

## **Portobello High School Parent Council - Report and Accounts – May 2023 – March 2024**

The Parent Council is a mechanism for parents / carers to hear what is happening around the school and to get involved in their young person'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 Teachers and the wider staff 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 with 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 young people 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](mailto:portyhighparents@gmail.com)
- Join us and Message us on Facebook: Portobello High School - Parent Council <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 2023 - 2024**

### **Parent Council / Parent Forum meetings**

In line with the previous year, the Parent Council initially held a mixture of in-person and on-line meetings but were delighted when the school introduced a hybrid approach to the meetings in March. Attendance has dropped considerably from the attendance at the on-line meetings held during the height of the pandemic, but the hope is that the hybrid approach will enable increased participation in the future.

Throughout the year the Parent Council has taken a focused approach in responding to themes of comments / concerns and positive action being raised with the Parent Council. Alongside a regular update from the Head Teacher, the Parent Council has hosted guest speakers in relation to topics of interest.

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

- the school's refreshed approach to anti-bullying;
- future potential approaches to school trips;
- alternatives to the current approach to prize-giving; and

- consultation on an amended uniform policy.

### **Parent Council – Other Activities**

Alongside the fundraising activities (see below), the Parent Council (PC) has undertaken a range of other activities during the year as follows:

- It has supported the recruitment of a number of senior staff – including the Acting Head Teacher post and permanent Head Teacher post - by organising volunteer Parent Representatives on the interview panels. The recruitment process for the Head Teacher post enabled a question drafted by the Parent Council to be put to the short-listed candidates – the Parent Council put forward “What would be your approach to increasing parental engagement in a diverse school community?”.
- For the first time, the Parent Council ran a refreshments stand at the S1 / S3 / S4 / S5 and S6 parents’ evenings, which gave Parent Council representatives the opportunity to engage with parents / carers and hear directly about the experiences that they and the pupils had had of the school and to hear any suggested areas for improvement. (The Parent Council were unable to provide the stall at the S3 parents’ evening due to a shortage of volunteers.) The plan is to continue to provide this refreshment stall at future parents’ evenings if there are sufficient volunteers to enable them to do so.
- The Parent Council communications group has been working on several areas. The Parent Council logo has been updated, and discussions have been had with the school to look at developing improvements in communications - both ways - between school and parents / carers. The Parent Council has input to the development of a draft school communications policy and is assisting the school with exploring areas such as a school app and providing feedback on the improvements that have been made to the school website.
- The Parent Council were also involved in discussions around proposed cuts to the City of Edinburgh Council Education budget, via the Parent Council Chair liaising with a network of Chairs of Parent Councils across Edinburgh. A number of depositions were put to Edinburgh Council by other schools which Portobello Parent Council supported in writing. Thankfully the final budget proposals resulted in an increase in budgets to schools for April 2024 – March 2025. There will no doubt be continuous engagement on this in future years as the decisions made only applied to the short term.
- The Parent Council has also put together a Parent Council handbook to help new members and has introduced an events stock management system to support the fundraising activity.

### **Communication**

Facebook (Portobello High School - Parent Council <https://bit.ly/3mCaOoh>) 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**

An independent review of the accounts of the Parent Council for the period May 2023 – April 2024 has been undertaken, with no issues being raised. A copy of the review is attached at Appendix 2. The Parent Council would like to thank Valerie Rogerson for undertaking this task.

## Fundraising

At the beginning of May 2023, the Parent Council held £7,805.35 in total funds (bank and cash). The total amount raised by the Parent Council over the period May 2023 – March 2024 (net of expenses) was £5,172 (£3,871 from fundraising plus £1,301 Council donation - see Accounts at Appendix 1 for detail).

We fundraised through:

- An online Christmas raffle, supported by several parent volunteers and a number of local businesses.
- Refreshments and raffles at the Sports Personality Awards, School Prize Giving, Cabaret nights, Christmas Concert, Spring Concert, and the school Parents' Evenings.

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 sites 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 2023-24 the following funds raised by the Parent Council were passed to the school:

<b>May 2023 - Funds raised in 2022-23</b>	<b>£</b>
Christmas Appeal – Inclusion Fund	500
Music Department	240
Drama Department	340
3D Printer	2500
Miscellaneous items across the school	<u>2000</u>
	<b>5,580</b>
<b>Funds Raised in 2023-24</b>	
8 sets of Genius Square XL and 9 sets of Prime Climb games for maths, which support the development of strong numeracy skills	505
50 JCL universal wireless keyboards for Support for Learning which enable pupils who have ICT with learning functions as an assessment arrangement to practice touch typing and using a full-sized keyboard in advance of assessments	1,111
The costs of a panto trip that the school organised for 20 looked after pupils and young carers.	253
Music / drama – funds raised at concerts / school shows	597
P.E – funds raised at June Sports Personality Awards	<u>130</u>
	<b>2,596</b>
<b>Total Parent Council Donations</b>	<b><u>8,176</u></b>
Card reader collections on behalf of others – Bake Sales / Inclusion Fund Donations*	226.50
<b>Total Bank Transfers to School per Accounts</b>	<b><u>8,402.50</u></b>

(\* the Parent Council provided card reader facilities for a couple of student bake sales and the collection of donations to the School Inclusion Fund at the Christmas Concert.)

At the end of March 2024, the Parent Council held £4,801.69 in total funds (bank and cash) and a small level of stock for upcoming fundraising events. Post the end of the period covered by the Parent Council Accounts (May 2023 – March 2024) the Parent Council has transferred £3,766 to the school to cover the cost of a class set of littleBits STEAM Student Packs. These kits of plug and play allow hands-on teaching of STEAM skills (science,

technology, engineering, arts and maths) particularly in S1/S2, and will also be used by the S6 Science Ambassadors who run a lunchtime group for S1 and S2 interested in STEAM.

#### **Council – 2023-24**

- Chair - Sharon Fairweather
- Vice Chair – Nancy Riach
- Treasurer – Andrew McFadyen
- General members – Alison Adams, Anandan Tabalan, Lindsay Drybrough, Martin Corley, Lorraine Inglis, Kirsten Donaldson-Wheal, Joanne Macauley, Claire Haggett, Claire Braidwood, David Atkinson, Anne Steinberg, Spoke Wintersparv

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 - we only work with the support of the whole school community so please continue that support next year.

**Appendix 1 - PHS Parent Council – May 2023 – March 2024 Financial Accounts**

<b>May 2023 Opening Balance</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Bank Balance	7,725.35	
Cash in Hand	80.00	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>7,805.35</b>
<b>Income</b>		
Edinburgh Council Donation 2023/24	1,300.60	
Christmas Raffle	1,296.00	
Easy Fundraising	338.33	
Sports Personality	376.17	
Cabaret (June)	427.09	
School Prize Giving	306.07	
Cabaret (November)	473.65	
Christmas Concert (1)	962.16	
Spring concert (3)	710.37	
Misc Donations	100.00	
Parents Evenings (2)	346.53	
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>6,636.97</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
School - Donations and Transfers (1+2)	8,402.50	
Fundraising Supplies	1,151.27	
General Supplies	86.86	
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>(9,640.63)</b>
<b>March 2024 Closing Balance</b>		
Bank Balance	4,721.69	
Cash in Hand (float)	80.00	
Total Bank and Cash		<b><u>4,801.69</u></b>

(Income includes Card Reader payments taken on behalf of others - 1 - £43.50 Bake Sale and £110 Social Inclusion Fund donations 2 - £73 Bake Sale - total £226.50 3 - £25 Social Inclusion Fund, which will be transferred to the school in April.)

## **Appendix 2 - Independent Review of the accounts of the Parent Council of Portobello High School**

I report on the accounts of the charity for the following periods:

- May 2023 – March 2024

### **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-imburement 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. Cash sales are all logged and checked. Receipts are in place. I can see no errors or omissions in the accounts.

Name: Valerie Rogerson

Address: 28 Southfield Loan, Edinburgh, EH15 1QR

Date: 27 May 2024