

Minutes of Wallace Hall 2-18 Parent Council Meeting
 Monday 17 November 2025, 7pm, Zoom

Present: Tina Fiske, Mr Blair, Mr Graham, Calvin Ruysen (Vice-chair), Laura Keenan (Chair), Alice Stilgoe (Secretary), Maria Navarro de Sepúlveda, Emily McClellan, Linda Corrway, Kara Millen, Alicia Hood, Jess Fusco, Dicky Fusco, Lewis Fergusson, Esther Ellicot, Rebekah Hamilton, Dr Fulton, Mr McTier, Alison Henderson, Mrs McDiarmid

Item	Details	Action
1.	Welcome and apologies Apologies: Mrs Gray, Tom Tryon, Jane Valentine	
2.	Approval of previous minutes Previous minutes were approved by Maria Navarro de Sepúlveda and seconded by Laura Keenan	AS to publish on website
3.	Mobile Phone Policy Barry Graham led a presentation by staff and students for and against the use of mobile 'phones in school. Here is a summary of their main points Mr McClair – Against <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deterioration of attention spans and social skills. Long form essay-writing increasingly challenging for pupils 2. Safety – relating to privacy and consent with unauthorised recording of staff and pupils 3. Safety – relating to increased risk of access to harmful online content and dangers of algorithms 4. Risk of theft of phones and expensive technology 5. Disruption to teaching and learning. If 90 seconds lost per lesson, in five lessons over a six week period that equates to 45mins or a whole lesson lost. Dr Fulton – For <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phones are part of everyday use now and by having them, pupils can be educated about their use. 2. Convenience for arranging logistics at the beginning and end of the school day 3. Online quizzes such as Cahoots and Blookets. This is a fun way of recapping learning and repetition of key facts 4. Online research 5. WHA recently purchased Achieve software (under £1,000) which is a bridge between learning at home and school, designed around Scottish education system with links to past papers 6. Celebrate achievement by recording extra-curricular achievements through use of QR codes Esther Ellicot – Against <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Addictive nature of phones and perils of addictive behaviour 	

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Advocated phone free time at school, particularly at break at lunch time to engage in conversation and connection with friends and peers 3. Phones are a distraction in class 4. Phones are used for research. Could this be done as homework task out of school hours? 5. Many tasks do require a device so an alternative would need to be provided 	
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Rebekah Hamilton – For

1. Phones are required for senior pupils in free periods as there are not sufficient devices at school to revise and do past papers
2. Online quizzes such as Cahoots and Blookets are popular and fun and a brain break
3. For pupils that struggle socially, phones are useful during break times as they are felt to reduce the stress around socialising
4. A phone ban would result in more printing costs and paper handouts
5. Young Scot Cards and Apple Pay are used for lunch payments so would need to find a work around in order to pay for lunch at school or to go into Thornhill

The presentations were followed by discussion, with the following points being made:

- Addictive nature of phones
- Acknowledgement that phones would need to be replaced by another device and question of how to fund this
- Important to recognise difference between technology as a vital and useful tool for learning, and the smartphone as a device which blends personal and work functions
- Personal mobile phone devices not protected by DGC firewalls so pupils can access risky content
- Families feel pressure to get mobile phone for their children when starting WHA both because everyone else has them and also because smartphones are relied on heavily as tool for learning
- Distraction during homework and frustrating for families who wish to minimise screentime at home
- No division between homework and play (listening to music, gaming, speaking to friends etc)
- Deterioration in memory and attention spans
- How to find a system to lock phones away during class
- Desire to see separation of mobile phones for social life and logistics, and technology as a tool for learning
- At what age is digital technology required in the classroom

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desire to see the classroom space protected from distraction of mobile phone and need to break reliance and dependency on phones - Issue of consent - School is disingenuous when it states that pupils do not require a mobile phone at WHA because they are often used or called upon in class - Difficult to make friends and socialise when devices are so prevalent in break times - Some students do not want a mobile phone - Could WHA consider fundraising for alternative tech for use in the class i.e. tablets or computers. Primary and ELC use iPads which have similar functions to a smartphone, but without the social media and messaging distractions. - <p>Next steps</p> <p>Barry thanked staff and pupils for their excellent presentations and all the points they raised, and for parent contributions to the discussion.</p> <p>Barry reflected that up till now, the school policy has been to allow mobile phones in the Academy, but suggests the time has come to review that policy by consulting staff, parents and pupils via a survey. Should survey results show strong support for restricted use of mobile phones in school, will look to review the school policy.</p> <p>Kara Millen and Barry Graham to draft survey.</p>	C/o Barry Graham & Kara Millen
9.	<p>AOB Burns supper Emily confirmed Burns Supper on Friday 23 January 2026. Please liaise with Emily if you are able to help.</p>	C/o Emily McCleannan
10.	<p>DONM Monday 12 January 2026, online 7pm</p> <p>Monday 2 March 2026, online 7pm Monday 27 April 2026, Wallace Hall Library 7pm Monday 15 June 2026, Buccleuch & Queensberry Arms Hotel, Thornhill 5pm</p>	