

**GRACEMOUNT HIGH SCHOOL
PARENT COUNCIL**

MINUTES OF MEETING
HELD ON 15 MARCH 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>
Margaret Ozturk	<i>Parent Member</i>
Audrey Gillan	<i>Staff Member</i>
Ashleigh Kennedy	<i>Clerk</i>

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Ken welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Becky Divine, Pupil Member.

Ken introduced Margaret Ozturk to the meeting who had expressed an interest in attending the Parent Council.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

One change was made to the Minutes of 26 January 2010. In the Results Summary in the Head Teacher's Report the last sentence in the S3/4 Results was changed from '.....to ensure that it results continued to improve' to '.....to ensure that *its* results continued to improve'.

The Minutes were then approved.

3. Report from Chair

a. Budget Update

Ken began by reporting that the budget cuts had been reduced from 2.5% to 1%. The Parent Council welcomed this outcome with Ian suggesting that parent pressure had influenced this decision.

Ken did report, however, that the amount of money that the Parent Council would receive had been cut. The £200 a year it received would

be cut to £190 and the Clerk's payment of £50 per meeting would be reduced to £40. This would come into effect in the new financial year. This came as a surprise to the Parent Council, especially as there had been no prior warning of this during the budget meetings.

Ken continued by stating that Ashleigh would stay on as Clerk despite the reduction in pay and apologised that this had happened.

b. DHT Appointment

Maggie Bisset, one of the Depute Head Teachers would be retiring at the end of April after many years at the school. Due to this, a vacancy had been advertised for the post. On Tuesday 9 March 2010 and Thursday 11 March 2010, 9 people were interviewed. The list was narrowed to 5 candidates who would be interviewed on Tuesday 16 March 2010.

Ian asked for some information about these candidates. Pauline answered by stating that they were all men, 2 were current members of staff with 3 being external. Ken added that the fact that all candidates were men was coincidental. He also explained that because there had been the recent appointment of Louise Sinclair as another Depute Head Teacher, the school was able to advertise the vacancy outside Edinburgh. This had varied the applicants and the 5 on the short-list interview were worthy candidates.

Ken intimated that he would draft a letter from the Parent Council to thank Maggie for her hard work and dedication to the school over the last 20 years.

c. Membership

Ken stated that he had sent e-mails to people who had expressed an interest in participating in the Parent Council Meetings but were not regularly attending. These included Susan Hall, Susan Wilson, Mohammed Alsham and Margaret Ozturk, who was presently attending. Ken was yet to hear back from Susan Hall, Susan Wilson and Mohammed Alsham. Ian intimated that he was happy to call Susan Hall to ask if she intended to come to the meetings. Ken added that Bob Perry the Co-opted Member had expressed previously that Monday and Tuesday nights were difficult for him to attend. Ken would also contact him.

d. Curriculum for Excellence

Ken had received information regarding the next stage in the Curriculum for Excellence. He had forgotten to bring this with him and gave his

apologies. He would remember to bring this for the next meeting.

e. AGM

Ken explained that the Parent Council was expected to hold an AGM once every school year. With the recent changes to the Head Teacher and the issue of the catchment proposals taking up some time in the Parent Council's previous meetings, the AGM would take place later in the year in June. He explained that the AGM usually consisted of a formal report to all parents about the Parent Council from the Chair as well as the Head Teacher Report.

Ken welcomed any ideas on the format of the AGM. Pauline had recently visited Queensferry High School where the Parent Council had attracted parents with a Cheese and Wine night, which included a Quiz. Issues were raised as to whether wine could be sold on this night without some sort of license. Ken stated he would explore the possibility of obtaining a license.

Pauline also suggested that parents were going to be invited into the school to take part in Child Protection Information Evenings and the AGM could be tied in with that.

Ken asked all members to consider the best format for the AGM

Ian raised the legality of the annual accounts being reported at the AGM. As the AGM will take place in June, two different sets of accounts could potentially be reported. Pauline stated that it would be fine to report on the accounts up until the end of the 2009 - 2010 tax year at the AGM.

Ian finally suggested that the Accounts could be displayed on the Parent Council Board in the main reception of the school.

f. Suggestion Box

A suggestion had been placed in the Parent Council Suggestion Box. It called for the dismissal of the cleaners and the introduction of cleaners who were capable of cleaning properly.

Pauline explained that a recent audit had been carried out on the AMEY cleaners, which reported that standards were high. Margaret asked whether someone could look at the staffing to see if there were issues with certain cleaners. Pauline answered that because AMEY were in charge of the cleaning, the school could not interfere.

The issue had been passed to Scott Mackenzie, Business Manager who was to contact AMEY with the concerns expressed in the suggestion.

g. Additional In-service Day

Ken explained that an additional in-service day had been added to the school term. This would take place on Wednesday 18 August 2010, which, would have been the first day back for pupils from the summer holidays. This additional in-service was to be a one-off for this year to help with the planning and implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence.

Ken explained that discussion had taken place at previous Parent Council Meetings regarding additional in-service days. The consensus before was for in-service days not to take place in the middle of the term.

Ian suggested that the additional in-service day could have taken place at the end of the summer term when studies had wound down and many pupils would be on school trips. Pauline answered by stating that many staff helped out on school trips and therefore would not be able to attend the in-service day. Furthermore, because the in-service would now take place in August there would be additional time to plan for it.

h. National Parent Forum

Ken reported that the National Parent Forum, which is supported by the Government, was looking at improving parental involvement in schools and national education strategies. The representative from Edinburgh parents is Tina Woolnough from Royal High Parent Council.

4. Report from Treasurer

Ian reported on the Parent Council Balance. On 31 December 2009 it was £446.55 and on 26 February 2010 it was £446.63.

5. Report from Pupil Member

Becky was not present to discuss any matters on behalf of pupils.

On a related note from the previous minutes, Ken had e-mailed Becky to ask how pupils were getting on with the changes in the Science Department. Becky answered that their fears were unfounded, the new teacher was using different strategies but it was working well.

6. Report from Head Teacher

a. Budget

Pauline began by giving the Council an update on the Budget. She explained that there was already a 1.5% embedded cut within the school budget. This meant that the school was paying back £46,000 this year. The overall cut from the City of Edinburgh Council stood at 1%. This was welcomed, as it was feared the percentage could have been higher at 2.5%.

Although schools had escaped the full extent of the cuts the Children and Families Centre was carrying the 2.5% cut. This meant that there would be a reduction in services such as foreign language assistants and music instructors in schools. This would impact on the school, as there would be no guitar teacher after the Easter Holidays.

Pauline explained that the cuts were not as drastic as once thought. Staffing was settled within the school and class sets would not be reduced. Pauline also intimated that Working Groups had been formed to assist with the projected Budget reductions next year. Over the last 5 years the Budget cuts have totalled 9%. Gracemount was in a fortunate position as a PPP school to not have to pay for utilities.

b. Staffing

Scott Roger would join the school as PT of Guidance after the Easter Holidays. He is currently at Queensferry High School. Pauline is looking forward to his appointment, as she believes he has lots of new ideas and will bring a new dimension to the Guidance Department.

Drama would now be introduced due to the budget cuts not being as high as forecast. The advertisement for this position was out and Pauline was confident a teacher would be in place by the end of May for the change of timetable in June. The Drama Department would be based within the Art Department. Around one-third of Drama is classroom based with the remaining two-thirds being practical and taught within the Drama studio.

Pauline explained that one obstacle that the new Department would face is the clearing of the Drama Studio after assemblies in the morning to make way for practical lessons. Pauline had looked into the Bleacher type system, which is common in America. This is when rows of seats are attached to a frame that can be mechanically stored away. This was

proving to be expensive with estimates of around £60,000. Ian suggested that seniors could be asked to help clear away the chairs. However, Pauline advised that this was against Health and Safety regulations.

c. School Improvement

The cycle would soon begin regarding self-evaluation. In April new groups would be formed. Parents would be invited to express their opinions through focus groups and questionnaires. Through this an Agenda would be set with the priorities for next year.

d. Bike Sheds

Pauline reported that the Bike Sheds were nearly completed. Pupils, staff and visitors could use these with spaces for 70 bikes. They would be locked at 8.30am and re-opened at 3.25pm. Visitors could gain access with a key from the reception.

The recent BT awards had given the school some money, which Pauline explained would be used to start up a Bike Club. The money would go towards training staff, maintaining the shed and encouraging healthy schools.

Margaret asked Pauline if Road Safety was taught in school. Pauline explained that this was taught in Personal and Social Education with the Police and Fire Brigade contributing.

Gwen McLeod joined the meeting.

e. CCWP

Pauline raised the CCWP (Consultative Committee with Parents) with the Council. The views of the CCWP were deemed to be fully representative of parents' views and wondered if this was the case. Lesley who had attended some of the CCWP meetings regarding the budget cuts and felt that instead of it being consultative it gave information and did not ask parents for their contribution.

Pauline explained that the CCWP was committed to change and would be opening up to other parent's bodies. Members welcomed this move.

f. Cathcment

Pauline had recently received a new proposal from the City of Edinburgh

Council regarding the catchment area. She handed out copies to members for reference prior to the official consultation.

Pauline outlined the proposed changes. Ken asked all members to read the document and it would be considered further at the next meeting.

7. Issues from

a. Staff

There were no issues from staff.

b. Pupils

There were no issues from pupils.

c. Parents

Gwen asked if there would be any confirmation before the summer regarding S2 course choices. Pauline stated that a letter would only be sent out if there were changes to a pupil's choices. Therefore if no letter was received then the pupil's original choice was fine.

8. Publicity and Recruitment

Ken asked everyone to try and publicise the Parent Council to other parents.

Pauline intimated that she had asked Gracemount to be used as a Parent pilot for GLOW. She believes that the infrastructure would be there to publicise the Parent Council to other parents who would be logging on to GLOW.

Lesley suggested that there could be a link on the City of Edinburgh Council website that gave the dates of the next Parent Council meetings.

Audrey asked Ashleigh if the Minutes of the meetings were sent to staff. Ashleigh stated that they were not but were uploaded to the school website by Steven Whyte once they had been approved. Pauline suggested that an e-mail could be sent to staff to view the Minutes on the school website. Ashleigh confirmed she would do this.

9. AOCB

Ken thanked the school for their recent involvement in the BBC Schools

Report, which resulted in 3 pupils interview the First Minister.

Lesley asked Pauline the procedure for booking the football pitch for use as her husband had faced some difficulty contacting the School for information. Pauline confirmed that any enquiries about booking the school's football pitch should be directed to the office where a member of the office would deal with it. Pauline would confirm with Scott Mckenzie that all office staff were aware of the process.

10. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 27 April 2010.