



LINLITHGOW ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

Linlithgow Academy Parent Council Meeting
Tuesday 5th May 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), Nick Goldfinch, Stuart Hamilton, Jennifer Melville, Julia Miller, Gina Vereker, Luisa Burgess (Staff Representative), Sarah Allan, Amy Barrett
Parent Forum Members:	Thea de Joode, Alice Lane, Claire Geoghegan
School Representatives:	Grant Abbot (Head Teacher)
Student Representatives:	none

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: Laura McGowan (Co-Vice Chair), Elsie Kenny (Student Representative), Pauline Orr (West Lothian Councillor), Sally Pattle (West Lothian Councillor), Sarah Carney (Staff Representative)

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

2.1 Previous Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting of 26th March 2026 were accepted without amendments.

2.2 Matters Arising

2.2.1 West Lothian Council (WLC) Mobile Phone Policy Consultation

Following on from the discussion on the school's mobile policy at the last meeting, it was noted that the Council is currently consulting on a West Lothian mobile phone policy for schools which has included Senior Phase debates within some schools and pupil questionnaires to gather views and experiences. Parents/carers and staff have also been invited to contribute to the consultation. The decision-making panel at WLC meets on 9th June 2026.

The Parent Council discussed the importance of consistent and clear policy at school level, as well as balancing the benefits of phones (communication, some learning uses) with concerns around distraction, behaviour, and social media. It was noted that both SNP and Labour election manifestos include commitments to some form of mobile phone ban or tighter restrictions in schools.

The school will consider local consultation outcomes alongside national policy developments when updating its own procedures.

2.2.2 School Communications – Loss of School App

G Abbot reported that the current communications mobile app, *The School App*, will cease at the end of July, necessitating a move to a new solution. The school is exploring *EduSpot* as a potential replacement app/portal as it is already authorised by West Lothian Council for use and integrates with the Groupcall functionality.

EduSpot has some limitations compared to *The School App*, which include a more complex process to send messages, a lack of a calendar function, and the restricted ability at present for the school to access or fully test the parent-side view of the app. Most importantly, pupils cannot use the app as it is linked to ParentPortal. However, developers have promised a June development update, which may address some of the identified limitations.

Parent Council members noted the importance of clear, timely communication, as well as the need for a solution that works well for families with complex care arrangements.

Action:

- *Await and monitor the June development update from EduSpot (G Abbot)*
- *Continue evaluating functionality for parent communications and report back to the Parent Council (G Abbot)*

2.2.3 Consultation on School Holidays in 2027/28

The Chair thanked members who had provided feedback on the proposal to have a 7-week summer holiday for one year only. She confirmed that all viewpoints had been represented in the collated feedback she provided to West Lothian Council.

3. Items from Parent Forum

Discussion items submitted by parents/carers in advance of meeting.

3.1 Sports Participation and use of Parent Volunteers

Concerns were raised by a parent concerning a recent incident in which the S1/S2 girls' football team had been unable to attend a fixture they had qualified for due to a lack of staff available to accompany the team. Parent Council members agreed that this was disappointing for the pupils involved and expressed concern that enthusiastic pupils were missing out on opportunities for competitive sport. The Headteacher was aware of the incident and reported that he and the PE department had tried to facilitate staff to accompany the team, but that it had not been possible on this occasion. He also confirmed that the date of this particular match was fixed unlike typical boys' football matches which meant there was no flexibility to move the match to an alternative date when staff would be available to take the team.

A potential solution discussed was to increase the use of parent volunteers, subject to appropriate PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) checks. It was noted that there is a financial cost to the school to support parents to obtain their PVG, and that the school cannot prioritise this in the current financial climate. It was suggested that the Parent Council Fundraising Group could consider financially supporting the school to enable more parents/carers to get registered with a PVG with West Lothian Council. It was also noted that

some parents/carers are already registered for a PVG through West Lothian Council from their volunteer work with primary schools, which means that they are already eligible to volunteer in Linlithgow Academy.

It was also noted that use of parents/carers with PVGs could be helpful for other off-site activities e.g. competitions, school trips etc.

The Parent Council also noted that there were wider considerations for the school when using parents/carers to support off-site visits such as first aid cover, supervision ratios, and disclosure and safeguarding obligations.

Actions:

- *Email parents/carers to see if there are individuals who currently hold valid PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) status who might be willing to assist with accompanying pupils to sporting fixtures or other off-site trips (G Abbot)*
- *Exploring whether the Fundraising Group could financially support PVG checks for parent volunteers to support trips, sports, and events. (A Schofield, K Bryson)*

4. Focus Topic: Artificial Intelligence (AI) use in the Academy

The Headteacher provided an overview of the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the school, with input from Luisa Burgess (Staff Representative).

The school is currently using AI primarily as a staff support tool, not as a pupil-facing system. The main platform in use is Microsoft Copilot, deployed within the school's existing licensed Microsoft environment. Any new use of other AI platforms in school must be approved through West Lothian Council's Digital Tools form, in line with local authority and national policies. The Modern Languages department also has use of an authorised AI tool that assists with live translation into local dialects. There are clear protocols governing data protection and privacy, appropriate content generation, and the scope of use in teaching and administration.

Within the Academy, AI is being trialled by staff for generating dynamic lesson starters and classroom materials, supporting administrative tasks (e.g. scheduling lesson cover for staff absence), and assisting with planning and resource development for staff. The school will shortly pilot an AI-generated cover system to support cover work planning. The Headteacher will report back to a future Parent Council meeting on the effectiveness of this trial which will include staff feedback and any issues or improvements identified.

It was noted the importance of staff training to ensure AI is used effectively and safely. To date staff training and informal support have focused on understanding what AI tools can and cannot do; the importance of good prompts (how to ask effective questions of AI); and the critical evaluation of AI outputs (checking for accuracy, bias and appropriateness). Staff are encouraged to share good practice and examples of where AI has saved time or improved resources.

It was confirmed that all AI outputs used in school are subject to human verification; staff must check, edit and approve any AI-generated materials before they are used with pupils. At this stage, AI is not being used directly by pupils for assessed work. Discussion is ongoing about if and how pupil-facing AI tools might be introduced in the future.

Parent Council members discussed the increasing availability of general AI tools such as ChatGPT and the risk of misuse in coursework and exam preparation. It was noted that the school has clear guidance for staff on how to recognise and respond to suspected AI-generated coursework and aligns with Qualifications Scotland guidance on AI use in assessment for national qualifications.

Looking to the future, the school anticipates that AI will become increasingly integrated into educational systems over time, but remains committed to careful, phased implementation. The school will continue to consult with staff, pupils and parents on the use of AI and will maintain strong human oversight.

The members thanked the Headteacher and others for the informative discussion.

Action: Pilot the new AI-generated cover system in the coming weeks and report back on outcomes to the Parent Council (G Abbot)

5. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer provided an overview of the Parent Council's finances and noted that recent expenditures included the purchase of the Zeta Maths subscription and mathematics textbooks and purchases of items for other subject areas in the school. He also noted that the accounts included the first donation from sales of second-hand books at Mannerstons café which is a new project to the Academy and is run by Ms. Olga Martin, a parent of a pupil in the school.

6. Fundraising Update

A short update was provided on recent and planned fundraising, noting that the Parent Council continues to raise funds through events (e.g. orchestra concerts) and initiatives, contributing to subject resources (e.g. textbooks) and wider educational experiences. There is interest in sustaining and, where possible, increasing fundraising activity to offset pressures on the school budget due to lower enrolment.

No new major fundraising events are currently planned, but the Parent Council intends to review the fundraising calendar and identify opportunities for next year at the June meeting.

Actions:

- *Meet to review current funding needs and agree immediate priorities for spending the remaining £1,000 (Fundraising Group)*
- *Over the summer, consider how to spread out the burden of funding requests and aim to pay for items earlier in the school year to support planning (Fundraising Group)*

7. Headteacher's Update

The Headteacher provided an update covering three main themes:

7.1 Course Choices and the 2026/27 timetable

This year school staff managed to speak to all pupils and parents/carers who were unsuccessful in their course choices before the examination period, which was helpful. Additionally, in response to feedback from a recent Parent Council meeting about the communication around course choice outcomes and presentation of the column structure, the school published examples of how to interpret the column structure on the website. This was well received.

7.2 Rights Respecting Schools Gold Award

The school had recently been awarded the Rights Respecting Schools Gold Award which was a significant achievement for the school community.

7.3 Staffing Update

It was confirmed that the school will host 3 probationary teachers in the 2026/27 session. There are also a number of other vacancies but it is hoped that these will be resolved before the summer holidays.

8. Any Other Business (AOB)

The following additional items were discussed:

8.1 Literacy and Book Sale – Pupil Leadership Opportunities

The Parent Council suggested that the S6 literacy ambassadors might be able to support the Mannerstons second-hand book box as part of their role, for example in raising awareness of the activity and encourage pupils to donate young adult books they no longer needed.

Action: consider asking Sarah Carney (or other relevant staff member) to identify literacy ambassadors or S6 leaders who might wish to take on this role (G Abbot)

8.2 School Trips – Future Focus Topic

The Parent Council agreed that **school trips** should be brought back as a **key focus topic** at meetings next year. This will allow a fuller discussion of **equity, cost, staffing and volunteer involvement** as well as consideration of how Parent Council funding and support can best enable a broad and inclusive range of trips.

Action: Include “School trips” as a planned focus topic in next year’s meeting schedule (H Jenkins)

8.3 School Pupil Numbers

It was noted that the school roll has dropped by around 120 over the last few years and that the current S6 year group leaving is the largest year group that the school has had in recent years. G Abbot confirmed that there were just under 200 new S1 pupils due to start in August 2026 and that almost 30 of these were out of catchment requests.

It was noted that the falling number of pupils at the school meant that there was a corresponding reduction in school funding which continued to present a challenge for the school leadership.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next Parent Council meeting was confirmed as **Tuesday 11 June**.

At that meeting the Parent Council will:

- Reflect on how the year has gone, including what has worked well and areas for improvement.
- Consider school improvement plan priorities.
- Begin planning topics and issues for next year’s meetings.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.