

**GRACEMOUNT HIGH SCHOOL
PARENT COUNCIL**

MINUTES OF MEETING
HELD ON 26 OCTOBER 2009

Present:

Pauline Walker	<i>Acting Head Teacher</i>
Ken Gregor	<i>Chair</i>
Ian Duncan	<i>Parent Member (Treasurer)</i>
Lesley Gibson-Eaglesham	<i>Parent Member</i>
Jim Brown	<i>Staff Member</i>
Ashleigh Kennedy	<i>Clerk</i>

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Ken welcomed everyone to the meeting. He introduced Jim Brown, Principal Teacher of Science who was present to discuss the School of Ambition programme.

Apologies were received from Staff Members and Gwen McLeod, Deputy Chair who was ill.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 22 September 2009 were approved.

Ken informed the Council that he had sent copies of the counter proposals to the catchment review to Cllrs Hart and Murray.

Ian wished to note that the counter proposals put forward by Pauline and Ken were excellent.

3. Report from Chair

a. Head Teacher Selection

Ken informed the Council that 6 candidates had been selected from 8 for the long leet interview for the Head Teacher post. These were due to take place on Thursday 5 November 2009. Ken indicated that Lesley had had her training in order to join the panel for these interviews. He also welcomed questions from other members for the interviews and asked for them to be submitted by Wednesday 28 October. This would give him enough time to contact David Wright, Neighbourhood Manager before the interviews took place. Ken was confident the new Head Teacher would be in place by January 2010.

b. Catchment Proposals

Ken reported that there was good turn out at the Public Meeting held at the school on Thursday 8 October 2009 to discuss the closure of Burdiehouse Primary School and the proposed changes to Gracemount High School's catchment area. He added that there was a lot of objection to the proposal from parents at the Public Meeting. The full review of the closure of Burdiehouse Primary School is set for Thursday 17 December 2009 with the papers published on Friday 11 December 2009. These papers will indicate what the review of the catchment area will be.

Concerns were raised regarding the affect the closure of Burdiehouse Primary School would have on the quality of education at Gracemount Primary School and the subsequent effect this would have at Gracemount High School. Pauline is confident that there will be a successful transition of pupils from Burdiehouse to Gracemount Primary School. Furthermore there should not be any decrease in the quality of education with an increase in classroom size at Gracemount Primary School.

Ken intimated that he had written to Mike Pringle Liberal Democrat MSP for Edinburgh South on a personal level regarding issues that were raised at the Public Meeting.

c. School Holiday Dates 2011 – 2012

Ken informed members that Edinburgh City Council had been asked by the Scottish Government to consider St Andrew's Day (30 November) as a holiday in the school holiday year 2011 – 2012. In 2011 this would fall on a Wednesday. This would not be an additional holiday, therefore a day would be taken from elsewhere in the holiday calendar to compensate. Instead of finishing up on Thursday 22 December 2011, holidays would begin the next again day, Friday 23 December 2011. The Parent Council had been asked by Edinburgh City Council to respond as to whether they were in favour of this proposal or not.

Objections raised from the Council were three-fold. Firstly, as the holiday was on a Wednesday and in the middle of the week parents may find it hard to find childcare. Secondly, it was in the middle of the prelims, which is an important time of the year for middle and senior pupils. Finally, it was felt that schooling traditionally winds down close to the Christmas holidays and it is best to finish up earlier so not to prolong this.

Ken stated he would send this back voting in favour of Appendix 1, to keep the status quo.

4. Report from Treasurer

Ian reported that the bank balance was £446.26 with interest in September of £0.33.

He raised the issue of why cheques were taking so long to clear. For instance the cheque given to the school for the tiepins on 22 September 2009 did not clear to 6 October 2009. Pauline apologised for this and explained that Jenni Scott the School Bursar had recently been signed off sick. She would explain more on this in her report.

5. Report from Head Teacher

a. 50th Anniversary

Pauline began by informing everyone that the school was 50 years old on Tuesday 27 October 2009. There were events happening in school that week to commemorate this anniversary. On the Tuesday there was to be schooling as it was in 1959 with old style teaching and assemblies held by members of the chaplaincy team. On Thursday 29 October there was to be an Open Evening with old staff and pupils invited to the school. There would be a whole school celebration on Friday with videos and photos with a dinner dance at night for current and former staff at the Royal College of Physicians.

Pauline handed out members a 50th anniversary tiepin and showed the selection of memorabilia that was on sale to commemorate. These were a mug, a pen, a pencil and a cuddly bear. Profits raised from the sale of these items were to be donated to Ogwini.

A time capsule had also been ordered and would be opened on the 75th anniversary. This would also coincide with the school being handed over to Edinburgh City Council. Finally a plaque would be placed outside to commemorate the school's 50th anniversary.

b. Curriculum of Excellence

Pauline informed the meeting that a programme of information and consultation for the new curriculum model would begin shortly with cluster parents. The implementation of this model will be in June 2010. Pauline reported widespread acceptance of this model from staff with different types of teaching being introduced in classrooms such as active learning. Pupils had responded well with high levels of engagement in classes and older members of staff were embracing the new teaching methods.

c. Outward Bound Trip

The most recent Outward Bound Trip had taken place in the October break. The trip concentrated on leadership skills. Pauline informed the group the next trip was planned for Activities Week in June 2010 with many members of staff volunteering to help.

Ian wished to record his thanks for Chris Wylie in organising the trip and the other members of staff who had given up their holiday to help.

d. Finances

Pauline reported that the school finances were fine. Correspondence had been received from the Council implying that cuts to finances should be expected. At the moment it was unclear as to what percentage of cuts would be implemented. However, Pauline has been working with the assumption that cuts would be approximately 5%. She explained that staffing was the major spend within the school's budget with 85% of the budget accounting for this. At the moment there was no budget for staff development due to cuts. Furthermore, the extra teacher in Maths and in English, due to funding from the School of Ambition, would come to an end next year. However, Drama would be reintroduced into the school. Pauline hoped that a new Drama teacher would be in place for Easter 2010 in order to set up the curriculum for the new school year.

Pauline concluded by informing members that she would be attending meetings over the next few weeks with Edinburgh City Council on the matter of proposed cuts.

e. Change Requests

Pauline reported that there had been some difficulties with Amey with regards to change requests from the school. For instance the bike sheds reported at the last meeting had not been fixed. In addition there are problems with heating in the school because there is no facility to alter the heating in individual rooms. This has resulted in some rooms being extremely hot with windows having to be opened to cool the room down. It was noted that Amey pay for the heating costs, however, it was felt that it was not environmentally friendly for this to continue. Pauline was to meet with Amey Management the coming Wednesday to discuss the problems and if matters were not resolved it was proposed that a letter from the Parent Council would be sent.

f. Staffing

David Patterson was due to retire on Friday 30 October. However, he had been signed off as long term sick and would not be returning before he retired. A replacement for his post in P.E. had been appointed. Pauline reported that there were 46 applications for the post, 12 were interviewed and 3 were 'beyond excellent'. In the end Jonathan Else had been appointed and would start on Monday 16 November. He had been a probationer at Gracemount in his first year of teaching and Pauline was confident that he would be an excellent replacement.

Interviews for the temporary Maths position were to take place on Tuesday 27 October 2009.

As aforementioned, Jenni Scott the School Bursar was off on long term illness. Due to her specialist role and her extensive remit, it was proving challenging for the school to keep her jobs on task. Ken asked if there was any way a bursar could be drafted in from another school. Pauline explained

that other schools were not willing to release their own bursar due to their specialist role. Scott Mackenzie was managing to keep this role going without the help of a finance assistant.

g. SQA Results

Pauline had had her meeting with Sharon Muir the Quality Officer about the SQA Results. It was agreed that Pauline would give an overview of the report at the next Parent Council Meeting.

6. Issues from Staff/Pupils/Parents

Staff

There were no issues from staff.

Pupils

There were no issues from staff.

Parents

There were no issues from parents.

7. School of Ambition Interview

Jim Brown was present to discuss the School of Ambition with members. He explained that interviews were taking place with parents and pupils to discover their thoughts and feelings about the School of Ambition programme. He first wanted to know what level of awareness it had with members and the successes of the programme. He ended by asking how if anything could have been done differently.

All answers in this consultation process were treated as confidential. Therefore no minutes of member's answers were recorded.

8. Communications and Publicity

Ken informed the meeting that the Parent Council Board now displayed member's pictures taken by Gwen at the last meeting.

Pauline suggested setting up a survey on a website called Survey Monkey to promote the Parent Council to other parents. To set up the survey on this website is quick and easy and a text message would be sent home inviting parents to log on and give their opinions. Pauline intimated that she was more than happy to set one up for the Parent Council. Response rate was expected at around 18%. Ken stated that this was a higher percentage than the 10 who responded to the 100 surveys handed out at the Fashion Show last year. Ian asked if the whole school would be asked to participate or a

sample. Pauline indicated that, as it was relatively inexpensive to text that the entire school would be asked.

9. Any Other Business

There was no any other business.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 26 January 2010.

A date is still to be decided as to when the AGM will take place. There was some discussion that a date may be added in February for this to take place. Ken will give it some thought and let other members know.