

## Gracemount High Parent Council

### Annual Report 2009-2010

This report sets out what the Gracemount High Parent council has been doing during the past session and how it can progress.

Since Parent Councils were formed three years ago, it is clear that there has been an increasing awareness that the Parental voice is becoming more important to those who run our Schools.

There is now a Government sponsored National Parent Forum with a Parent representative from each Local Authority to give a Parental input to national education policy.

In Edinburgh the Consultative Committee with Parents, where Parents from across the City meet with the City Council is being revamped to be more relevant to the needs of Parents.

We ourselves have recently been involved with a new process to select a Head Teacher which has been designed to give Parents a more active roll.

There is reason to believe that this trend will continue with Parents views being more consideration at all levels.

### Membership

We lost one Parent Member this year when Arthur Hopkinson left the Parent Council as his son left the School. Arthur was an original Member of the Parent Council and always took an active part. Id like to thank him for his commitment to the Parent Council.

This year we have been lucky to have a Pupil join the Parent Council. Becky Devine represented Pupils and kept us well informed on the views of Pupils and what issues were being pursued by the Pupil Council. Becky leaves the School this year to go to College. Id like to thank her for her time on the Parent Council and wish her well for the future.

The School Staff continued to be represented by Audrey Gillan and Chris Hume who attended alternate meetings. Again Id like to thank them for their commitment and contribution they have made.

### Issues

There have been three main issues which the Parent Council have had to consider this year.

Catchment changes – In August the City of Edinburgh Council put forward a proposal to change the Schools catchment area as part of the proposal to close Burdiehouse Primary. The proposal would have meant a large area of the current catchment would have moved to Liberton High. This would have had serious consequences for the School.

The Parent Council and the School Management team vigorously opposed these changes. We were ultimately successful as the proposal was dropped from the final plans to close Burdiehouse Primary. I'd like to thank Councillors Murray and Hart for their support on this and for attending our meeting in September to discuss the issues.

Although the catchment changes are still to be fully resolved the new proposal does not in the main harm the School.

Head Teacher Appointment - Parents on the Parent council were asked to form part of the selection panel for the ne Head Teacher. Myself and Lesley took part in the long and short list interview process which resulted in the appointment of Pauline Walker as the new Head teacher.

Id like to thank the professional members of the selection panel for fully including us in the process and ensuring that it was inclusive with the Parents fully involved.

Budget Cuts – Throughout the year the prospect of deep cuts to the School budget were being suggested by the City of Edinburgh Council .The parent Council asked the Head Teacher to advise us what he affect of the proposed 4% cut in the budget would be. The answer was that such a cut would have a severe impact on the School and its ability to maintain the standard of education that it offers.

Like Parent Councils across the city we were deeply concerned at the affect a budget cut of this size would have. We were represented by Lesley at two special meetings held for all Parent councils to discuss the cuts with the City Council. Lesley gave us a full account on these discussions which showed there was a robust opposition to these cuts by all Parent Councils.

To what extent the opposition expressed by Parent Councils focussed the minds of the politicians is unclear however the good news was that by the time the budgets were agreed the cut had been reduced to 1%. Although not welcome it is certainly more manageable for the School.

In addition the Parent Council have also discussed a wide range of issues such as: exam results, looking at trends between departments and between girls and boys: curriculum for excellence, how it would be implemented and the issues surrounding the implementation: The 50 th Anniversary celebrations, how the Parent Council could help promote events: classroom behaviour, how anecdotes spread and the reality; Smoking amongst pupils, What strategies can be used to help them stop and many more.

## Meetings

We held six meetings including an Annual Open meeting. We have had visits from David Wright the Neighbourhood Manager to tell us about the new Head teacher appointment process. City of Edinburgh Councillors Hart and Murray to get our views on the catchment changes. Jim Brown principle teacher of science to find out how Parents perceived the School of Ambition projects.

We have had the services of Ashleigh as our Clerk. Ashleigh has worked very efficiently taking minutes, circulating Agendas and other communications I'd like to thank Ashleigh for her hard work and hope that she can continue in this role as she starts her new career.

The Head Teacher or her Deputy has attended all meetings. The Parent Council have been kept up to date on all changes in staffing, events in the School and all relevant information. There has been an open and clear discussion on all topics raised.

## Communication

An issue which has always concerned the Parent Council is how to communicate with Parents. We have carried out mail shots to Parents. We always have an article in the School Newsletter and we have a section on the School website. We have recently used text messaging to advertise the Annual meeting

This year we have introduced a Parent Council notice board and a suggestion box which is positioned in the reception area.

For next year I would like us to work on improving our communications, we need to update the notice board and web pages more regularly. I would like to work with the School as they attempt to improve communications by use of e-mail and as GLOW comes on line utilise the various functions there.

## Finance

The Parent Council continues to receive funding from the City of Edinburgh Council. The funding is to be used for communicating with Parents, publications and supporting the aims of the Parent Council.

I'd like to thank Ian our treasurer for again keeping the accounts concise and clear. The audited account for each financial year can be found in the Parents section of the School website.

## What next.

For the Parent Council to grow and become even more relevant to the School we need to attract more members, we need to find ways of making it clear what the Parent Council is for and find ways to communicate better. We need to find ways of encouraging all types of Parental involvement so that those who do not feel comfortable with the Parent Council can find their own way of contributing.

The dates for Meetings during the 2010-2011 sessions are as follows:

Monday 23rd August 2010  
Tuesday 12th October 2010  
Tuesday 3rd December 2010  
Monday 7th February 2011  
Tuesday 26th April 2011  
Monday 20th June 2011

All meetings at 7pm in the School.

To conclude thanks to all members of the Parent Council for their help and contributions this year, particularly to Gwen and Lesley, their work has made things much easier for me.