



LINLITHGOW ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

Linlithgow Academy Parent Council Meeting
Thursday 29th January 2026
7.00 pm – 8.30 pm
Meeting in school and Zoom video conference

Minutes

Attendees

Parent Council Members:	Helen Jenkins (Chair), Kelda Bryson (Co-Vice Chair), Karen Marriott (Clerk), Adam Schofield (Treasurer), Lindsey Campbell, Nick Goldfinch, Stuart Hamilton, Laurence Kenny, Jennifer Melville, Julia Miller.
Parent Forum Members:	Patricia Clark, Colin Jenkins, Chrissie T, Sughanya M, Grace Zhang
School Representatives:	Grant Abbot (Head Teacher), Luisa Burgess (Staff Representative), Alison Bulloch (Depute Head)
Student Representatives:	Tom Diamond, Maisie Flint
In attendance:	Joe Clare (Active Travel Officer), Pauline Orr (West Lothian Councillor), Sally Pattle (West Lothian Councillor)

1. Welcome and Apologies

The meeting opened with a welcome to all attendees, both in person and online. Introductions were made, and apologies were noted from: Sarah Carney (Staff Representative), Tom Conn (West Lothian Councillor), Rafael Arribas (Parent Forum Member), Elsie Kenny (Co-Head Student), Laurence Kenny (Parent Council Member), Nick Goldfinch (Parent Council Member), Maili Konczak (Parent Council Member), Laura McGowan (Co-Vice Chair).

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

2.1 Previous Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting of 26th November 2025 were accepted without amendments.

2.2 Matters Arising

It was noted that the sound Issues at the previous Parent Council meeting had been resolved and parents joining the meeting online reported that the sound quality was improved.

2.2.1 Senior Boys' Toilets & General Maintenance

It was noted that the maintenance issues with the toilets had been resolved and that they were now in use by pupils.

It was also noted that the PE corridor would be repainted over the February holidays.

2.2.2 Bus Fire

It was noted that there had been no further information from West Lothian Council concerning the bus fire and that some parents remained concerned. It was also noted that there had been another minor incident with school transport.

Action: Councillors Pauline Orr and Sally Pattle to follow this up with the Council directly and report back to the Parent Council.

3. Presentation from Active Travel Officer

Joe Clare presented a PowerPoint presentation which outlined the work of the new Active Travel Hub project in the town.

Joe Clare introduced himself as the Active Travel Officer for Linlithgow Academy and gave a PowerPoint presentation on the new Active Travel Hub project funded by SESTRANS and in partnership with the Linlithgow Community Development Trust. The Active Travel Hub aims to increase walking and cycling rates at the school and in the wider community. He outlined the hub's activities since August 2025, which included working with young people on route planning, bus familiarization, and cycle route development, and emphasized the mental and physical health benefits of active travel. The project aims to become self-sufficient within Linlithgow in a couple of years.

The Parent Council was invited to share ideas and connect with the project. Members suggested making links with Linlithgow Community Football Club, SnowSport Scotland (based at Polmont Ski Centre), and that the project consider the development of safe cycling routes from Springfield to the Academy. An invitation was extended from the local councillors to Joe to present at the next local area committee meeting.

Actions:

- Invite Joe (Active Travel Officer) to present at the next local area committee meeting (Sally Pattle)
- Send Joe (Active Travel Officer) contact details for Linlithgow Community Football Club (Stuart Hamilton)
- Contact Joe (Active Travel Officer) next week to discuss bike access and route issues from Springfield to the school (Luisa Burgess)

4. Items from Parent Forum

Discussion items submitted by parents/carers in advance of meeting

4.1 General

The Chair noted that a few issues had been raised by Parent Forum members but, as the individuals were not able to attend the meeting, that discussion on these issues would take place at the next meeting.

4.2 Buses idling engines at the Academy

Grant Abbot noted that a parent had alerted the school directly concerning recent occasions when they had observed that the vehicles being used for school transport had been parked up with their engines running. The Councillors at the meeting noted that there have been previous complaints about this practice. The school has now reported this to West Lothian Council who in turn have reminded school transport providers

that this practice is illegal and that they should have engines off until departure. The Senior Leadership Team at the school have agreed to check that is being adhered to.

5. Focus Topic: Course Choices

Alison Bulloch (Depute Head) gave a presentation on course choices for pupils at the school. This included an overview of how the national Curriculum for Excellence works through a broad general education until S3, when pupils move into the senior phase with more specialisation and choice. It was noted that the school offers more advanced level courses than some other West Lothian schools and had been awarded SQA Gold accreditation in recognition of the broad subjects on offer at various levels, however budget constraints may impact future offerings.

The presentation covered course choices for pupils due to enter S3 to S6 in the next academic year, including how the school determines what subjects to offer at each level, the course-choice and timetabling timeline, the guidance provided to pupils and parents/carers, how the information is gathered, collated and reviewed, and the communication to pupils on what subjects they have been allocated.

The presentation outlined the change from the previous limiting column-based choice to a free-choice model, highlighting the challenges of balancing specialisation and efficiency. It detailed the process of creating a series of spreadsheet-based matrices to map all choices allowing identification of popular and less popular subject combinations. This information, together with timetabling constraints (part-time staff contracts, class sizes, availability of specialist rooms etc), ultimately enables the construction of a 'column structure' and a timetable.

It was noted with pride that the school had been able offer all S3 pupils their chosen options for the previous two years, excepting languages. Likewise, the vast majority of Senior Phase pupils (approximately 600 individuals), were able to study their preferred subjects, although it had not been possible to achieve this for everyone. Pupils are no longer asked to specify a reserve choice as they will always be asked to confirm an alternative if their initial choices are not possible.

Members had a chance to ask questions following the presentation, and below is a summary of the main discussion points:

- The course choice and timetabling process is highly complex
- There are challenges with continuing to offer a broad range of subjects within increased budget constraints, which means that the school unfortunately cannot accommodate all the pupils who express an interest in Hospitality, and is unable to offer Music Technology and Food Technology in the next academic year.
- That, while the subjects of English and Maths/Applications of Maths are not compulsory at Higher level, they are a popular choice combination and therefore are purposefully placed in two of the six columns. It was noted that can limit the flexibility for those who do not choose both subjects at Higher level in the Senior Phase.
- That, while less than ideal, bi-level teaching has been used in recent years to enable Spanish and French to be offered at both National 5 and Higher level, but that this would not be appropriate in some other subjects.
- That communication to parents/carers does not always align with what pupils are told in school which causes confusion e.g. the recommended maximum number of Highers vs Level 6 or National 5 qualifications
- That, while there are challenges with the timing of delivering disappointing news to pupils who do not get their initial choices, that these communication from the school could be reviewed:
 - Some members questioned the tone of the emails sent when a young person's course choices had not been accommodated, noting that it can come across as lacking sympathy.

- Some members found the finalised 'Column structure' information published on the website confusing, and it was suggested that the school consider reformatting or displaying the information in another way.

Actions:

- Review the published guidance in the course choice booklet and website regarding the current recommendation for S4 pupils making choices for S5 to choose 5 Highers plus a Level 6 course, and communicate this more explicitly to parents (Alison Bulloch / Grant Abbot)
- Review and consider improvements to the communication and presentation of finalised timetabling 'Columns'. This should include a review of the text used in the email to communicate when it has not been possible to accommodate a pupil's preferred course choices, and publicising any actions taken in the previous year in response to feedback to close the feedback loop to parents/carers and pupils moving up a year (Alison Bulloch / Grant Abbot)

The Chair thanked Alison and Grant for the presentation and chance for members to discuss the topic.

6. Treasurer's Report

Adam Schofield (Treasurer) presented a verbal update on the current financial position of the Fundraising Committee.

7. Fundraising Update

Adam Schofield (Treasurer) provided a verbal update on the activities of the fundraising committee, highlighting recent donations and lottery prize allocations. He also noted that the online 'shop' would soon be updated with items requested by teachers so that supporters can contribute money to allow the school to purchase the items.

7. Head Teacher Update

The Head Teacher gave an update including:

- The school's minibus was stolen over the Christmas break, creating logistical challenges and additional hire costs for upcoming events. It was noted that Linlithgow Community Development Trust have a minibus that might be able to be borrowed.
- An outline of changes at national level, including the dissolution of SQA and the launch of Qualifications Scotland from 1st February 2026.
- Plans for an Easter study support program are being drawn up
- There is to be a new science event, Linlithgow Loves Science, to be hosted at the school later in February in conjunction with Origin Peptides. The event will be held over 2 days and involve feeder primary schools as well as pupils from the academy.
- West Lothian Council are actively discussing the use of mobile phones in all school in the local area, and feedback has been provided by the school to the council on the current academy policy.

Action:

The contact details of Linlithgow Community Development Trust to be provided to Grant Abbot so that he can investigate if the minibus is suitable and available for the school to use (Sally Pattle)

8. Any Other Business (AOB)

The Chair noted that Gina Vereker who had been leading on the communications for the Parent Council had stepped down from this role due to other commitments and thanked her for her work in this area. A request was made to members for volunteers to help develop communication strategies for the Parent Council.

The Chair noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday 23rd March 2026, with the focus topic on reporting.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm with thanks to all attending.