

PARENT COUNCIL FOR ST. THOMAS OF AQUIN'S HIGH SCHOOL

CONSTITUTION agreed 1 October 2007 and amended 6 September 2012

This amended version for discussion and agreement at the AGM on 1 June 2017

1. Our Parent Council Philosophy

The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 provides a framework for ensuring that parents have the opportunity to express their views and have these taken into account on policy matters affecting the education of their children. The Act states that every parent (defined as parent, carer or guardian) with a child in school is automatically a member of the school's Parent Forum. The Parent Council is a smaller body, elected to represent the views of parents.

The Parent Council of St. Thomas of Aquin's High School exists to support the school, working together and in partnership with the school for the benefit of all pupils.

The Parent Council of St. Thomas of Aquin's High School welcomes the participation of all parents, guardians and carers of pupils at the school and will endeavour to ensure that their views are heard and acted upon.

We have an open door policy at Parent Council meetings whereby we welcome the presence of all parents. Any parent wishing to raise agenda points for the Parent Council can do so by contacting the Chair prior to a Parent Council meeting. The Parent Council considers all matters of a general or policy nature. Any issues specific to any individual – student, parent or staff – should be raised directly with the school.

The Parent Council is a valuable means by which Parents can let their voice be heard.

2. Parent Council Name

The Parent Council shall be known as the St Thomas of Aquin's High School Parent Council. The Parent Forum may decide by a majority to change the name if it wishes.

3. Aims – Purposes. What the Parent Council is for

The objectives of the Parent Council are to:

- 3.1. Actively encourage partnership with the school community by supporting the Head Teacher, staff and pupils.
- 3.2. Identify and represent the views of parents on the education provided by the school and other matters affecting the education and welfare of the pupils and to enable consultation with parents on matters of school policy and other related issues.
- 3.3. Promote contact and involvement between the school, parents and the wider community to support the education and welfare of pupils.
- 3.4. Promote contact and involvement between the school and associated primary schools.
- 3.5. Support the school to promote our Catholic ethos.
- 3.6. Report to the Parent Forum.
- 3.7. Represent the views of parents and on behalf of the school in relevant matters with the Education Authority and other bodies, as appropriate.
- 3.8. Organise social and fund raising events to provide financial assistance to support the school.

4. Numbers and Membership of the Parent Council.

There are places for up to 22 parent members on the Parent Council.

The Parent Council will operate through sub-groups as and when required.

Elections to the Parent Council take place annually at the Parent Council AGM, and through the year to fill casual vacancies and give parents regular opportunities to volunteer for membership. Members will be elected for a period of two years, and may offer themselves for re-election after this period. Members may resign at the AGM, or at any time through the year, by notifying the Chair of their intention to do so.

Parents across all year groups are welcome to volunteer to become a member of the Parent Council. If there are more than 22 nominations in total, parents standing for election will be asked to speak briefly to the members of the Parent Forum present at the meeting to outline their reasons for wanting to be elected to the Parent Council. The election will be by secret ballot. Priority will be given to members with children in year groups currently un- or under-represented on the Parent Council. All members of the Parent Forum present at the meeting

(regardless of whether or not they are members of the Parent Council) are eligible to vote on membership of the Parent Council.

Any parent member missing four consecutive meetings may be required by the Chair to step down from the Parent Council.

There must be a quorum of four parent members, or 20% of current Parent Council membership, should any matter come to a vote.

5. Other People included in the Parent Council

The Head Teacher or his/her representative has a right and a duty to attend every Parent Council meeting.

In addition, positions on the Parent Council are reserved for the following non parent members:

5.1. A representative of the church, either lay or ordained.

5.2. A representative from the wider community.

5.3. A Teacher representative.

5.4. Two pupil representatives from the senior school, to be identified from the senior school.

5.5. A representative from Edinburgh City Council

Vacancies for all positions will be advertised via a number of forums including school newsletters and website.

6. Office Bearers

For consistency with constitutional practice, office bearer roles will be appointed as follows:

A Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer of the Parent Council will be appointed annually at the Parent Council AGM. Their appointment is for a period of one year, after which they may offer themselves for re-election.

In the absence of a Secretary, the Parent Council may appoint a person who is not a member of the Parent Council to act as a Clerk for the purposes of arranging

meetings, preparing the agenda and taking minutes. An honorarium may be paid to the Clerk for this role.

7. Meetings

The Parent Council is accountable to the Parent Forum for St Thomas of Aquin's High School and will make a report to it at least once each year on its activities on behalf of all the parents.

If a minimum of 25 members of the Parent Forum request a special general meeting to discuss issues falling within the Parent Council remit, the Parent Council shall arrange this. The Parent Council shall give all members of the Forum at least 2 weeks' notice of the meeting and, at the same time, circulate notice of the matter, or matters, to be discussed at the meeting.

Any member of the Parent Forum or member of the public can attend a meeting of the Parent Council. Should any matter be put to a vote, only members of the Parent Council are entitled to vote.

Anyone attending a Parent Council meeting is required to conduct themselves in a responsible way, and to remember that the purpose of the Parent Council and its meetings is to work together and in partnership with the school for the benefit of all pupils. Anyone behaving in a manner that the majority of members of the Parent Forum present at a meeting believe to be disruptive may be asked by the Chair to leave.

8. Annual Meeting

An Annual Meeting will be held once in every school year on a date to be agreed by the Parent Council, provided always that no more than 15 calendar months shall elapse between one Annual Meeting and the next. A notice of the Meeting including date, time and place will be made available to all members of the Parent Forum via various means including school newsletters, website and parent meetings, for example the First Year Parent Induction meeting.

The Meeting will include:

- A brief report on the work of the Parent Council and any sub groups.
- Election or re-election of members and office bearers.
- Discussion of issues that members of the Parent Forum may wish to raise.
- Approval of the accounts.

9. How the Parent Council will carry out its work

The Parent Council will meet at least once in every school term.

It is the intention of the Parent Council to work by means of consensus. Where appropriate, members of the Parent Council will endeavour to find ways to reach decisions without the need for a vote. In the event that a vote cannot be avoided, each parent member at the meeting will have one vote, with the Chair having a casting vote in the event of a tie.

Provided that it has the support of at least 20% of the members of the Parent Council, an additional meeting may held on request. All members of the Parent Council will be given at least one week's notice of date, time and place of the meeting.

10. Notes of Meetings

Copies of minutes will be emailed to everyone attending the meeting who has given their email address to the Secretary and to the Parent Council email distribution list, and will be available on the website. A hard copy will be available from the School Office.

11. Confidentiality

Should a subject under discussion be deemed by the Parent Council to be confidential, only members of the Parent Council and the Headteacher or his/her representative may be present for that discussion.

12. How the finances of the Parent Council are looked after

The Treasurer will open a bank or building society account in the name of the Parent Council for all Parent Council funds. Withdrawals will require the signature of the Treasurer and two other Parent Council members.

The Treasurer will keep an accurate record of all income and expenditure, and will provide a summary of this for each Parent Council meeting and a full account for the Annual Meeting.

The Parent Council shall be responsible for ensuring that all monies are used in accordance with the objectives of the Parent Council.

13. Changing the Constitution

The Parent Council may change its constitution after obtaining consent from members of the Parent Forum. Members of the Parent Forum will be sent a copy of any proposed amendment and given reasonable time to respond to the proposal.

14. Dissolution of the Parent Council

Should the Parent Council cease to exist, any remaining funds will be passed to the education authority to be used for the benefit of the school, where this continues.