



Balmuirdy Parent Council Annual Report 2023/24

Introduction

The Parent Council (PC) is a group of parents/carers who represent parent's/carers' views and work in partnership with the school to achieve the best for all pupils. The PC is used to represent matters of interest from the parent forum, and is pleased to work on a consultative role with the school relating to education policy and the school building.

Balmuirdy Parent Council (PC) commenced the 2023/24 session continuing with the 2022/23 appointed PC office bearers. All 2023/24 session PC meetings took place in person at Turnbull High School.

Throughout the year our membership has comprised of 12 parent council members with 1 co-opted member from the local community. Local Councilors have attended the meetings on a regular basis and provide a link to local authorities. The average attendance has been 7 people. The overall makeup of the parent council covers most of the primary age groups, but not all. We said goodbye to one of our members, and thanked them for their commitment and involvement over the years. At the same time we wish to thank current member for their continue support and contribution to the group.

From October 2023 to end September 2024, Balmuirdy Parent's Council held 6 meetings at Turnbull High School.

Meeting dates were:

- Tues 7th Nov 23
- Wed 31st Jan 24
- Tues 5th March 24
- Wed 17th April 24
- Tues 28th May 24
- Tuesday 10th Sept 24

Office Bearers:

- *Chairperson: Marieanne Macleod*
- *Vice Chairperson: Stephanie Fowler*
- *Clerk: Kelly O'Neill*



A look back

Over the 12-month period we have influenced change, provided support and received information on key topics relating to Balmuirdy Primary School. The following bullets give an overview of key Parent Council items covered in the 2023/24 school year.

- **Parent Council Office Bearers** – the PC continued with 3 office bearers in the 2023/24 session: Chairperson: Marieanne Macleod, Vice Chairperson: Stephanie Fowler, Clerk: Kelly O'Neill. The Chair and Vice-Chair have informed PC members that they intend to step down at the AGM in November 2024. New office bearers will be requested at the November 2024 AGM.
- **Head Teacher change**
 - We thanked Balmuirdy PS' outgoing Head Teacher, Lorna Kenny for her leadership and support during her 13 years at Balmuirdy PS. Lorna Kenny retired at the end of the 2023/24 school year.
 - The PC provided support to East Dunbartonshire Council (EDC) in recruiting the new Head Teacher. The Parent Council Chair, Marieanne Macleod, and another PC member attended two interview panels. The Parent Council also supported the process by providing topic areas and questions for 4 interview questions. (2 for each interview) The four areas selected were:
 1. Transitions – managing change
 2. Communication and engagement
 3. Sustainability and play
 4. Cost of the school day.
 - We welcomed the incoming Head Teacher, Charlotte Grogan in August 2024.
- **Head Teacher update.** The Head Teacher update provides the PC with an update on topics of interest to the wider Parent Forum. Updates on the following topics have been given by either Lorna Kenny, Charlotte Grogan or Carol Jarman (Depute Head Teacher)
 - **The Reading committee** – the school is going for the reading schools award. Class library areas have been refreshed following survey feedback from staff, pupils etc on seesaw. Classes visited the local library and pupils had the opportunity to register for a library card.
 - **School Writing Programme** - There is a robust scheme in place which will be due to be reviewed again in 2024/25. PEBL (Pupil Enquiry Based Learning) and a new programme, The Circle, are both being rolled out across the authority. Training for Head Teachers has taken place. Balmuirdy's recent focus has been on reading which has been discussed in more detail in previous PC meetings (see minutes for further information).
 - **School Improvement Plans** - (plans available on school website: [Improvement Plans - Balmuirdy Primary](#)) Include wellbeing and inclusion.
- **Active Schools** - Lindsay Jackson from Active Schools provided an update on their role within the school. They work in partnership with Sports Scotland, Local Authority and Scottish Government. They aim to provide extracurricular sports - lunch or after school and highlight community sports that are on offer. Balmuirdy currently has limited facilities as the after school uses the hall. Active Schools intend to gain engagement within the pupil



council and find out what needs the children feel they have and how they can help. Active Schools encourages parental involvement and input.

- **Cost of School Day**

- **The cost of the school day** continues to be a regular agenda item at Parent Council meetings. There are support options available for parents/carers and information can be requested through the school office. The PC will continue to discuss this topic to make options more accessible to families.
- **P7 residential trip** cost over £350 per pupil in 2023/24 and is £350 for 2024/25. The PTA provided fundraising support in 2023/24 and PTA fundraising is expected to continue every year for each P7 year group. The trip cost will be reduced for P7s receiving free school meals and the school office can provide other options for parents concerned about trip costs. The school leadership team has been asked to consider potential alternatives to reduce costs for families in future years. This is an ongoing topic of discussion.
- **The PTA set up a uniform swap shop** which is generally available during PTA events. There is ongoing discussion with the school to see how this can be accessed on a more regular basis.

- **New School Build project status**

- Updates were provided by Councillors at various PC meetings in the 2023/24 school year. Refer to minutes of meetings for specifics. Throughout the year the Head Teacher, Lorna Kenny, and various staff members have been involved in consultation workshops with East Dunbartonshire Council to provide input to decisions on external areas, parking, and interior design. Morgan Sindall (contractor) also engaged with the pupils to understand what the children wanted to learn during the build.
- Current status – at the September 2024 Parent Council meeting, Councillors confirmed that the decision to progress to the build phase of the new school, has been paused. The reason for this pause in activity is due to increased construction costs, inflation and borrowing costs. Councillors were asked to update the EDC website on the project status here: [Balmuildy, Milngavie and Bearsden Primary School Projects | East Dunbartonshire Council](#) At the time of writing this annual report (November 2024), the website contained information on identified works to be progressed to improve the condition of the existing school until such times the new build project can be reinstated to the Capital Programme.

- **Sexual Health and Religious Education (SHRE) – SHRE material changed in the 2023/24 school year to Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) education.** Information on the changes was provided to the Parent Council. Parent/carer feedback was sought via email communications from the school office. Parents/carers were also invited a parent/carer meeting on 14th May 2024 where they had the opportunity to obtain information on the changes. SHRE lessons were delivered to pupils in May/June 2024. The material is fact based. Parents received access to the materials for lessons, as in previous years. Note Materials for all stages can be viewed at www.rshp.scot

- **Organisation of classes** – This topic is recurring from the previous year. Parents had a concern around classes being mixed going into the next school year. The PC was advised that Balmuildy Primary school does not have a set policy for changing classes, and any



decisions to change the make-up of classes are based on the needs of each year group and there is no restriction on how class changes are managed to allow for flexibility with class needs, eg learning groups and social needs within the year group. Parents are welcome to speak to the school directly about individual concerns they may have.

- **Homework** - Parents raised concerns about the amount of homework their children were required to complete each week which has been causing stress for both parents and children. The PC was advised homework is provided for parents so they can work on current activities at home but is optional, not mandatory. A reminder of the optional homework policy was subsequently provided in the Balmuildy PS November newsletter.
- **Pupil Safety**
 - **Road Safety, Parking and driving near the school** - There has been continued conversation around unsafe behaviour from drivers of vehicles during drop off/pick up times. Unsafe behaviour discourages active travel and makes it difficult for children to have safe walking routes to the school. A near miss occurred with the school's lollypop lady at the start of the 2024/25 school year, due to a vehicle speeding along Stirling drive. There was a further discussion on requesting support from community police. The current and previous Head Teachers have written to parents/carers to show consideration when parking in the nearby streets as well as parking in a way that ensures safe walking routes for our children. The PC will continue to discuss this topic to consider and influence the implementation of all appropriate risk mitigation controls.
 - **Safe Walking Routes in the school grounds** - Concerns around walking routes for school pupils have also regularly been raised, particularly where pupils are walking along vehicle access areas within school grounds. Vehicle access has been prohibited within the school grounds during school start, finish and breaktimes. This came into full effect in September 2024.
 - **Dog mess in the playground** – This topic was discussed in September 2023 and it was advised that it is expected the school will be closed to the public during construction of the new school. The new school build is paused and the November 2024 school newsletter notes dog mess is becoming an increased problem covering pupils shoes and clothing. The PC will seek to find a solution that suits the needs of the school and wider community.
 - **Safeguarding of pupils**
 - **School disco – PC members** highlighted concern regarding parents/carers taking photos/videos during school disco. The PC was informed that phones are not permitted to be used during the school day or at social times. This concern was followed up with the PTA and information on prohibited phone use is now provided to parents prior to discos.
 - **Tempest Photography** – A concern was raised about the school contract with Tempest Photography following the media attention around the experience of a school in Aberdeen. The Head Teacher, Lorna Kenny, reassured PC members that the school had no issues with the service provided by the local franchise and that generally they are booked in each year when the company are in taking photos.
- **Parent Teacher Association (PTA) items**



- The PC highlighted a perceived lack of school support at PTA events and that parent helpers and PTA staff sought school staff support and leadership during events that help fundraise for the school. There was an agreement for school staff to review the current support available and see where gaps could be closed.
- The PTA had requested for the storage for PTA items to be considered during new school build. This would be covered during the new school build consultation workshops.
- **Additionally, the Parent Council also**
 - Provided support to East Dunbartonshire Council (EDC) in recruiting a part time Depute Head Teacher
 - Supported the P1 induction through written communications,
 - Uploaded relevant PC information and documentation to the Parent Council website. <http://www.balmuirdy.e-dunbarton.sch.uk/parents-info/parent-council/>
 - Improved communication on PC meetings and invited the Parent Forum to attend (All Parents / Carers / Guardians are automatically members of the Parent Forum)

Future Plans

Over the next 12 months our plans are to:

- Welcome and support new Parent Council office bearers.
- Continue to build the capacity of our Parent Council Members, to ensure the overall make-up of the parent council covers all primary age groups.
- Review and refine our PC Action Plan
- Continue to contribute to P1 Inductions,
- Continue our involvement in the wider EDC Parent Forum and ensure Balmuirdy PC representation,
- Continue to put forward ideas, concerns and solutions from the wider parent body of Balmuirdy
- Meet on the following dates in the 24/25 session:
 - Tuesday 10th Sept 24
 - Wednesday 13th Nov 24 (AGM)
 - Tuesday 21st Jan 25
 - Wednesday 5th March 25
 - Tuesday 29th April 25
 - Wednesday 28th May 25

All meetings will take place at Turnbull High School 6.30-8pm



Governance

Balmuirdy Parent Council creates, maintains and/or refers to the following documents and these are now available on the PC website <http://www.balmuirdy.e-dunbarton.sch.uk/parents-info/parent-council/>

- **Balmuirdy Parent Council Guidelines.** These guidelines were updated in April 2023.
- **Constitution of Balmuirdy Primary School Parent Council** (describes how PC members are selected and how the PC operates within Balmuirdy Primary School)
- **Parent Council Meeting Minutes**
- **Balmuirdy Parent Council Annual Reports** (this document)

FAQs

How can I get in touch/find information from the Parent Council?

- Email: balmuirdy_pc@outlook.com
- Please join the Parent Council FB page for direct updates and to contact us <https://facebook.com/groups/balmuirdypc/>
- Key information including minutes will be available on the school website: <http://www.balmuirdy.e-dunbarton.sch.uk/parents-info/parent-council/>
- The school office can also direct your queries to the Parent Council.