

## **Minutes from the Parent Forum 27<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

**Attendance** – 15 in person and 34 online

1. **Previous Minutes** - The minutes of the meeting held on 29th January 2025 were approved.
2. **Mobile Phone Discussion**

The Head Teacher and Mr McCallister gave an overview to the progress and plans around the use of mobile phones in School and they also highlighted that they have a bill going to the Pupil Parliament for discussion in early April.

There has been a wide-ranging consultation with parents & carers, pupils and teachers over several months now as well as the feedback from Edinburgh City Council and the Scottish Government about the use of mobile phones in school. PHS has seen a huge increase in the detrimental impact of mobile phone use in school on learning and on the mental health of young people as well as a range of other implications.

There will be more details coming out to parents in due course but the plan is to introduce self-sealing pouches for phones so they can't be accessed during school time but will remain within the possession of pupil at all times. There will be a number of magnet seals around the school to unlock the pouches at the end of the day.

There was some discussion about if this will be bell to bell or if there will be some flexibility around lunchtimes when access to phones may be needed for a range of reasons, meeting friends, using banking app in nearby shops etc. This is yet to be finalised but a range of considerations are being taken into account.

There were questions around a number of one off or emergency situations and again, there will be a process in place for contacting pupils in an emergency and for unlocking pouches for those with legitimate reasons to need to access their phones outside of class time if required.

There was clarity that this is not aimed at visitors to the school, but additional pouches will be available for those visiting the school who want them.

There were also discussions around some pupils with additional support needs that would require some access to their phones. This will be managed through the learning support team and in some cases a Velcro sealed pouch will be offered rather than the magnet sealed pouch or access to an agreed universal unlocking point.

The new policy will be introduced for S1-3 in May and for S4-6 on their return from study leave in June. All details how pouches will be distributed and paid for, when it will come into effect etc. will be sent out by the school in advance.

This is about young people and learning, and the school hopes parents and carers support the pilot project for the increased learning and mental health and wellbeing of young people in school time.

### 3. Head Teacher Update

**Staffing** - There were a number of staffing updates including the recruitment of a number of pupil support workers and a member of staff who has rejoined the support for learning team (Noelle).

**School Day** - There is an ongoing consultation around the school day timings, specifically in relation to the first 10 minutes - Key Adult/Registration. The school will feedback the outcomes and any proposed changes at the May Forum.

**SQA Visit** – The two new SQA chiefs' representatives visited the school to talk to staff and pupils and were listening to the challenges around exams including those not in school not able to achieve Highers/ Advanced Highers/ National 4/5 level qualifications and how to be more agile and inclusive.

**Outdoor Education Programme** – There has been a number of offsite activities arranged to date, and although the communication around these activities needs to improve, the feedback has been extremely positive and there are plans to expand the programme.

**Marseum 900 Exhibition** - Portobello High School celebrated the success of its inaugural "Marseum 900" event on Friday, 21st March, welcoming over 700 visitors from across the community. Inspired by Edinburgh's city-wide "Edinburgh 900" celebrations, this interdisciplinary initiative saw over 300 learners creatively showcase Edinburgh as a city of leisure, culture, and celebration through imaginative storytelling and visual exhibits. It involved pupil, staff and P7 feeder schools and was an open-door event for the whole family. This is a timely event when thinking about Portobello High School 150<sup>th</sup> next year so discussions on this will follow.

**The Curriculum** – there are a number of changes planned to S1-2 curriculum map of 32 periods. Much of it remains the same – English, Maths, Modern Languages, Science and Social Subjects as well as some Cooking, CBT, Business Computing, Drama etc. but an increased Personal Social Education to include an increased wellbeing elective programme – mental health, progressive masculinity, mentors and violence prevention etc. as well as a range of activities such as music, sport etc.

Also building on the School Off Programme choices – Spanish/ Football/ Swimming/ Arts etc. which were retro fitted last year to S1 but extended to S2 this year as well.

This will also firm up the changes discussed earlier in the year for S3 which will be 6 subjects with English, Maths and Modern Languages being compulsory and others to be chosen and 3 periods a week of these subjects to improve the S4 outcomes.

There was a plea for more information shared with parents/carers to help guide their young people. There is a plan to add these options to the Pathways microsite. More on this at the May Forum.

#### 4. **Pathways/Navigator Programme**

**The Navigator Programme** – this has been positively received and further access over Easter and immersion sessions during study leave will be coming shortly.

**Pathways** – The feedback to date is very positive, especially for subjects with short videos and descriptors but there was some feedback around some of the subjects not having content. The school acknowledged the need for improvement as this was first version of the site and time was an issue.

Parents/Carers fed back a few ideas from other sites or ways that the information could be improved which will be fed into future versions, especially with so many new options or options that parents have never come across.

The microsites providing details on pathways across all year groups is being expanded with more information available across a range of pathways.

**Vocational Pathways** - A highlight in this area included a pupil visit to Scottish Parliament to showcase their work on agile pathways. This came off the back of some press coverage around the work being done by the school, led by Mr McAllister, on vocational based pathways. opportunities.

There has been a huge shift in the curriculum and the stay on rate at the school has improved with a small number planning on leaving S4 this year.

#### 5. **Humanities, Languages and Technologies Review Feedback**

The review comprised of external team with internal members, reviewing the quality of learning and the outcomes of attainment and achievement across these subject areas.

Overall, this was very positive and highlights included respectful relationships, nurturing relationships, a variety of learning experiences for young people, clear purpose of learning and the staff working collaboratively across departments. The languages department has the highest attainment across the school.

There were a number of key areas for development including better informing pupils and parents/carers around the area of assessments, especially in S1-3, greater use of adapted planning to meet individual pupil needs and consistency of excellent learning across all classes. These will now be used to create an action plan for improvement.

There is still a planned parent engagement to feed into this review which will be carried out before the Summer.

## **6. School Inclusion Update**

As part of the inclusion activity there is the Progress Pathways Centre in school which is a space for those not in classes full time, in school full time or at all, it includes a learning zone for supporting S1-3 and progress pathway room to support S4-6.

There is also a in the community provision at Portobello Wash House on a Wednesday morning for those who don't attend school which has been successful.

This has led to extending this out to a full-time provision and curriculum offer to match the in-school learning offer including outdoor learning, qualification etc. from the start of May. It will use the Portobello Wash House and Branch Out Together near Figgate Park as well as a virtual provision to support those who with challenges entering the school building and will be part of the mainstream provision.

Square Peg is a sector leading around emotional based school non-attendance. They have been working with the school and are currently working on a social impact approach to shape this area of work. More on this to come.

## **7. Parent Council Update**

There have been a lot of school events, and we are looking for more volunteers.

The next Forum is also the AGM so there is an opportunity for any other parents/carers to join the Parent Council. The invite to the P7 parents/carers to join us for the next Forum and AGM in May. We are open to any ideas or suggestions for the Forum please get in touch.

### **Any Other Business**

The next Forum/AGM is 27<sup>th</sup> May 7-8.30pm.

There was a question about the school cookbook and the school will provide us with an update.