LASSWADE HIGH SCHOOL

CHAIR’S REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2018

It’s been another very busy year for the Parent Council with 7 meetings since our last AGM in September 2017. We missed a meeting in May 2018 due to competing commitments. May is a busy month as the timetables change and the SQA exams are on. We have reduced the number of meetings this year to 6 and will review whether that is enough in June next year. Attendance remains high and has rarely been lower than 15. It’s so encouraging to see many regulars and new faces contributing to our meetings which rarely last less than two hours – not for the faint hearted!

**LOOKING BACK**

Looking back over the last year the focus has continued to be parental engagement and feeding into topics and policies of interest to the parent body. At the beginning of the 2017 session I met with Mr Hornell and we planned a number of topics spread out over each of the meetings for the session. These topics reflected a particular area of policy or curriculum where parental views were sought in order to influence the direction of travel for the School. Following feedback we also introduced more feedback from pupils and more pupil presentations. In particular the 6th Head Team attended and contributed to a number of meetings as did the Student Voice teacher contact, Ms Blake. This ensured a more interesting mix of topics. In addition AOCB continued to provide an interactive and immediate opportunity for parent’s to raise a range of concerns.

We are very lucky to have a number of committed Councillors who regularly attend and support the Parent Council. A significant part of our November and January meetings were spent discussing the impact of cuts. As Chair I attended the public meetings and wrote a letter to the Council outlining the impact cuts would have on our pupils. Our councillors have answered questions and provided us with information on the cuts and attended meetings to update us. These are very challenging times for education and the effect of cuts makes the need for fundraising all the more important.

The topics we discussed at the meetings included the format of the school report, the SQA exam experience including the timing of prelims, mentoring, mental health and pupil discipline. Many of these discussions were challenging and wide ranging and I am very grateful to all of you who participated so fully in these debates. We also discussed issues such as the appointment of the new school captains who replaced the previous Head Boy/Head Girl format and smoking outside the School.

I worked closely with the Head Girl, Teigan Hunter to organise the very successful careers event in October 2017. This event was well supported by parents and with over 45 careers represented it was a huge success. Over 200 pupils attended. It was a significant achievement for Teigan who worked very hard to make it such a success.

Fundraising has been another huge feature of this year. Thanks to Marek Short sponsorship and the hard work of the Fundraising sub group under the direction of Fiona Robertson, our Christmas Fair 2017 broke previous records in stall numbers and income. 20 parents volunteered to help that evening and it truly was a team effort. We gave School groups free tables to allow them to maximise their fundraising potential. This year in 2018 which should really be covered by the report next year, the 6th years ran the show and even more funds were raised!

200 Club continues to grow. Fiona Harris kindly set this up and with the rest of the fund raising committee we have been trying hard to make it work. We now have almost 57 members, down on last year and with a School roll of 1500 and over 120 staff there is clearly more scope for members. A gentle push therefore to those of you who have not yet signed up to consider supporting this project. At SPOTY this year which was sponsored by the Parent Council we left an application form on every seat to encourage new members but we did not achieve any new sign ups as a result.

The bingo night and a couple of refreshment stalls have contributed additional finance to our coffers. Thanks to those who support us in all these events either by pouring coffee or making a donation. This allows us to help various departments in many ways. This will be covered by our Treasurer in her report.

With the help of Tracey Bird, who had now left the Parent Council, I applied for 6 grants this year. Only one was successful but we were able to pay for an inspirational speaker, the Cyclist Mark Beaumont, to come and speak to 5th and 6th years with the funding we received from the Daisy Chain Trust. I also worked with a Company to supply a business folder which many of you may have seen being used at events. The advertising from this has provided the sum of £1250 to the School which we will receive shortly.

Looking back previous year’s reports, I noticed that Mr Hornell challenged us to raise £5000 a year. With the additional funding from the grants and the folders, we have broken that this year. Looking forward hopefully that will be achievable in the next year.

We can’t do it without support and if anyone is looking for a new challenge then please do volunteer and help out on the fundraising side of the PC. It’s a shame that we can no longer find enough parents to support providing refreshments at events – it is at a difficult time of the evening. We have decided to outsource this to school groups so that the same people are not doing this role all the time.

We have been working each year on improving Communication following the communication survey we undertook in September 2017. That was the motivation for the new website. In addition we have been using the School facebook page regularly to highlight topical issues. We created out own Parent Council facebook page which I regularly update and this seems to be well received.

Finally I contributed to a Consultation on the Education (Scotland) Bill which sought response on the role of Parent Councils.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

At our meeting in August 2018 we broke into groups to discuss aims and additional topics to discuss. There was a clear message from parents that they wanted more information about school trips, exams and some decisions such as the move to School Captains. The continued inclusion of pupil presentations was supported and the need for more meetings highlighted.

Fundraising remains a big focus. We have found it increasingly hard to find volunteers to staff refreshments for parents evenings so we handed this over to School Groups who will use the donations for their projects. This has meant a drop in income for the PC. We remain hopeful that the 200 club will continue to grow and that our Christmas Fair and Bingo nights will be a success. We desperately need a parent to take over the responsibility of organising these events as those of us who have been involved for the last 7/8 years will not be parents at the School in two years’ time and we need to start planning for that now. In order to ease the burden of chairing on me, John French, the vice chair and I are working on changing the Constitution to allow for a joint chair role. Going forward we will share the role and will formalise this in a new constitution.

Thanks again to all those who attend, support and participate in making the Parent Council a vibrant and challenging forum for debate.

Lindsey McGregor

Chair Person

26/11/17