PHS Parent Council
12 February 2025
MS Teams Meeting

Attendees

Ellie Johnstone, PC Chair (Chair)
Kevin Ryalls, Head Teacher (HT)
Alasdair Reid, Deputy Head
Claire Barrett, PC Secretary
Dawn Johnstone, PC Comms Lead
Tristan Compton (Vice Chair)

20 parents joined the Parent Council meeting. ***Parent comments and questions are shown in bold italics*** *with answers given below.* Actions are in red and action tracker is at the end of these minutes.

Welcome, Minutes and Actions

The Chair welcomed everyone and the minutes of the last meeting in November were agreed.

Chair's update

Reinspection took place w/c 9 Dec. thanks to parents in focus groups and survey responses. PC has not yet seen the Re-inspection report.

Recruitment process for permanent Headteacher took place (Parent Council were on the interview panel) with Kevin Ryalls appointed on a permanent basis. We welcome Kevin and are delighted that continuity is secured for the school. We've seen a real shift during the interim period and pleased this momentum in the right direction will continue.

Prelims & study leave - congratulations to students during this time. Are there things we want to feedback as parent group on this process? PC is happy to pass on any comments to school.

Recent storm – well done to school and SBC for getting info out quickly, and rescheduling prelims to alternative dates.

Parent Visit to New School

Tristan Compton presented following the recent visit to new school building.

A representative group of parents (ie from all year groups) visited.

Photos showed

- the high ceilings
- bright, light airy spaces
- the assembly hall/performance space,
- finished (sample) classroom,
- Aesthetics – exposed pipework, ceiling fans etc.
- Acoustic panels on ceilings and walls to absorb sound. The classroom had a quiet calm atmosphere, in contrast to the larger communal spaces.

(See appendix for photos and parental feedback comments)

New School Discussion and Q&A

Mr Reid commented that school now has the details of the plans, eg dimensions of rooms so can start to make plans. Senior Management Team (SMT) is working to get answers to queries themselves rather than having to involve the architects. Looking at how the tutorial spaces, library space etc will be used, giving ownership of these to faculties with a lead on each of those areas. SMT want to reassure parents that they are planning all of this at the moment. Focus at next inset day to make a start on this.

The Chair thanked parents for going on the visit.

Q: Is there a plan to evaluate how things are going at key stages once the move has happened? Eg a survey on use of spaces?

A: We absolutely will be checking in on how things are working, we will keep an eye all the time and be responsive. There will be many opinions – we're keen to listen but have to make our decisions as we go along. We'll do everything to make it work. We'll take away the comments from the parent visit. We need to continue working together to make it work. There are 2 days off for a school move. Possibly day before and day after Oct holiday, but TBC.

Q: Regarding the actual move, parents could help with this, rather than use class time and the young people (particularly seniors). Also, there was a rumour of the potential for home learning either side of the move?

A: We don't expect our teachers to ask pupils to help move things during class time. We welcome the offer from parents to help out – this will be noted, thank you for the offer. Re home learning – there are no plans for that, I don't know where that suggestion came from. We can relay that again if need be.

Parent Council requested from the school that the 2 move dates are confirmed as soon as known, to get the message out.

Q: Regarding toilets and unisex/universal toilets in schools – is that still being discussed? Scottish Government may be doing consultations in schools.

A: It hasn't been discussed recently. The plan is to engage with the students and decide as a community.

Tristan pointed out that the design of the toilets is very flexible. There are a number of blocks in the school, each laid out with toilet and sink within its own cubicle. These could be split lots of different ways: male/female/unisex/juniors/seniors etc.

Q: Could we start collating FAQs to put on the website? Could we start collecting parent helper names, for the move?

A: It's important that any communication is coming from the school. Yes, some FAQs is a good idea. Updates on what people are asking about. Plea for patience for updates from the new school (once we are in).

Action – PC (Tristan/Ellie) to send Mr Ryalls the collated FAQs and comments from parents to form basis of communication to parents.

Fundraising for the School Opportunities Pot

Tristan Compton explained that Friends of PHS is effectively the school's PTA. Any expenditure from FoPHS has to come to PC for approval. The focus is mainly on raising funds for projects, events, materials for school that benefit a wide range of pupils. In October 2019, £10k was raised at an auction held to raise funds for the Opportunity Pot – this pot is for pupils who need additional financial support to have the same opportunities as other pupils and is used mainly for school trips.

The FoPHS account balance is currently £10 – 12k. The question is whether some of these funds should be used for the Opportunity Pot. The amount needed for the Opportunity Pot is £10k as this was the amount raised 5 years ago and is now spent.

There was a suggestion that there may be some requirements which will only became apparent after the new school has opened.

The Headteacher noted that there is a real need to fill this Opportunity Pot again. There is no money left. A lot of schools have stopped trips so that the cost of the school day is completely free to all. PHS does not want to go down this route. The school has tightened up the process for requesting funds. Obligation is put on trip leaders to explore other funders for trips too. Eg Battlefields trip, a lot of money comes into the school externally for that.

A parent made the point that any funds raised should go through the FoPHS charity account so as to benefit from gift aid.

A parent commented that if the FoPHS account is used for the opportunity pot, it should be future funds raised only, not current funds. The HT responded that we cannot wait until an October event as the pot is already empty – it is critical.

A quick poll conducted in the meeting showed general support for using FoPHS funds for the Opportunity Pot.

The Chair floated the possibility of raising some funds when selling off equipment and materials from the old school. There are ideas for fundraising 'saying goodbye' to the old school – a nostalgia event - a ceilidh or something in the new school. Using high profile ex-pupils to raise publicity.

Action: Bring back list of fundraising ideas (and helpers) to the next PC meeting for discussion.

Headteacher's Update

Kevin Ryalls thanked Ellie for her comments, he is privileged to be the new Headteacher of PHS.

Showbie – Mrs McDowell reports fewer issues coming in about work not being on Showbie, problems with access etc and is dealing with issues as they come in. A reminder to parents to look at Showbie is planned.

Curriculum Change - communication went out about the changes. The school roll is falling. Current P5 – S3 is smaller than previous years. Eg current S4 is 245, younger year groups are typically now 215. S1 next year will have 8 classes. Will look to other schools to run some courses. There will be a more aligned timetable and make better use of online learning across schools. It's very normal for courses to be offered online. School is looking to grow the curriculum and some classes in the upper school are too small - look at each individual case. It is difficult to keep everyone happy with course choices but will look at other schools if there are courses that can't be run. At the end of the day the school can't offer everything. There is a decrease in people leaving PHS to go to other schools and an increase in pupils coming in.

Q: What's the best way to contact the school to talk about a course not being offered that a pupil would like? Is it through pastoral?

A: Speak to Mr Reid or pastoral.

Next year's S3 – this will be the first time they are making choices at the end of S2. Because it's Broad General Education, there will be an expectation to have a broad choice going into S3 but there aren't enough periods in the week to do everything. We base our S1 – 3 curriculum decisions on: uptake, the local labour market, but also the staff that we have in the school. Eg Business & IT is a growing area, we have good number of teachers (we are lucky) so can offer a good number of periods for that subject.

We are looking at more flexible models of learning eg online, strong rationale as looking at Adv H as using that format for that. This would be similar to the experience at university.

We're excited at looking at the different ways we can meet the needs of students, eg niche subjects. Looking at schools in Edinburgh, piloting things in SBC to pool resources for subjects eg Ad H French, so fact that it's not directly taught at PHS is not necessarily end of the road and looking at ways to continue that support. We're

looking at the data to inform how we change the curriculum and we have a far cleaner plan re strategic recruitment to future-proof sectors for the school and labour market.

Q: Communication of those changes - my daughter has made choices for S4, if those subjects are not available as Adv H that would be good to know that now. Can that be shared more widely.

A: it will not always be static. Our goal is to get progression across all of the areas but I take your point.

Q: Timetable, aligning it to share with schools across the Borders, is a great idea. Does that mean there's a review of house-time, and the current timetable? Could we have parental input to that?

A: It's being discussed now by Headteacher group and timetable modelling group with other schools. Eg Midlothian schools have aligned their timetables and it's made a big difference to what they can offer. We will be told if there is a change eg to house-time. I would suspect change would happen in August, a few minutes here and there.

Q: Is the new school geared up for hybrid meetings?

A: I think there should be a meeting room set up for this (and for use by the community). We are looking at how to use the spaces and upskill what we have now.

The meeting closed at: 9pm

Next Meeting: Weds 12 March 2025

(Last meeting of year 13th May, no June meeting).

Peebles High School

New Build

Feedback from Parents Visit– 7th Feb 2025

Discussion on Next Steps

- How best to support the school and the move?
- Questions and Answers?

MSite
Site Entrance
THUMBS UP!
FETY
SN'T HAPPEN
ACCIDENT
bam
YOUR SAFETY IS MY SAFETY
YOURSAFE
IS MYSAFE

bam

What are you most excited/pleased about what you have seen today?

Huge high ceilings give a feeling of space, and grandeur we don't currently have in any part of the old school.

Excited about the science department, from Kevin's descriptions of what it will include and the layout. Great to look forward to that for the science learners.

Most excited about the opportunities the new building will provide. Loved the atriums, canteen area and different possible uses of space.

The promise of a modern learning environment with its positive effect for pupils' behaviour, mindset and ambition.

That the building is on track for October move-in!

Really happy that the build is light and airy. Large windows and useful breakout rooms. Glad to see several communal areas.

I am excited for the light and space that the news school affords and particularly impressed by the environmental credentials of the building (heat pumps, solar etc).

Everything will be lovely and new - this will be a real treat for pupils and staff and should give a sense of pride in their school which may have been difficult to summon up in recent years due to the fire etc.

That our community has the privilege of such a wonderful new school enabling a better learning environment for the young people. I'm excited for my son to start such a new and positive experience following a difficult start.

What concerns/unanswered questions do you have about the new school building?

Enough social spaces for breaks and lunchtimes?

Possibility of 'a week or two of home learning' while staff settled into the new school. This wasn't mentioned on our visit, it sounded like the students would be straight into the new school from October break. With a Year 5 next year, it's vital they don't miss key face to face learning at that time. I'd like some reassurance on the plan here.

Concerned that the library may be abandoned in favour of an S6 common room

Small size of the assembly hall.

"Industrial car park" aesthetic.

How the more open plan areas will actually be used - will they become dead space / corridors.

still concerned the building won't be big enough to accommodate all the pupils.

The risk that any acoustic issues in open spaces identified on completion do not get addressed due to no residual budget – even though likes of simple glass partitions may be straightforward to quickly retrofit. So I would like to hear more on the completion terms of fit for purpose appraisal, accepting it all may be fine.

Acoustics and open plan spaces. It will be good to see it once progressed further to understand this better, and of course full of students!

Concerned about managing behaviour during transition times between classes.

Cafeteria area seems significantly smaller than current offering.

The new staircases seem much narrower. Lesson changeover time could be chaos. Maybe a one way system should be considered?

Not keen on the 'industrial' look – walls and ceilings. That's personal preference though!

All the pipe work, heat exchange systems etc. are visible on the ceilings which might not be everyone's cup of tea aesthetically but might be good from a learning POV.

If you were describing the building to another parent in one/two sentences, what would you say?

A massive improvement on what we currently have and loads of potential to make this a great environment for the kids to learn in.

The views out are stunning and inspirational!

Light, airy & a vast improvement on the current environment

A fully up to date teaching facility and incredibly positive learning environment. A real asset to the Peebles community.

Big, light and has some great views. The heating system is energy efficient / clean and the enhanced provision areas are much better than current school. Has a library!

A great space, lots of natural light and a feeling of space rather than claustrophobic. It will be a big improvement on the current school, and great to have all the students together in one building.

A vast building which is well overdue and will help deliver a more stable environment for learning.

What concerns/unanswered questions do your children have about the new school building?

Still concerned about the amount of open plan space and how that will work for concentration in class or for general stimulation levels for students looking for quiet study spaces.

Some concern that there will be no charging sockets for their ipads (not sure if this is true) and the noise they might get from open plan areas and exposed pipework etc.

Will they have lockers?

How will toilets be organised?

My children are interested to know where they can/should go in the school, when through the day and for what purposes, and what will be expected of them.

Cafeteria area too small

My S6 has been feeding back some concerns he overhears from teachers regarding it "not being big enough".

Some spaces will be very different indeed and staff will need to work out how best to utilise and manage these spaces, namely the performance/exam/main hall, the bleachers seating, the open areas.

Will there be a library? Will there be quiet study spaces?

How can parents / Parent Council help ease the transition to the new school?

Communication with families on process for moving in / expectations etc. in advance.

Support with FAQs for parents

Spend some time on nostalgia for the old school / selling the fixtures and fittings

Parent volunteers to help with moving or clearing current classrooms?

Timeline publishing.

Would be great to offer an open day for parents/ wider community once open.

Effort to get teachers on side and more positive about the move would also be helpful.

Connect the story of the new environment with the new teaching approach.

Reinforcing the non-negotiables for new standards of conduct and behaviour at the new school.

Leave it to the professionals and support them as much as possible at this stage.

Open Days where PC can be 'ambassadors'

Being patient and understanding will help. It will be a huge transition and take time to adapt to all the changes it will bring.

The new building gives an opportunity for a reset/fresh start. Is there anything you would like to be "reset" at the same time as the move (e.g. School name, colours, uniform, policies etc.)?

I would also like to see some more adaptation of rules and policies for seniors, or at least Year 6, to allow the students to take more solo responsibility for themselves and their study time – more like Uni & sets an example for the younger ones.

It would be great to start back with a smarter uniform policy, or at least a more enforced policy

Incorporating the new school into the curriculum would be good both before and after the move around engineering, electrical works, renewables, the landscaping work etc. might help with pupils feeling ownership and also maximise educational benefits of building something new

Think there will be enough upheaval with the move

Using new teaching methods to harness the significant benefits of new environment.

Behaviour and conduct committed to by staff, pupils and parents – 'the standard you walk past is the standard you set'

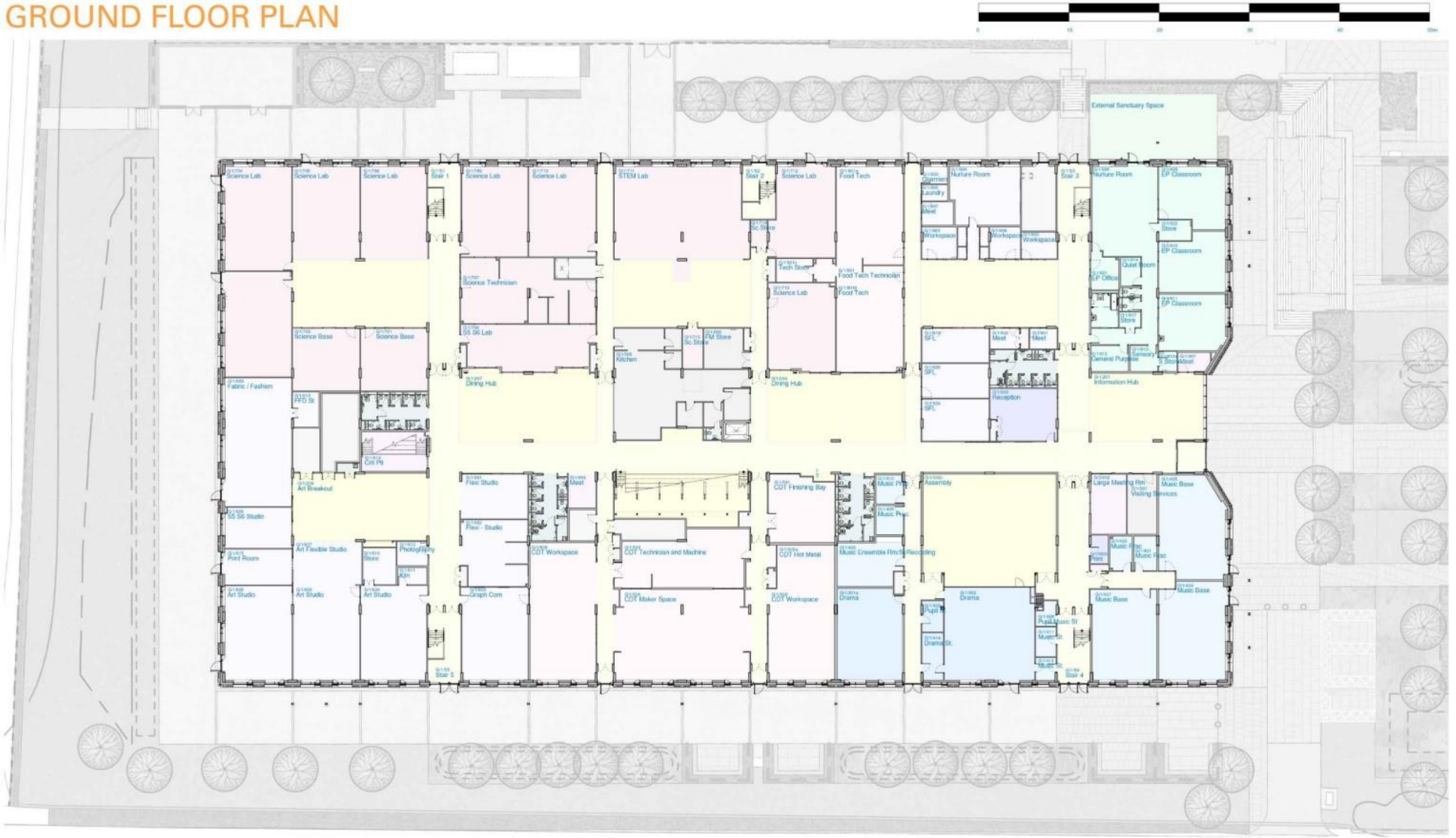
Avoid temptation of adding other worthy things

Uniform – would really like to see a step away from black as well as something completely different for S5/6 (e.g. business suits or similar)

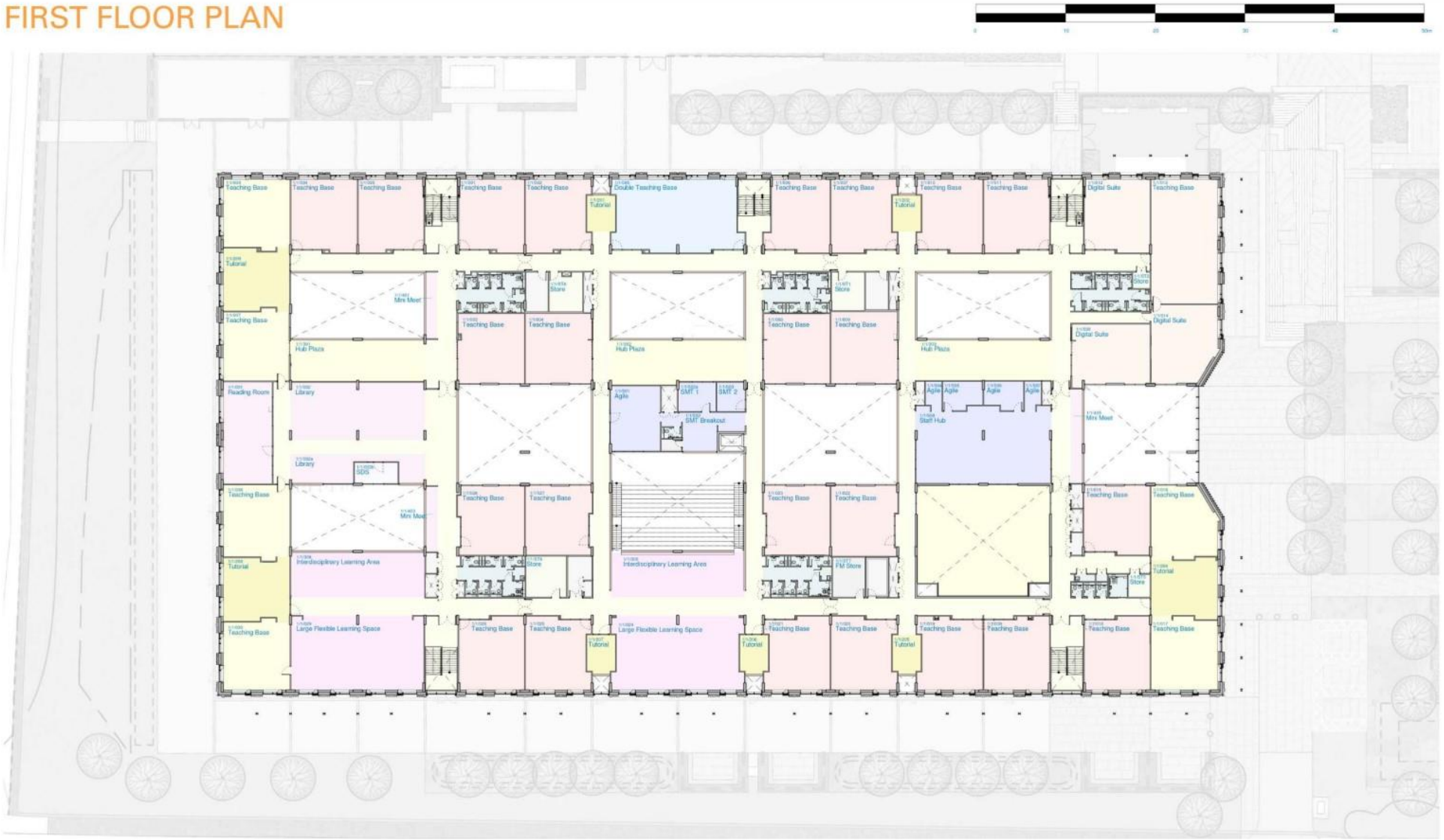
I think this is a question which the children should be asked.

Smarten up the uniform – blazers for S5&6, longer length for skirts

GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



PEEBLES HIGH SCHOOL

SITE PLAN

Parent Council Action tracker 2024/25

Meeting	Item/Issue	Action	Who	Update
Feb 25	Fundraising (new school)	Bring back list of fundraising ideas (and helpers) to the next PC meeting for discussion.	PC	
Feb 25	Parent FAQs on new school and move	PC (Tristan/Ellie) to send Mr Ryalls the collated FAQs and comments from parents to form basis of communication to parents.	PC	
Nov 24	Smoking/vaping on school bus	Chair to pass this onto HT	HT	
Nov 24	Parent Council Survey	Chair & HT to discuss best timing for 2025 survey	Chair/HT	
Nov 24	Street lighting concern	Chair to contact SBC about faulty street lighting in Craigerne Lane and future plans for lighting around new school	PC Chair	
Nov 24	Career Pathways Resource	Career Pathways resource to be shared on the new school website under Curriculum and/or DYW	Mrs Boyd	Done?
Nov 24	Upcoming Further Inspection	Parent Council will share our enthusiasm for continuity of leadership and feed this into the inspection report/SBC	PC Chair	Done
June 24	Raising awareness of Uni aspirations group	Action: Dawn to send University aspirations letter to Kevin to send out to S4 – S6 parents to encourage uptake amongst that age group.	Dawn/Head	Done
June 24	Attendance at PC meetings. Is there another way we could meet digitally?	Action: Dawn to investigate another digital platform.	Dawn Johnstone	Done

Please get in touch around any of the issues raised at phspc@outlook.com

Helpful Info/Reminders

Parent Council Meeting Dates for 2024/25	**Post Holders**
Wednesday 11 September 2024	Chair – Ellie Johnstone
Tuesday 08/10/2024	Vice Chair – Tristan Compton
Thursday 28/11/2024	Secretary – Claire Barrett
~~Wednesday 29/01/2025~~ Wednesday 12/02/2025	Communications Officer – Dawn Johnstone
~~Thursday 06/03/2025~~ Wednesday 12/03/2025	Event Coordinator – Gillian Moran
Tuesday 13/05/2025 (AGM)	Friends of Peebles High School SCIO representative
	Property Working Group Lead – Tristan Compton
	Taskforce Coordinator – post vacant

We welcome interested parents & carers on the Parent Council as general members or working group members. We simply ask that you try to attend meetings regularly. If you would like to be an ordinary member or join a specific working group, please email your details to**: phspc@outlook.com**

Any parent or carer interested in supporting the Friends of PHS charity with running fundraising activities should get in touch at mailto:FriendsofPHS@outlook.com

Website: **phsparents.org.uk** **Facebook:** **PHS Parents –** can contact us via Messenger

Twitter: @PHSparents @PeeblesHigh