

GRACEMOUNT HIGH SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING
HELD ON 20th JANUARY 2012



Present:

Pauline Walker	<i>Head Teacher</i>
Lesley Gibson-Eaglesham	<i>Chair</i>
Ken Gregor	<i>Depute Chair</i>
Ian Duncan	<i>Parent Member (Treasurer)</i>
Lesley Warner	<i>Parent member</i>
Kevin McCabe	<i>Parent Member</i>
John Sode-Woodhouse	<i>Parent Member</i>
Ashleigh Kennedy	<i>Staff member</i>
<i>Lauren Burnett</i>	<i>Pupil Member</i>
Rob Baltzer	<i>Gracemount Primary PC</i>
Kenny MacKaskill	<i>MSP, S.N.P</i>
Carol Menzies	<i>Community police officer</i>
Rachel Matheson	<i>Clerk</i>
Bill Cook	<i>CEC Cllr , Labour</i>

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Lesley welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited members present to introduce themselves. A contact sheet was then passed around for all those present to add their details to.

Apologies were received from Jill Fitzpatrick, parent member and Alun Bowie, community police officer.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

On page 2, article 4, the sentence 'This included a £10 top-up cheque being cashed in June.' to be changed to 'This included a £10 top-up cheque cashed in June.'

3. Report from Chair

a) Consultative Committee With Parents (CCWP)

Lesley had missed the last meeting of the CCWP, but was able to pass on that consultation is now in motion, concerning the 2013-14 school dates. Preliminary dates are available online for comment. Pauline pointed out one date in particular which had seemed out of place, the 5th of June, which will fall on a Thursday next year.

The CCWP have also released their most recent report, which is to be shared with the council. Lesley agreed, along with Pauline to try and organise to have it posted on the website and Facebook page.

4. Report from Treasurer

Ian reported that the balance for the Parent Council account was £942.94. This included a £10 top up cheque cashed on the 7th of November. Ken then briefly explained the situation regarding the top-up cheque, for the benefit of new members.

7:15 pm – Kenny MacKaskill MSP arrived.

John Sode-Woodhouse enquired as to whether the PC funds are under the council's own control, or whether they are managed by the authority. Ian replied that the council managed their own funds, but must report to the authority on a regular basis, as the money (£600 per annum) is received from them.

Pauline then raised the issue of how this money should be spent, as funds were building up. Examples given of past investment included, sponsorship of last year's school performance of 'Fame', the purchase of an award to be given out annually at the school's award ceremony and the purchasing of 50th anniversary pins for the school. The only stipulation is that the money should be used on a project that would promote awareness of the PC amongst Parents and the School Community.

Pauline put forward that it should be something permanent and suggested looking at outdoor learning facilities for the surrounding grounds. She also suggested the idea of looking for matched funding. Kenny Mckaskill put forward the suggestion of using the community payback scheme or applying to the justice authority.

It was agreed that the issue was to be considered for discussion at the next meeting, with Lauren to ask the pupils for ideas, and Ashleigh to inform staff.

5. Report from pupil member

a) Pupil council report

The issue most raised by pupils in the school has been lack of action on the part of the pupil council. In order to remedy this, a table has been set up downstairs during break times, where pupils can come and register any complaints or actions they would like to see taken by the council. They have chosen to make some of the more achievable suggestions their goal for this term. These include repainting the toilets, getting more tables for the canteen area (Pauline has been able to provide two more) and tackling issues of bullying and racism.

Pauline added that whilst it was not acceptable to have any form of racism or bullying in the school, it was encouraging to notice the kids stepping forward to complain about it themselves.

7 .30pm – Cllr Bill Cook arrived.

She also mentioned that ‘Radio Gracemount’ was still going ahead once a week at lunchtime.

Lesley offered any support for the pupil council that could be given by the PC.

6. Head teacher's report

a. Changes to staffing

Currently two staff members are approaching maternity leave within the next two weeks. These are Sam Karpa (music teacher) and Sarah Cunningham (music specialist).

Three permanent appointments have been made over the past term. These are Craig Knight (Biology and Physics), Heather Livingston (History and Modern Studies) and Angela Davies (French and Spanish). Jim Brown the head of science has left to take on a depute post in another school, but his position as PT of science will not be filled permanently until phase 3 of management restructuring has gone through. Currently Gillian Morrison is replacing him on a temporary basis.

Concerning Pauline's imminent maternity, applications for the cover post were closed today, with interviews to take place a week on Friday. The post will run from the 16th of March, through to the end of

October. Pauline will be on the interview panel, but no parents are being invited to sit in.

b. Prelim exams

The 4th year prelims took place just before Christmas and thus far, the results are very encouraging. The mentoring focus on the pupils working for 5 or more credit grade seems therefore to be having a positive impact.

The 5th and 6th years will sit their prelims over the coming fortnight with those under mentoring seeming to be on target so far.

c. Improvement planning review

This will take place in March, with the possibility of involving the council in this during future meetings this year.

d. Management restructuring

Monday the 23rd of January is the interview date for all those stepping up to a new post. This is apart from science, which as aforementioned, will be arranged after the rest of the restructuring is completed. Following this, there will be a recruitment freeze between then and the end of April.

e. Severe weather

Ken Gregor asked Pauline if she could expand upon the email sent to all parents, following the high winds closing the school last term. Pauline was able to explain that the email was simply sent out to remind parents of procedure and encourage them to text their children if they are under the age of 16, in order that children could show the text to the responsible teacher, to prove that their parents are content for them to go home.

f. ICT Budget

Ian raised the issue of the school budget, which Pauline was able to say was doing fine, with the largest expenditure this year going to be the replacement and expansion of current I.T tools within the school. This has already been budgeted for.

When it is finally installed, there will be two networks, a managed network for staff and an open high-speed wireless network available to all within the school. Although BT will take responsibility for the

managed network, the school may have to hire a software engineer to take care of the open wireless.

The plan is eventually to have 600 pieces of ICT kit individually for each pupil, which they can take from class to class. This is particularly to avoid the disparity of asking pupils to bring in their own tablets etc, as not all pupils may be able to do this.

In advance of this there has been the instigation of the 'ICT have a go heroes' project, where various teachers and departments have volunteered to trial ICT technology to evaluate how useful it could be to the school.

Ken Gregor asked whether the school would still continue to use Apples. Within the school, teachers have been asked whether they would wish to keep these or move to PCs, and the answers have been mixed across the school. There is no sponsorship of the school by this company, so they are free to choose, and Pauline is currently looking at sponsorship opportunities in line with the 'have a go heroes'.

The important point Pauline said, was to try and keep at the forefront of technology within the school, rather than be struggling to keep up with the pupils.

Ian raised two points:

- i) With there having been difficulties in the past with BT and billing, has everything been cleared up, in prospect of the new networks being set up?
- ii) What are the security issues with these new networks?

Concerning point i, Pauline responded that for 5 years the school has been charged for 90 machines, rather than the 56 we actually have. If this is not resolved by next week, then she is preparing to escalate the issue.

Concerning point ii, Pauline answered that she would be looking at various companies to provide security. There would be a strong focus on educating the pupils, but also looking at safe storage of machines during holidays and the possibility of security tags for all pieces of equipment.

6. Issues from Staff/Pupils/Parents

a. Staff

Ashleigh had one issue which had been raised via email from a staff member worried that the management restructuring coinciding with the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence, would have seriously detrimental effects within school, as it would leave teachers with very little experience, running multiple departments.

Ken responded that the PC was very aware of this issue and had raised similar points with the CEC in the past. He added that most High School PCs across the City were of the same opinion. John Sode Woodehouse asked if there had been any success, to which Ken replied that no, although pressure from PCs had been able to slow down the putting in place of the new structure, it had still gone ahead, in order to reduce costs.

Lesley added that schools have really had no choice but to accept it. Despite the move being questioned by PCs and head teachers, nothing has been done, and now all that the Gracemount PC can do is offer as much support as possible to the school, throughout the changes.

b. Pupils

No issues were raised by pupils.

c. Parents

No issues were raised by parents.

7. Any Other Business

a. PC Notice Board

Ian raised the issue that the Notice Board may be out of date, and other members of the council confirmed this idea. Although the task is still to be delegated, it was felt that replacing photos would be a good place to start.

b. Scottish Schools swimming championships

John-James Gibson Eaglesham will be representing Gracemount in this competition on January 28th.

c. Community policing report

Carol Menzies was able to update the council that following a risk assessment, any staff that wanted to come out with the police in the local area one evening, would be invited to do so. Local councillors did this prior to Xmas and it was felt that it went very well.

Following on from the last meeting when behaviour at Tesco's was raised Carol reported 7 calls concerning youth trouble were received, with 3 of them resulting in charges being brought. One concerning a 14 and 15-year-old racially abusing staff, one concerning an ex-pupil shoplifting and another about noise and disturbance around the storefront area.

Carol is still working with social and vocational classes in the school, and these groups have completed their housing project, with a visit to a show-home on the Hart new build site. Fire-fighters, will visit classes in the next fortnight to talk about fire safety.

There will be a change in officer in the school around Easter time, in line with the council's new strategy to have one officer shared between two schools. Gracemount will share officer Mike Brookes with Liberton High School.

The focus on truancy yielded good results last term, with Lesley Warner and officer Menzies going out twice in the run up to Christmas around various areas of the community and town centre. This will be repeated soon in the next couple of weeks.

Facebook bullying and computer safety are issues, which have come to the fore, and the police team will be giving presentations to all years, concerning this in the coming weeks. Carol mentioned that she had recently been provided with training and resources to host a parent based session on cyber safety and asked Pauline whether this was something she could present within the school. Although positive about the intention, Pauline did say that the school have tried this on numerous occasions and generally the turn out is incredibly low. However she was happy to allow the presentation to go ahead, in the hope that more parents might turn up.

Lauren Burnett, was able to cite that she is quite aware of Facebook bullying being quite prevalent within the high school, particularly through use of apps such as Facebook's 'brutal honesty app'. Pauline added that charges were coming through at the moment for various pupils, with Carol expanding that there were 4 areas within police legislation under which charges could be brought on pupils misusing computer technology in this way.

Lesley thanked Carol for her great input and on behalf of the council, added how much she will be missed when the changes go ahead at Easter.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is Monday 5th March 2012. This is also the AGM.