

**GRACEMOUNT HIGH SCHOOL
PARENT COUNCIL**

MINUTES OF MEETING
HELD ON 7th Nov 2011



Present:

Pauline Walker	<i>Head Teacher</i>
Lesley Gibson-Eaglesham	<i>Chair</i>
Ken Gregor	<i>Depute Chair</i>
Lesley Warner	<i>Parent member</i>
Kevin McCabe	<i>Parent Member</i>
Kenny Macaskill	<i>MSP, S.N.P</i>
Alan Bowie	<i>Community police officer</i>
Carol Menzies	<i>Community police officer</i>
Heather Livingstone	<i>Staff member</i>
Ian Duncan	<i>Parent Member (Treasurer)</i>
Rachel Matheson	<i>Clerk</i>

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Lesley welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited new members to introduce themselves.

Apologies were received from John Sode-Woodhead, parent member, Norma Hart & Bill Cook, CEC Cllr Labour, and Andrew Graymuir, co-opted member.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

On page 7, the last four dates listed to be changed to the year 2012.

3. Report from Chair

a) National Parent Forum of Scotland

Lesley had received information on this, which she passed around the group. This year's forum will focus on CfE (Curriculum for Excellence).

b) King's buildings

An email has been received from Karen Trail at Liberton, informing the council that over the weekend of Nov 11th-12th, images will be being projected on the tallest wall of King's buildings, to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Welcome Trust, the group who fund the majority of the research done in the building.

c) Link to F.A.C.e

Lesley wished to enquire as to whether the school website was currently linked to F.A.C.e (Families And Children Edinburgh). Pauline was able to confirm that previously this had been the case, but with the website being remade, she couldn't be certain as to whether the link had been transferred or not. She agreed to ascertain this for the next meeting. She was also able to inform the council that Steven Whyte has been working incredibly hard, and the new website should be up and running soon.

d) Seminar

An invite was received to this year's seminar, being held on Wednesday the 9th of November, in Westerhailes. Pauline offered to go, if there was a parent member interested in attending also. Certain members mentioned the possibility of availability.

4. Report from Treasurer

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

5. Report from pupil member

a) Pupil council report

Although Lauren was not present, Pauline was able to inform the staff of pupil council progress. 9 new members were elected on the recent elections. They have organised to have a drop-in centre twice a week at break, where pupils can come to discuss or raise issues. They have also agreed to report to Pauline on a monthly basis.

The current focus within the pupil council is now to be more on learning and teaching, and finding ways of allowing children to evaluate and

discuss how learning and teaching are worked upon in the school. Beth, Laura and Natalie, all senior members of the council, interviewed and photographed interviews with new 1st year pupils, which will be turned into a short animation reflecting their responses.

Text surveying is also being introduced, whereby a new question will be raised every week about learning and teaching in the school and pupils will be invited to vote on the issue, using their mobile phones.

b) South Edinburgh Neighbourhood Partnership

The Pupil council will also be presenting to the South Edinburgh Neighbourhood Partnership Event, where they will be invited to give their views on the community as a whole.

6. Head teacher's report

a. Management restructuring

Management restructuring is continuing, with the protocol concerning this still to be ratified by the unions.

Decisions concerning the change from Principal teachers to Curricular leaders will follow this, cutting department heads from 19 to 12, with all cuts and restructuring concerning these members of staff, to be implemented at the same time with the exception of Guidance & Pupil Support.

Ken Gregor raised the question of why it was necessary to rush things, when it might be more suitable to wait until the following August, in order to affect a more gradual change, and avoid disrupting the school mid-session. Pauline was able to respond that it was purely budget based, particularly with the next round of budget cuts due in January.

Pauline concluded by stating that the situation was still confidential, but that the most important thing was to ensure a smooth transition for pupils and provide adequate support for teachers.

Ian raised the question of how Pauline's imminent maternity leave might affect the situation. She was able to state that her vacancy would be advertised or offered for redeployment. Ken asked whether the Parent Council would have a role to play in the appointment, which Pauline answered that, no, parents couldn't change the decision, although they could make their views known. She also made the point that she was keen to work with the new acting head teacher

in the run up to her leave, in order to ensure they understood the school.

b. Strike action

Unions have now completed balloting on strike action for the 30th of November, with the majority of both Unison and the E.I.S supporting the action. Although she has yet to make a final decision, Pauline was able to say that she expected the school may have to be closed on that day. Ken raised concerns for the pupils studying for exams, and the disruption it would cause. He wished to know if they would receive extra study time, or had the unions agreed on any form of support for them? Pauline offered Christina France, the EIS rep for the school, as the best person to talk to, though she felt it best to wait for information from the unions, which should be announced soon.

c. Severe weather

A severe weather warning has been received by Pauline, predicting the possibility of snow in the next fortnight, with a snow plan in place for the school, should this occur. Generally having the facilities open is not a problem, as AMEY run that side of the school. Protocol expects most head teachers to make a personal risk assessment from the school. Last year Pauline's main concern was the large number of pupils who were walking in amongst traffic in the blizzards, along Captain's Road and Lasswade Road. These two Roads have been raised to priority one for snow clearance this year, which may aid the situation. In order to help keep the school open, all members of the community are invited to be involved in clearing the snow, if available.

If it is not possible to open, then alerts will be sent out by text and radio, and will appear on the council website. Steven Whyte has also set up 'Snow Glow', an aspect of the national website that should allow children to study from home.

Kenny Macaskill agreed that things hadn't gone as smoothly as they could have last year, but that he feels the council is better prepared this year. He mentioned that if areas with higher snowfall, such as Aberdeenshire are able to trudge through it and keep things going, then there is no reason why Edinburgh should not be able to do the same.

Alan Bowie was able to add that there were plans to have police in the community as snow wardens this year.

d. Tesco (Anti-social behaviour)

During the past month various acts of antisocial behaviour have arisen in the community around the school, particularly regarding the new Tesco superstore. Pupils were banned from the shop for throwing fizz-bombs, and involving themselves in aggressive and racist behaviour, towards staff.

Although the issue has been tackled, with Tesco closing to pupils for a week, and those involved being punished, Pauline still had some concerns about the way that some of the more well-behaved pupils were being drawn into this. She also raised concerns about how the pupils were seen in the community, citing an example of a media studies group being ill-received at the local shops, and Lesley Warner citing a recent example where her daughter was unfairly accused in Tesco.

Pauline also felt that there had to be a focus on the positive aspects of the school, rather than allowing this sort of behaviour too much attention. She mentioned the community service aspect of the pupil punishment, along with the school's involvement in the youth engagement forum, visits from residents at the local nursing home and the recent open evening.

Ken asked whether we were still following through with the plan to go out in a police van one Friday night, to see first hand what the situation was like. Alan said he would look into this.

7. Issues from Staff/Pupils/Parents

a. Staff

Heather was able to offer incredibly positive feedback from staff concerning the recent open evening. The number of parents that came and the constructive opinions given were very much appreciated. Kevin McCabe was able to add that as a parent, he found it to be a very positive event, where he very much enjoyed the chance to meet staff. He and Lesley both commented on the reputation of the school for having such an enthusiastic staff base.

b. Pupils

No issues were raised by pupils.

c. Parents

No issues were raised by parents.

8. Any Other Business

a. Retired member

Ian informed the council that a previous member, now retired from the council at the age of 82, is suffering ill health and his son is his carer. Ken added his sentiments on behalf of the council.

b. AGM

Pauline raised the issue of how the AGM was to be run this year, and whether a new format, such as a quiz evening, might entice a greater number of new members to come along. She had discussed this idea with Ashleigh Kennedy, who was keen to organise it, if agreed. This was considered a good idea, with the date of the 5th of March being proposed as a possibility.

c. Letting targets

Pauline was able to confirm that the school was heading to achieving its letting targets, through hosting various events and functions in the school, during non-school hours. Over the past year both wedding feasts and charity dinners have been held, and more people are coming forward to rent the school as a venue.

d. CCWP lecture

Lesley brought up that she had thought the agenda for the next meeting of the CCWP (Consultative Committee with Parents) was to be the current budget cuts, but had recently received an agenda for ICT. Pauline suggested contacting them to confirm what the agenda was to be.

e. Change of management

Lesley announced that the head of Liberton, Donald McDonald, would be moving to James Gillespie's in January.

9. Community police officer report

a. In-school group work

Community link officer Carol Menzies was able to report on group work she has been involved in within Gracemount high school. During the previous term this involved social skills and life choices with a group of girls who were particularly reluctant to engage in school.

This term the focus is on working with the 3rd year social and vocational group. She has also involved Ross Young, who is running Heart new builds. For 4 weeks he is running a housing project with them, attempting to build bridges that will put the kids off causing problems at the local building sites, whilst engaging them in practical problem solving and group work. Over the course of the 4 weeks, they are given £200, 000 to build a house, taking into account all of the materials and décor, both interior and exterior.

She is also working with a group of 4th year boys, who have been considered hard to handle during class-time, and are thus involved in the group, in place of their regular S.E. class. They sit down, have a cup of tea and attempt to talk through issues concerning gangs and young people in the community, getting to the roots of how it starts, how it gets out of control and where the practical implications lie in their own community.

Carol was able to report that she felt the groups were working successfully and she passed around copies of the current lesson plans.

b Fireworks night

Talks were also given during the previous fireworks evening, to alert pupils to potential dangers and encourage safe behaviour.

c. Truancy

Working alongside Lesley Warner, she is also involved in targeting truancy, which at the moment involves visiting areas where truancy kids are renowned for gathering, every 2-3weeks. Her plans are to involve local businesses and bring on board police horses, in tackling this. At the moment the group being most targeted are those where it is felt there is a possibility of change in attitudes, rather than hardened offenders.

d. Next steps

Regarding next steps, Carol mentioned that she would like the possibility to observe some of the pupils she works with in class, to see how they behave, and would also like the opportunity to visit S.E classes, in order to explain her role within the school to pupils. She lastly mentioned her enthusiasm to be involved in the next open evening, in order to share her work with some of the parents.

Pauline commended the positive links she has already seen forming and added that the information given to the school concerning attitudes and behaviour in the community are extremely useful. She

explained 'Just do it', the new positive behaviour rewards system in the school, with which the police are also involved. Heather also mentioned that the social subjects department have added in a topic on the police, to the s2 curriculum.

Lesley mentioned that at the last CCPW meeting, Cllr McLaren had mentioned that there may be more funding coming out, to allow schools to organise community police link-ups. She then thanked the police for all of their efforts so far, and offered any support the council could offer.

10 AOCB

Ken thanked Kenny Macaskill for coming along to the meeting. Mr Macaskill thanked the Parent Council for inviting him and then outlined the two ways in which he felt he could be of most use to the school:

- a) By fighting the school's corner, and standing up on their behalf on appropriate issues.
- b) By helping to divert youngsters through various projects, such as local youth boxing groups, with which he has ties.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is Monday 16th January 2012