to make connections with parents of new pupils before they start at the school.

Communication

Facebook continues to grow with over 700 followers and is a strong communication channel for parents / carers to chat with each other. The Facebook page is also used to understand themes of focus for meetings, targeting the agenda towards areas of interest and need.

Parent Council members attended wider Parent Council locality network and specialist meetings (run by City of Edinburgh Council) to raise and feed in parents / carers views on issues of concern and to bring insight back for all.

The Parent Council also continued to liaise with the wider Parent Forum through email and via the school Weekly Update, which was considered especially important for those with no Facebook access.

Finance

During the year the Parent Council has implemented several new finance procedures, including moving to on-line banking and away from the use of cheques. It invested in a couple of card-readers, which now enables payments at fundraising events to be taken using contactless cards, as well as cash.

An independent review of the accounts of the Parent Council had not been undertaken for a couple of years, so the Parent Council has ensured that the last three sets of accounts have now been independently checked and verified, with no issues raised. Confirmation of the reviews is attached at Appendix 2 (the Parent Council would like to thank Valerie Rogerson for undertaking this task).

Fundraising

In August 2022, the Parent Council held £4,402.72 in the bank. The total amount raised over the period August 2022 – April 2023 (net of expenses) was £3,403 (£2,102 from fundraising plus £1,301 Council donation - see Accounts at Appendix 1).

We fundraised through:

- A Christmas raffle, supported by a volunteer parent and a number of local businesses.
- Refreshments and raffles at the October School Play, Christmas Concert and Spring Concert.

A small element of funds is generated through Easy Fundraising. We would like to increase the flow of funds generated through this avenue. Easy Fundraising is a service that donates money to the Parent Council as individuals make purchases on sights like Sainsburys and Amazon.

<http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/portobellohighsc>

The Parent Council is keen to increase the range of fundraising activities and has put together a fundraising “sub-group”. If you are interested in getting involved with fundraising, please get in contact with us using the details in the “Find out more” section above.

In 2022-23 £6,080 of funds raised by the Parent Council have been committed to the following:

- School Christmas Appeals 2022 and 2023 - £500 for each appeal
- CDT - £2,500 for a 3D printer
- Drama department - £340 (half of the net funds raised at the school play)
- Music department - £240 (half of the net funds raised at the Christmas Concert)
- Support for learning - £100 for specialist Lego sets
- Duke of Edinburgh Award - £359 for a new tent and gas stove
- Science - £500 for an infra-red camera
- English - £416 for 25 wireless keyboards
- Photography - £582 for speed lights and transmitter kit, collapsible reflector and pop-up background
- Whole school - £43 for card deck games

Half of the net funds raised at the Spring Concert will also be donated to the music department in due course.

Council – 2022-23

- Chair - Sharon Fairweather
- Vice Chair – Nancy Riach
- Secretary - Alison Adams
- Treasurer - Anandan Tanabalan
- General members – Lindsay Drybrough, Beverley Klein, Martin Corley, Juraj Szavits-Nossan, Lorraine Inglis

Thank you to the members of the Parent Council, and all at Portobello High School for the hard work undertaken over the last year.

As ever, a huge thanks to everyone who supported the Parent Council over the last year. We only work with the support of the whole school community so please continue that support next year.

Appendix 1 - PHS Parent Council – August 2022 – April 2023 Financial Accounts

August 2022 Opening Balance	£	£
Bank Balance	4,402.72	
Cash in Hand	Nil	
TOTAL		4,402.72
Income		
Edinburgh Council Donation 2022/23	1,300.60	
Christmas Raffle	552.60	
Easy Fundraising	248.89	
School play	1,203.69	
Christmas concert	587.87	
Spring concert	813.51	
Sub-total		4,707.16
Expenditure		
School Donation	500.00	
Fundraising Supplies	729.35	
General Supplies	75.18	
Sub-total		(1,304.53)
April 2023 Closing Balance		
Bank Balance	7,725.35	
Cash in Hand (float)	80.00	
Total Bank and Cash		<u>7,805.35</u>

(Note – post year-end event - a further donation of £5,580 was made to the school in May 2023)

Independent Review of the accounts of the Parent Council of Portobello High School

I report on the accounts of the Parent Council for the following periods:

- November 2020-October 2021
- November 2021 - July 2022

Guidelines for independent reviewers

Connect - an organisation that supports partnerships in education - provide guidelines to parent groups and treasurers in relation to annual accounts. These are outlined below and were used of the basis of my review.

The Treasurer is responsible for organising an annual review of the accounts by an independent examiner. This does not have to be done by an accountant but should be done by someone who is good with numbers, eg, someone who works in a bank or building society, or the Treasurer of another group in your community, eg local Girl Guides Treasurer. However, this person should not be a member of the PC/committee or a relative of a PC/committee member. (There are different requirements for groups with charitable status.)

The following checks are the kind of review the independent examiner might do. However, they will have their own methods and must satisfy themselves that the accounts are accurate. Once they have satisfied themselves, they will need to state in writing that they have checked the accounts and they are a true and accurate financial record of the parent group, dating and signing the statement.

1. Most important. Check the bank statements agree with the spreadsheet total. If the Treasurer has been doing this on a monthly basis, it should be straightforward.
2. Examine the expenditure and pick five entries to check the back-up paperwork. Examples would be:
 - a. A large external purchase. Proper invoice received and signed off by two signatories.
 - b. Regular re-imbursement to PC/committee member or volunteers – receipts provided as proof of purchase and signed.
 - c. Any item of expenditure that seems unusual or out of the ordinary.
3. Examine the income. Compare it to the previous year. Does it seem in line? Query any obvious changes eg. Easter Egg hunt last year £350, this year £150. Reason – it was raining this year.

Where there are discrepancies, the independent examiner should liaise with the Treasurer until these are corrected – often they are simply errors or omissions. The examiner should put any concerns that cannot be resolved in writing to the committee. What action is taken is then up to the committee.

Once the accounts have been checked, the independent examiner should write to the PC formally and confirm they are satisfied with the accounts. This letter will form part of the Treasurer's written annual accounts and financial report to the Parent Forum at the AGM. The approved annual accounts and financial report should also be made available to the Parent Forum by being displayed in the school/on social media.

Independent reviewer's statement

I confirm, therefore, that I am satisfied that the accounts presented are an accurate and appropriate representation of the financial position of the Parent Council.

The bank statements agree with the accounts. Receipts are not available for large items of expenditure but minutes of meetings confirm the spend. I can see no errors or omissions in the accounts.

Name: Valerie Rogerson

Address: 28 Southfield Loan, Edinburgh, EH15 1QR

Date: 1 March 2023

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Independent reviewer's statement

I confirm that I am satisfied that the accounts presented are an accurate and appropriate representation of the financial position of the Parent Council.

In particular

- The bank statements agree with the accounts.
- The cash balances deposited to the accounts agree with the cash book.
- Receipts for items paid with cash match the amounts in the cash book.
- The minutes confirm the decisions around spending which matches with the accounts.

I can see no errors or omissions in the accounts.

Name: Valerie Rogerson

Address: 28 Southfield Loan, Edinburgh, EH15 1QR

Date: 21 May 2023