



Hermitage Academy Parent Council

26th January 2026

Attendance

Name	Role	Apologies
Douglas Morgan	Head Teacher	
Derek Munro	Teacher	
Susy Sinclair and Beth McClurdy	Skills Development Scotland (SDS)	
Laura Watt	Chair	Apologies
Kirsty Sweeney	Secretary	Online
Donna Gairns	ASN Rep / Vice Chair	
Stella Kinloch	Treasurer	
Claire Walker		
Andrew Tennant		Online
Kathleen Daly		Apologies
Anna Tkachenko		Apologies
David Smith		Apologies
Andrew Brown		
Marie Smith		Online
Dawn MacFadyen		
Tyler Whatmore		Apologies
Louise Grafton		Apologies

1. Welcome and Apologies

Welcome from DG – deputising for Laura Watt who is

2. Skills Development Scotland

Suzanne Sinclair (acting PT STEM) and Beth McClurdy (DYW rep) introduced their roles.

Suzanne's role is to promote STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) and employability in general.

Recent Engineering academy in Dumbarton.

- Lots of partner organisations present including BAE systems, British Airways, Diamond Power.
- Over 20 pupils from S4-S6 participated.

- Covered approach for applying for apprenticeships, interview practice, aptitude tests, application process.

Beth works on Schools and Employers – work experience, running careers forum, work experience and workshops in the school. It is a struggle to find willing employers local to take on students. The Base has security restrictions.

Question for everyone - Anyone in local area, parents, friends/family who would offer work experience placements? It would benefit young people so much. School said it has been difficult to build up a bank of employers.

Anywhere that you can get public transport too inc West Dunbartonshire not just Argyll – Dumbarton, Clydebank, Balloch, Helensburgh.

Ideas shared:

- Advert in Community Advertiser looking for local employers.
- take a list of what pupils are looking for to the Chamber of commerce/Rotary Club.
- Volunteer section - Some local volunteer groups get involved too inc Fun First, Hermitage Park – limestone courses through Argyll College.
- Many employers can't afford a full week to support pupils or have them in their workplace then is there other options for employers – half day or 1 day placement over a few weeks or months or coming into school to present to pupils. Not just a week in March, a week in October. Consider the employer coming to the school for a short workshop.

If a list is pulled together as a school then would benefit if PC helped promote and put out to parents to access employers.

Spreadsheet that pupils are listed on in terms of interests and when they plan to leave date end of S4, S5 or S6. SDS can pull together employers with match with the pupils needs.

Anne and John, the careers advisors also get involved. Where there are bespoke interests then it can be harder to get experience to tie up.

Any parents who can offer work experience through their job then contact the school officer FAO of Suzanne and Beth.

3. Head Teacher's Report

Key points, since last meeting on 10th Nov.

Staffing Update –

- Mr Arbuckle returned from planned absence, thanks to Mr Gibson supporting Davarr which has a knock on effect, as Mr Gibson goes back to Arran.

- Principle teacher for Art cover has continued in acting role.
- Mrs Sinclair – Principle teacher in STEM in Miss Molhearn absence.
- Emma Whitfield moved on from family liaison officer – Daniel Pearson was successful candidate.
- New member of staff – starting tomorrow – Miss Gallacher – post in Modern Language teacher.

In general, build up to Christmas period has been difficult due to staff illness and cover and difficult start to Jan but staffing absence has dropped this week. Prioritise certificated classes. In odd occasion, Advanced Higher classes will have their teacher moved as the trust is there for independent study but it is a last resort.

Prelims

- Lots of prelims, S5 and S6 since the break and S4 before the break. There has been high conduct and very proud of pupils. 300 presentations that must be coordinated.
- 50% additional support needs (ASN) within that so many alternative arrangements required.
- Mrs Muir has been off since Christmas so senior leadership team is running at full capacity, and Mrs Kennedy who stepped in. A real positive experience but still lessons to be learned.

Careers and Pathways event

- Moving focus to the biggest event and all the local and national employers and colleges/universities. Focus on finding out what the challenges are applying for courses and jobs and the competition out there.
- Quiet time between 6 -6.30 and then it gets busy. Specific Year S2 – 6.30, S3 – 7.00 and S4 – 7.30, S5 - 8.00 and different focus for each year groups leading by Head Teacher.
- In the Library suite and Engineering Panel from Babcock at 7pm,
- SDS topic on career management 8pm

Spring study

- LA funding secured to run spring study will take place at Easter holidays but dates are going to follow Easter weekend Tues 7th to 10th April. Will be shared on Eduspot.

S2 parent night

- Thank you to PC to support the parent night. Really great to have parents there and take feedback from parents.

4. Prelim Review

Qu – impact on prelims on continuing of teaching. Saw young people following their timetable at normal and saw benefit from people attending and getting benefit from

being in classes when not at exams. So move away from study leave and now a positive result and benefited from it.

Back to class after their exam, as some teachers saying no point in coming this afternoon as there will be no teaching. School shocked any teachers are saying that and DM will make it clear that pupils should be in class before and after exams even if they are not getting taught the curriculum to benefit from time with teachers.

Timetable for the parent is hard to follow – columns depending on whether exam in class or not. Sometimes unclear what day the exam is.

Next time, individual timetable will be provided. We are trying to maximise learning by doing it by columns. Understand it can be confusing and is something already considering for next year.

5. Treasurer's Report

Current balance - £8,698.14.

Income sources - Received ABC award, £1,280 - ABC give a £1 a head per pupil every year.

Expenditure - bank charges. Only spending was webpage, and 2025 spring break.

Survey planned for fund allocation

- Generally, we spoke about approaching the use of the funding. At the PC working group it was only fair, transparent to survey pupils, teachers and parents about use of the funding. Then we will make decisions based on that.
- School to support through Google Forms so then collect from school and don't have to get contact details.
- The survey has been drafted and it school to check before issuing before Easter.
- Meeting with senior team tomorrow to finalise.

6. Staying Safe/substance

PC and parents are aware of the recent tragedy in the school.

PC had a discussion about this and wanted to help the school and support pupils with making the right choices. Part of that was looking for guidance from the school.

School appreciate how this has been framed as it has been a difficult time and even though it involves an individual it affects the school community so good to discuss.

There will be speculation and need to be careful we don't go down an avenue due to speculation but in general terms school agree and see an increase in the need to stay safe and making positive choices around different substances.

Current school programs:

- Our Principal teachers in guidance all have remits – alcohol / drug / violence/by-stander approach/keeping each other safe, have speakers from Police Scotland at Assembly.

- Mrs Brady leads on substance misuse education and has recently been on updated training.
- Policy Scotland Liaison - We don't have a youth / community engagement officer from the Police at the moment and hasn't been one for quite some time. We always want to look at things for a pupil holistically. Interim person acting at the police liaison - HT spoke to police liaison and there are two community officers and they are happy to come to talk to the PC. School is speaking to police about messaging to pupils on these issues and welcome feedback from Parent Council.

Parent Council support offered:

- 30th March – agree Police will attend as a first step and support available.
- Provide parent guidance on having conversations with children.
- Share health and wellbeing curriculum to parents –
- Share information to help raise Alcohol and Drug awareness for Parents i.e. Share online content so parents can tap into it. There is currently recorded information could be put on the PC website.
- Or events that take place in school that something like this could be tagged on to.

School believe be proactive is the best approach. Suggestions for school

- Include substance awareness in school calendar communications.
- Support PC and parents on above.

7. Communications Group – Stella/Andrew/Kirsty/Mr Munro

Mr Munro provided an update.

School Improvement Survey development

We looked at questionnaire that school are about to put out and there will be junior/senior school looking at school improvement plan areas such as work experience, parent perspective on information from school.

Will share feedback in due course.

Website accessibility issues:

- Current site is not mobile friendly – EduSpot phone only access but takes parents to unreadable material.
- Mobile friendly website is needed and it's not dynamic when linking from Newsletter.
- Need to get it working better to reduce phone calls to the office and things parents are looking for.
- Search not working well due to lack of tags e.g. school bullying can't be found – positive relationships is what it comes under – a parent can't find the information. So tags/meta data is needed.
- School are making links with office team to spread responsibility and upskill staff to share work of keeping website up-to-date.

PC have taken on board lots of the Parents comments on communications and are passing these on via the Comms Group.

School seeking **web development volunteers** from the Parent community, if anyone is a web expert and could offer any support.

8. Update re Buses

At last PC working meeting an in depth discussion was held and it wasn't considered to be in remit of PC or School because it is a public service. But we recognise impact on pupils so we are happy to write to First Bus but won't be leading a campaign in relation to this.

9. Litter culture/bin provision

Site manager/Mitie – looked at school bin provision. School have said about issue of bin provision and - 7 new bins ordered and hopefully help with capacity, especially at entrance from Morrisons.

Assembly they talk to pupils about litter – there is some work to be done on culture. Grab Trust to work with the school – new initiative. Been sharing this with local neighbours.

School agree there is work to do around this issue. Trying to make it pupil lead and grows from ground up. The Grab Trust have a plan around this and Mitie are back up to fulling staffing capacity to help – janitor/cleaning.

10. Course choices

Parent raising – course choices – issue raised about availability.

Music technology

- Course being phased out (last cohort currently in S5) at Higher
- National 4 - Music / technology numbers dropped/sustainability of the subject.

Age Restrictions impact hairdressing/beauty courses

- New SQA guidance requires students to be 16 plus for Higher level beauty / hair dressing
- Age restrictions relate to chemicals that they use
- School having to look at dob – have to be age 16 in S5 as must be 16 in Aug at start of course to be able to take it
- School will be mention at parents information evening but it is happening nationally.

Course choice documentation goes live Friday after Careers evening

- Hyperlinked format replacing the 100 page document with link to each pathway S2 – S26 for each subject.
- Give parents as much information as possible to understand qualification levels and university requirements.

AOB – only forum members attendance is recorded, but we don't take list of parent attendance due to difficulties of doing this and easier to

Date of next meeting: 30th March 2026

Next steps/key actions:

- Police Scotland community officer to attend March 30th meeting
- Parent Council to write letter to First Burs regarding service provision
- Parent Council Survey on fund allocation to be distributed after senior team meeting
- Course choice information made available by school
- Communications team continue website accessibility improvements and survey on school improvement plan
- Parents to come forward if they can offer work experience or can help with website.