

**GRACEMOUNT HIGH SCHOOL
PARENT COUNCIL**

MINUTES OF MEETING
HELD ON 11th June 2012



Present:

Ken Gregor
Ian Duncan
Kevin McCabe
Lewis Patterson
Chris Hume
Norma Cook
Bill Cook
Alan Bowie
Jill Fitzpatrick

Depute Chair
Parent Member (Treasurer)
Parent Member
Acting Head Teacher
Staff member
CEC Labour councillor
CEC Labour councillor
Lothian & Borders Police
Parent member

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Ken welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were given on behalf of Kenny Mckaskill MSP, Lesley Gibson Eaglesham, Cllr Nick Cook and Susan Gill.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

In article 9, 'it was agreed to provide £100 for learning support and £500 towards the cost of laptop bags', to be changed to 'it was agreed to provide £100 for support for learning and £500 towards a project of the schools choosing.'

Gill Fitzpatrick to be added to those present

3. Report from Chair

Ken reported in Lesley's stead. He said that he had nothing specific to raise other than the arrival of Curriculum for Excellence fliers, aimed at informing parents of the new curriculum structure. These were handed out amongst members.

4. Report from Treasurer

Ian advised that the annual cheque of £562.60 from Edinburgh City Council had arrived. This brought the current balance to £1350.49, prior to the £600, which would come out shortly, as a donation to the school in return for publicity for the Parent Council.

5. Report from pupil member

No pupil member was present, although Chris Hume was able to report that owing to exam leave, the council had not met properly of late.

5. Head teacher's report

Staffing

A high number of probationers coming to the end of their contracted year, along with retirals, has meant that there will be a total of 9 interviews being held within the school, over a 3 week period. The panel for these will consist of Lewis and the two depute heads, Lesley McComish and Louise Sinclair. Lewis hopes to have all posts in place within the next 1-1 ½ weeks.

Lewis reported that he has been pleased with the high level of interest shown for each post, and the high standard of applications coming in.

With the recent addition of Jackie Burt, as head of science, the full cohort of curriculum leaders has been filled in the school.

Guidance

With the review of guidance recently completed, the school will be looking to move from 5 principal teachers of support (currently 4 pupil support leaders (guidance) and 1 learning support leader) to 4. This will consist of 3 pupil support leaders and 1 support for learning leader.

With the retiral of Katriona Wright as current Support for Learning Leader, interviews will be held for that post. 3 interviewees have gone forward for this, including 1 internal candidate, who is a current Pupil support leader. Dependant upon the outcome of these interviews, the school will have to look into restructuring of the current Pupil support staffing.

Deputes

Redeployment of deputies has been taking place across the city, but Gracemount will not be affected by this, owing to the recent departure of

Stephen Rafferty. However, with the reduction in deputies in the school from 3 to 2, all members of senior management are feeling increased pressure in their workload. Some, non-management, members of staff have taken on certain tasks that would have fallen within the deputy remit, as a professional development opportunity and this has helped the situation. However, Lewis was able to say that whilst the workload is manageable, it does leave less time to focus on the less important, but just as worthy 'nicer' aspects of the school.

Ken raised concerns that should a fall in attainment arise as a consequence of the reduced management numbers, the blame for this would fall heavily on the shoulders of the head-teachers and deputy heads. Lewis responded that he had no concerns that attainment would drop. The free-time that has been cut from each member of the management team, through taking on the greater workload, is more time for creative and strategic planning, rather than the main work of the school, such as maintaining levels of attainment.

Office and support staff

2 out of 3 members of the office staff left in the last month and there have also been members of the support staff, on long-term sick leave, which has caused some unavoidable disruption. Ken asked whether there was any common link between the two office staff choosing to leave around the same time, but Lewis was able to confirm that they both left for different reasons, neither of them negative.

Ken asked Lewis if he could provide Lesley with details of those members of staff leaving the School as the Parent Council have been in the habit of writing to retiring members of staff to thank them for their service to the School on behalf of all Parents

Parents evening

Gill Fitzpatrick raised the issue of Mr Kidd, head of the football academy, not being present at parents evening. This subject is taken by pupils throughout their standard grade course and does count for an award. Therefore, for the parents of pupils following this course, it might be useful to be able to check in with Mr Kidd during parents evening.

Lewis answered that Mr Kidd was under a separate contract than other teachers within the school and therefore his hours, including those

given over to parents evening, may be different from the rest of the teaching staff. However, Lewis agreed to look into this.

Kevin then raised the issue of holding parents evening during Outward Bound, when members of staff were away. Lewis answered that he would need to check when Outward bound was booked, as generally parents evenings are set well in advance, when the school calendar is arranged the previous year.

Ken suggested that it might be worthwhile considering having a mechanism in place to allow parents who wished to speak to absent teachers, to do so, at a later date, or through different means, such as email or phone.

DHT Restructure

Norma asked whether the restructuring and increased workload has caused a dip in morale for staff within the school. Lewis replied that morale, whilst it is still good, has been affected by the unsettling times the school currently faces, concerning the change in DHTs. This is due in part to the increased workload as a result of this and the inclusion of types of work with which staff are not familiar. Chris was able to add that everyone is incredibly busy at the moment, with all the work to be done for the new curriculum. However, he did note that Gracemount seemed to be ahead of many other schools in this work.

Draft improvement plan

Lewis issued a draft copy of the improvement plan to members of the PTC. He has avoided putting anything new in place, due to the short length of his post and has focused more upon reviewing and evaluating what was already included in the previous plan.

Certain acronyms which members were not familiar with were explained. These were as follows:

ASL – additional support needs

GLOW – Web-site linking all Scottish schools

GIRFEC – Getting it right for every child

Lewis said that he hopes to have the final draft ready by mid-November at the latest, although he plans to work on having it done earlier if possible.

Ken asked all those present to read through the draft Improvement plan when they had time and forward any concerns or questions directly to Lewis.

S1 intake

Norma asked what the intake of first years was looking like for this year, and was told around 106.

Parental engagement

Less than 50% of first year parents turned up at parents evening. Lewis was keen to rectify this. Kevin was curious to know how many parents who had made appointments didn't turn up, though numbers were not known for this. Lewis raised the question, 'Do we need to go to them?', regarding the possibility of following in the footsteps of other schools, who have made moves to hold parents evenings in community centres and other places, which can encourage greater participation.

Norma asked if there was a pattern to the non-attenders, and Bill asked if there were any geographical indicators. Lewis was able to concede that part of the issue probably lay more within certain schemes within the Gracemount area.

8 Issues from Staff/Pupils/Parents

a. Staff

Ashleigh Kennedy put forward the idea of a breakfast venture within the school, where fruit or similar could be made available at registration. The PTC were keen to help, though would need to discuss how best to get involved.

Ken asked Chris to ask Ashleigh for more detail of how she saw the scheme working and how the Parent Council could assist.

Jonathan Else, head of PE, is looking to implement a policy whereby all pupils must bring in their PE kit, regardless of whether, due to physical injury, they intend not to take part. Those unable to participate physically could still be involved in refereeing, score-keeping etc, providing they were in appropriate uniform. This is being suggested in a bid to encourage all pupils to be as involved as possible, in all aspects of PE, regardless of physical ability. The Parent Council gave its support to the idea.

b. Pupils

No issues were raised by pupils.

c. Parents

No issues were raised by parents.

9 Any Other Business

Pauline Walker and child

Pauline Walker has had a baby boy, and both mother and child are doing well.

Awards evening

Ian wished to know who would be present as guest speaker at this years awards evening, which Lewis was at present, unsure about. At this ceremony the award for team of the year is presented on behalf of the PC. It is possible to vote for which team should win, through the school website. The awards evening will be held on the 28th of June.

Dates for next year

Ken wished to confirm that all members present were happy to continue holding meetings on a Monday evening next year, and that all agreed with the idea of holding no more than two meetings per term. All present were happy with this and the months suggested for meetings were September, November, January, March, April and June. Ken said he would speak to Lesley in order to confirm exact dates.

These dates will then be distributed to members and printed in the school newsletter.

Community link officer

Alan Bowie, Police Inspector from Howdenhall was present. He confirmed that Mike Brookes the School Link officer now had official duties at Gracemount and Liberton High Schools. Mike Brookes is involved in running the John Muir Trust award, with a small group of 2nd years with particularly challenging behaviour, and this seems to be going well.

Football awards

Kevin McCabe wanted to raise the possibility of handing out awards to the current 1st year team. He and fellow school football coaches have invested in 3 new awards; Players player, Coaches player and Top goal-scorer.

Lewis to confirm if these awards can be presented at the Celebration evening.

10 Date of Next Meeting

The dates for next year are still to be confirmed.

It was agreed to retain a Monday night and have two meetings per term.

Ken will select 6 dates similar to the past session and distribute to members for their views.