

**GRACEMOUNT HIGH SCHOOL
PARENT COUNCIL**

MINUTES OF MEETING
HELD ON 23 AUGUST 2010



Present:

Pauline Walker	<i>Head Teacher</i>
Ken Gregor	<i>Chair</i>
Gwen McLeod	<i>Deputy Chair</i>
Ian Duncan	<i>Parent Member (Treasurer)</i>
Lesley Gibson-Eaglesham	<i>Parent Member</i>
Bob Perry	<i>Co-opted Member</i>
Audrey Gillan	<i>Staff Member</i>
Ashleigh Kennedy	<i>Clerk</i>

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Ken welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained the meeting was taking place in the more relaxed atmosphere of the Staff Room. However, both the Staff Room and the Meeting Room had been booked for all Parent Council Meetings if the Staff Room was not suitable.

Apologies were received from Margaret Ozturk, Gillian Fitzpatrick and Susan Wilson.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

There was one amendment from the Minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 27 April 2010.

The December date for this year's meetings was changed from Tuesday 3 December 2010 to Tuesday 7 December 2010. The confirmed dates are as follows:

Meeting	Date
1	Monday 23 August 2010
2	Tuesday 12 October 2010
3	Tuesday 7 December 2010
4	Monday 7 February 2011
5	Tuesday 26 April 2011
6	Monday 20 June 2011

Ken thanked Ashley Christie for completing the Minutes when she filled in for Ashleigh at this meeting.

The Minutes were then approved.

3. Report from Chair

a. Clerk top-up payments

Ken began by explaining that further to the reduction in the Clerk's payments from £50 to £40, contact had been made to the City of Edinburgh Council regarding topping up the payment. They had indicated the Parent Council could use their funds to top up the Clerk's payment from £40 to £50, a practice other schools were using. He explained that Ashleigh would receive a cheque from the Parent Council made payable to the City of Edinburgh Council for the sum of £10 and she would send this in with the payment form for £40.

The Parent Council agreed to make this payment from funds to maintain the Clerks payment at £50.

Ashleigh expressed her gratitude and thanked all members for this positive change.

Ian indicated that the City of Edinburgh Council had received the comments from the Parent Council concerning the initial reduction in the Clerk's payments.

b. Annual Meeting Review

Ken reported on this meeting held on Monday 14 June 2010. He indicated it was a different and enjoyable night, which involved active learning and 'speed dating'. He wished to record his thanks to Chris Hume and Stephen Rafferty for organising this evening.

Ashleigh had typed up the suggestions and answers that had been written by Parents and Stephen Rafferty is to review them and consider how best they can be used. Ken will provide the suggestions and answers to members of the Parent Council for comments

Although the evening was enjoyable the main purpose of the evening to attract more parents had been unsuccessful.

Ken suggested that the Parent Council will need to consider best format for next year.

c. Parent Council Award

Ken expressed an idea to have a Parent Council award at the next Celebration Evening to promote it to other parents and raise the Council's profile. Ian concurred that it was a good idea but believed voting for the award should be held within the forum of the Parent Council and not in outside forums. Conversely, Ken believed a wide group of voting would promote the Council to staff, pupils and parents. Ken indicated that there was no immediate need to act but all members agreed it was a good idea.

d. Pupil Member

With the departure of Becky Divine the former Pupil Member from Gracemount High School, there was now a vacancy for a Pupil Member on the Council. Pauline intimated that she was to speak to senior pupils to find a replacement for Becky. Ken finished by thanking Becky for her great input throughout the year.

e. Parent Council Logo

Ken explained the he had contacted Barbara Dingwall, Principal Teacher of Art to see if she could create a logo for the Parent Council. He hoped this would give the Council an identity. He had not heard back from Barbara but hoped this would involve pupils in the creation of a logo and in doing so promote the Council to pupils.

f. Children and Families Revenue Budget Review Meeting 2011 - 2014

This meeting is to be held on Tuesday 31 August 2010 to encourage participation, involvement and shared decision making in the Children and Families Budget. Lesley would be attending as a CCWP representative for the Primary School cluster and as Ken could not attend, Lesley would also be representing Gracemount High.

Gwen asked whether a discussion should take place before the Budget Meeting so Lesley could represent the Parent Council views. Ken felt that because there was little information on the meeting, a discussion by the Parent Council was not necessary and he would trust Lesley's judgement. Pauline also added that the meeting would probably call for ideas for the Budget Review instead of asking for views and opinions.

Lesley will update the Parent Council with what happened at the next meeting.

Bob raised some thoughts with regard to this topic. He believed that the cuts would encourage parents to get involved with the Parent Council as a means of raising their concerns. He also added that by having pre-announced substantiate topics this would involve more parents in the Council. For instance in March the Council could host parents on the issue of budget cuts and in June the issue of school uniform. This would ultimately get more

parents involved even if for just one issue. Everyone agreed this was a worthwhile idea.

Pauline stated that she would be attending the Head Teacher's Meeting on Wednesday 1 September 2010 which would give an indication of the likely cuts for next year.

Bob asked if teaching and learning would be affected by the cuts. Pauline believes that this is unlikely; however, there may be a reduction in support staff which would affect vulnerable children. It also may be likely that teaching staff would find themselves working harder as the cuts began to filter through.

Ian asked Pauline if she could raise the issue of Head and Depute Head Teacher role changes. He understood that there had been some discussion of removing Business Managers from schools which would lead to Head and Depute Heads taking on the Business Manager's role, ultimately taking them out of the classroom to complete administration. Pauline acknowledged this and concluded by stating she would be able to report the outcomes of the Heads meeting at the next Parent Council meeting.

g. Constitution Change

As indicated at the Annual Review Meeting, it was agreed that there would be a constitution change allowing the Chair to be in this position for a limited period. Therefore, Ken would step down as Chair next year and hoped there would be a seamless transition between himself and his successor.

Ken asked Parent Members to consider taking on the roll.

h. Raising Issues

Ken asked if Members had any issues they would like to raise, could he be made aware to them at least a week before the next meeting. This would enable him to have time to get an answer in time for the meeting and to determine if the issue was relevant to the Parent Council. It would also ensure that all issues on the Agenda were discussed equally without worrying about time.

Gwen agreed that in theory this was best but did not always work in practice. She sometimes did not think of an issue until she was on her way to the meeting. Ken agreed that sometimes this would happen and these issues could be raised in Any Other Business. But as a general rule prior warning would be most suitable.

On this note, Ken informed the Council that he was going to keep a register of any issues raised and any action that needed to be taken. Ashleigh was to create the document and would maintain it. All members agreed with this idea.

4. Report from Treasurer

Ian began by explaining that there had been two payments made in May to the Council from the City of Edinburgh Council for a total of £503.20. These payments were unexpected and after more than two weeks of investigation it was discovered that the payments were meant for Gracemount Primary School's Parent Council. On 1 July 2010, £503.20 was reimbursed to the City of Edinburgh Council.

The balance as of 23 August 2010 was £937.22. A cheque had been made to Gracemount High School for £74 which covered the costs of the Annual Meeting such as texting parents. This amount would come off the balance once the cheque had cleared.

5. Report from Pupil Member

No pupil member at present.

6. Report from Head Teacher

a. Staffing

Pauline began with a report on staffing. Laura Kelly (Maths), Louise Taylor (Business Education) and Sandra Scott (English) had returned from the school after maternity leave and secondment. There had also been an intake of probationers and new staff:

Craig Knight	Biology
Rosalind Brown	English
Anna Vuillot	French
Rachel Ponder	Maths
Mark Gregor	PE
Emma Taylor	Drama
Gary Morison	Office

Pauline also intimated that Cat Baillie was due to start next year in the office. Currently she is on maternity leave and had been transferred from Rowanfields Special School due to surplus requirements. Therefore Gary Morison had been kept on in the office to cover this vacancy until she starts. Pauline had sent her flowers on behalf of the school for her recent arrival.

Pauline also reported the departures from the school. Jenny Dowling a French teacher for 16 years at the school had left on Friday 19 August 2010

to take care of her ill mother. Sathia Chetty was retiring at the October break after a long career at the school. Ken stated he would send a letter from the Parent Council to Sathia.

b. Results

Pauline handed out a breakdown of this year's exam results which did not include any appeals. There had been strong results from the S3 and S4 who had sat exams. 88% of pupils by the end of S4 had achieved 5 or more awards. The target set by the City of Edinburgh Council is 90%, however, this year there were 8 pupils who did not reach this target due to being non-attendees and vulnerable pupils. The absence of an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who concentrates on non-attendees and getting them back to school had contributed to this figure as well. The school now has a permanent EWO, Lesley Warner, which will encourage non attendees back to school. In addition the Access to Success programme for underperforming pupils in S4 contributed to these strong results. This programme helps pupils who are behind in specific subjects and assists them in achieving more.

The senior school were improving; 11 pupils had achieved 5 Highers with special note of one Pupil who had gained 5 As at Higher level. Pauline commented that the Higher results should have been better and reported that a number of initiatives were under way to tackle this. These included the Common Room being closed during school periods, no study periods and an assertive mentoring programme where teaching staff met with pupils every 3-4 weeks to see how they were getting on. It is expected that the mentoring system will pick up on any issues and resolve them quickly.

Bob Perry left at 8.10pm

c. Whole School Improvement Plan

Pauline handed put copies of the Whole School Improvement Plan.

There are a number of different priorities listed in the Plan. These included improving attainment, introducing new aspects to learners' experiences such as GLOW, introducing the Curriculum for Excellence for the new intake of S1 which was now under way and was being audited for future years, increasing pupil voices, global citizenship and health and well being.

One priority that related directly to the Parent Council was the issue of parental involvement. Pauline has set out a number of tasks to increase parental involvement such as improving the use of e-mail and GLOW as a means of communication. To date the school had received 241 data collection forms back with parental e-mail contact and 266 without or those who had not returned yet. S1 parents had not received these forms yet. This was seen as encouraging from the Council's point of view of reaching more parents.

Ken asked if the Council could send information out to parents in the form of an e-mail. Pauline agreed that the Council could, however, the information had to be vetted so it would not compromise the school.

The school has the academic year to implement the School Improvement Plan. Pauline indicated that all parents would receive a simpler parent friendly version before the next meeting with any issues open for discussion at the next meeting of the Parent Council.

7. Issues from Staff/Pupils/Parents

a. Staff

Audrey reported that Lynne Brown the Librarian was busily arranging the visit of 4 Ogwini pupils coming in September. An update on the next visit would be available at the next meeting.

b. Pupils

There were no issues from pupils.

c. Parents

i) Merit Award System

Gwen raised the issue of the Merit Award System. She had discussed with Stephen Rafferty at the Annual Meeting and he had indicated that the school may be reviewing the system. Pauline admitted that the data was not the best and staff have to manually count all the merits on the system. Pupils are graded on Behaviour, Effort, Homework and Progress from 1 – 4 (1 being at the lowest end and 4 being excellent). Pupils who have 3 and 4 across the board are awarded merit awards in gold, silver or bronze. Gwen asked why only those with certain gold awards are awarded at the Celebration Evening. Pauline explained that these pupils were the top gold pupils who would be achieving mostly 4 in their subjects. Pupils who received the lower gold merits and silver and bronze received their awards at a different ceremony in school. Gwen asked if this was sending a mixed message that some gold merits were better than others and suggested that there could be a different name for the top gold awards such as the 'diamond' award. Pauline welcomed this idea and intimated she would discuss this with the School Leadership Team.

Gwen also asked what the difference was between academic awards and merit awards. Audrey explained that academic awards were for achievement in specific subject areas whereas merits were for a rounded performance across the school. Pauline agreed that clarification was needed with the award system by stating she would add a note in the newsletter and create a leaflet to highlight the differences. She concluded that she would explain the Merit Award System at a future meeting.

ii) Edinburgh Evening News Article

Lesley raised the issue of the recent Edinburgh Evening News article on Gracemount High School having the worst figures in Edinburgh for Police call outs. The article had claimed that there were over a 100 Police call outs in the last two years. Pauline indicated that Scott Mackenzie the Business Manager had contacted the communications unit at the Evening News to investigate where this information had been obtained from. It transpired that the Evening News had used a Freedom of Information request to gain this information from the Lothian and Borders Police. The school had investigated its own records and it seemed to suggest there had only been 50 call outs in the last two years, mostly out of hours.

Ken intimated that he would write a letter to the Edinburgh Evening News on behalf of the Council to express their disappointment and frustration over this misleading article and the bad publicity it had for the school.

8. Any Other Business

There was no any other business.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 12 October 2010.