

GRACEMOUNT HIGH SCHOOL
PARENT COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT TO PARENTS 18th SEPTEMBER 2008

The start.....

The first meeting of the Parent Council was held on Thursday 6th of September 2007

- We had four parents Ken Gregor, Morag Clarke, Ian Duncan and Arthur Hopkinson and a member from the Teaching staff.
- We selected a Chairman, Deputy Chair and Treasurer.
- It was agreed to invite Bob Perry to join the parent council as a co-opted member.
- The member representing the staff would be Heather Boag or Laura Johnston who would attend alternate meetings.
- Future meetings were arranged to be held in November, January, March, April and June.

Other points about meetings

- Jim Cassidy attended all meetings and his open approach has meant that the Parent Council has been given the appropriate information about the School.
- We have had the services of a clerk, Caroline Sanderson who prepared agendas, produced and distributed minutes and other documents.
- Each meeting has been conducted in a relaxed and positive atmosphere with all present comfortable to take part.

Items discussed

This is a selection of some of the items the Parent Council discussed throughout the year

- Exam results - .We looked into exam results, particularly how the School and individual departments were progressing, compared result with comparative Schools, and discussed how the strengths could be extended throughout the School and how weaknesses could be improved.
- Toilets - Concern was raised about toilet facilities and we spoke about strategies to improve them. It was interesting to note that the same concerns had been raised by pupils through their Pupil Forums and they were putting forward constructive ideas.

- School of Ambition - We were kept up to date with the School of Ambition programme , how the funding was being distributed and the progress that was being made across all the initiatives.
- Ogwini - The link the School is continuing to develop with Ogwini High School in South Africa was discussed with great interest. The success of the sponsorship scheme was seen to be a good way of strengthening links between the School, parents and local community.
- Budget cuts – The affect of the budget cuts affecting all Schools was explained and specifically the impact on our School. As a parent Council we agreed to monitor this situation before deciding how to react.
- Transformational Plan – Detail of how the Transformational Plan was progressing and the targets being met were presented and discussed fully.

Guests

To increase the scope of meetings and discover more about the School and how it worked a couple of guests were invited.

- Scot McKenzie, the business manager gave us an insight to his job, what his responsibilities are and how he fits into the senior management team.
- Jim Brown, principal teacher of science, gave us his view of the School and his department since his appointment in August 2007.

I would like to thank both of them for giving up their time to attend our meetings and give us good insight into their jobs and their attitude to the School.

Finance

The Parent Council receives money from the City of Edinburgh Council that is to be used for communicating with Parents and to cover administration costs

- Our treasurer Ian Duncan opened a bank account where our money is held and makes a regular report at meetings on the balance.
- A copy of the accounts for the year ending 31/03/08 is attached to this report.
- This financial year The City of Edinburgh Council have provided each Parent Council in the City £200 plus 60p per pupil

Questionnaire

To help us get the views of a wider number of Parents we trialled the use of a questionnaire which was put out during the fashion show evening.

We wanted to know

- Did parents know how to contact the Parent Council?
- What issue was most important to Parents?

Response was not great (despite the chance of winning a bottle of wine for all completed replies) but it was clear from those that did reply that they did not know how to contact the Parent Council directly and that the most important issue to them was that their children were happy at School

These results will need to be considered during the next year.

Assistance from the City of Edinburgh Council

The Children and families Department have created a Parental Involvement Unit. Their roll is to:

- Provide advice and support on the rules regarding Parent Councils,
- Provided training courses for members of Parent Councils
- Produce newsletters detailing issues of interest to Parent Councils.
- Encourage the development and progress of Parent Councils.
- Make payments to the clerk

This unit has been very helpful to us and have been able to answer all the questions we have had through the year.

Success

The strengths of having a Parent Council were shown with our representations to AMEY. The School had been trying without success to persuade AMEY to reduce the costs they were applying to the new signs being put up around the School as part of the School of Ambition Plans. After the Parent Council wrote to AMEY these costs were removed.

Other meetings

As chair I attended some other meetings throughout the year.

- Along with Jim Cassidy, Pauline Walker and Kirsty Mcsporrان I was invited to attend a meeting of the City of Edinburgh Council sub committee to discuss the findings of the School review
- I attend a meeting of the Gracemount & Liberton cluster Schools Parent Council Chairs
- I attended a meeting of the South Neighbourhood High Schools Parent Council Chairs.

What next for the Parent council?

Dates of meetings for the next year will be:

- Thursday 16th October at 7pm
- Thursday 4th December at 7pm
- Thursday 22nd January at 7pm
- Thursday 2nd April at 7pm
- Thursday 11th June at 7pm

We would like to see a Pupil representative attend to give us their view of the School.

We need to publicise the Parent Council more so that Parents know more about it and what it is trying to do.

Most importantly we need more Parents to understand that the roll of the Parent Council is important in representing parents' views, that it is not difficult, complicated or time consuming and find ways of encouraging them to become part of the Parent Council.

Ken Gregor
GHS Parent Council
18/09/08