

**GRACEMOUNT HIGH SCHOOL  
PARENT COUNCIL**

MINUTES OF MEETING  
HELD ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2009

Present:

Pauline Walker	<i>Acting Head Teacher</i>
Ken Gregor	<i>Chair</i>
Gwen McLeod	<i>Parent Member (Deputy Chair)</i>
Ian Duncan	<i>Parent Member (Treasurer)</i>
Lesley Gibson-Eaglesham	<i>Parent Member</i>
Audrey Gillan	<i>Staff Member</i>
Becky Divine	<i>Pupil Member</i>
David Wright	<i>Neighbourhood Manager</i>
Cllr Norma Hart	<i>Labour Liberton and Gilmerton</i>
Cllr Ian Murray	<i>Labour Liberton and Gilmerton</i>
Ashleigh Kennedy	<i>Clerk</i>

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Ken welcomed everyone to the meeting. Ashleigh Kennedy was introduced as the new Clerk to the Parent Council. Becky Divine was also introduced as the new Pupil Member. Ken stated that the Parent Council had been looking for pupil representation for some time and thanked her for becoming a member. David Wright, Neighbourhood Manager was introduced. He was present to discuss the selection process for the new Head Teacher and the Catchment Proposals. Finally, Cllrs Norma Hart and Ian Murray were introduced. They were present to discuss the catchment proposals and had to leave thereafter to attend the Mansion Annual General Meeting.

Apologies were received from Bob Perry who was in Canada and Gillian Fitzpatrick whose father is ill.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

Ken had received the minutes from the last meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2009 the day of the present meeting. He apologised for not having them sooner for people to look at. Ken asked if there were any concerns with the previous meeting's minutes to contact him.

3. Report from Chair

a. Catchment Review

*Staff of the School, Pauline Walker, Audrey Gillan and Ashleigh Kennedy were unable to comment on this discussion.*

Ken explained the proposed changes to the school's catchment area as it appears in Section 11 of the document regarding the closure of Burdiehouse Primary School. The proposals are to change the Murrays, Murrays Brae, parts of Lasswade Road and parts of Gilmerton Dykes from Gracemount High School's catchment area to Liberton High School. Concerns were noted by Parent Members as to the knock on affect a possible catchment change may have. These included a fall in the school role, which would result in a decrease in the quality of provision and a drop in Head Teacher salary. It was felt that GHS had improved so much in the last 10 years and a change of catchment area would be detrimental.

David Wright reported that he and Pauline Walker had produced a counter proposal, submitted on behalf of the school, which sought to retain the current catchment area and create a more formal link with Gilmerton Primary School. This had been given to management at Children and Families. He also explained that the consultation process with regard to the catchment area was still open and there was to be a formal review next year in March or April.

*Ken to send copies of counter proposal to Cllrs Hart and Murray.*

Ken thanked David and Pauline for this work and explained that he had drafted an objection to the proposed catchment changes, which he would still send to the Council. He welcomed other Parent Members to do so. He also brought to the attention of the Parent Council that there would be a Public Meeting on Thursday 8 October 2009 at GHS to discuss the proposed closure of Burdiehouse Primary and the proposed changes to the catchment area.

*Cllrs Hart and Murray left the meeting at this point. Ken thanked them for their attendance and support.*

b. Process for selecting Head Teacher

*Due to the nature of the discussion and information exchanged all attendees employed at the School and pupil members were asked to leave the meeting during this item.*

*David Wright left the meeting at this point.*

4. Report from Treasurer

Ian handed out copies of last year's accounts as the finances had been audited. He stated that the current balance was £6,161.37 due to a £5,000 grant from Liberton and Gilmerton Neighbourhood Partnership, towards the Football Academy, having been awarded on 14 September 2009. Ian presented a cheque for £5,000 to Pauline on behalf of the Parent Council. This would leave a balance of £1161.37 resulting from a left over balance of £589.03 from last year and the £572 funding given on 1 July 2009 for 2009/10. Ian believed this to be too high. Ken noted that some of this money would be used to pay for the Parent Council Suggestion Box and Display Board in the reception area at the school.

*Pauline to find out costs for Suggestion Box and Display Board.*

Parent Members also expressed a desire to use some of this money in line with the Aims and Objectives of the Parent Council. It was felt that £500 would be a suitable amount. Pauline gave some suggestions for uses of this money. These included a donation to help re-vamp the bike sheds or extra staging for the Dance Academy. It was decided that the Parent Council would make a donation to pay towards the costs of publicising the Gracemount @ 50 celebrations and towards the tiepins produced to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Pauline stated 700 of these had been ordered at a cost of 75p each. Pauline thanked Parent Members for this contribution. Ian is to arrange that a cheque for £500 cheque be passed to Pauline.

#### 5. Issues from Staff/Pupils/Parents

##### Staff

Audrey mentioned the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations that were being arranged by Staff. Events had been organised from Tuesday 27 October to Friday 30 October 2009. There was also an Open Evening scheduled for Thursday 24 September 2009, which had a Health and Eco slant.

There were no other issues from staff.

##### Pupils

Becky indicated that there were no issues on behalf of the pupils. She explained that the Pupil Council, which she was a member of, was in discussion about making changes to the Bike Sheds and Dining Hall.

##### Parents

###### a. Swine Flu

Ian raised some concerns regarding the measures in place to reduce the spread of swine flu in the school. He cited the facilities available for hand washing and the toilets being locked during classes. Pauline explained that there were tissues and medicated gel in every classroom and pupils were being encouraged to wash their hands regularly. With regard to the closure of the toilets during classes, Pauline explained that the toilets were locked to avoid truancy and vandalism. Pupils were still able to access the toilets during class time by signing out a key at the office. Pauline also added that any pupil or staff showing any swine flu symptoms was to stay away from the school. The school would endeavour to stay open in the winter. Pauline would sanction any closure of the school and then contact David Wright to inform him. Pauline is confident this would not happen.

## b. French Listening Exam

Ian raised the issue of how many candidate's grades were affected by the acoustic difficulties in the French listening exam in May. Pauline responded by stating that it did not affect any candidate's grade. The SQA was given an early alert to any possible difference in projected grades. Ian thanked her for this quick and decisive action and wished to record his thanks for Scott Mackenzie's hard work on this matter.

## 6. Report from Head Teacher

Pauline reported there had been a good start to the year, with 620 pupils being the highest role so far. She explained there had been good behaviour and manners from pupils in the first few weeks of term and even indicated that levels of litter were down which was encouraging.

### a. Staffing

Pauline explained the new changes of staff to the meeting. There are 10 new members of staff, which Pauline believes to have contributed to the good behaviour of pupils. In the English Department, Claire Lee is covering Sandra Scott's maternity leave and Claire Chalmers is the English probationer. Cat Ballany is the probationer in Biology. Christopher Hume, who was the History probationer last year, has become a permanent member of staff. He's become involved in the Pupil Council and set up a Debating Society within the school. Tom Tyrell is covering the vacancy made by David Twigg's secondment to Broughton High School. Paul Cummings who was in the temporary Maths position has been offered a permanent job at Holy Rood High School. It would be likely that he would leave after the October break when his Disclosure check had come through. This would leave a temporary position in the Maths Department. Hilary Campbell had been appointed as permanent Home Economics teacher due to the vacancy created when Ellen Leonard left to take up the PT position at Penicuik High School. Sam Smith had become a permanent part time member of staff in the Music Department. Linda Moisey is covering Shona Valentine's maternity cover in the Business Education Department. Finally, Tracey Neil who was an existing member of the P.E. Department had become a permanent member of staff.

Pauline also reported that Dave Patterson would be retiring on Friday 30 October 2009 after many years teaching P.E. at Gracemount High School. This would leave a position in the P.E. Department which Pauline is confident will be filled by an excellent replacement. The position has been advertised and Pauline expects upwards of 50 applicants.

### b. SQA Results

Pauline reported that the indicators were very good with regard to the SQA results. She explained she will be attending an attainment meeting shortly,

which will analyse the results and she will be able to report back. She expects the upward trend of the last 5 years to continue. 5 – 14 levels are almost on par with the Edinburgh average and the number of candidates receiving 5 or more Credit grades in their Standard Grades is nearly at 30%. Pauline indicated that the middle to higher years were an area that needed work but there was a strong basis for grades to also improve in these years.

#### c. Finances

Pauline explained that there had been efficiency savings in place at the school to recover the £45,000 or 1.5% deficit that the school had. £36,000 had been carried forward from last year and there was a 3-year plan in place for paying this back. Financially the school was ok and Pauline was confident that the school would be able to overcome the deficit.

#### d. New Curriculum

Pauline reported on the performance of the Dance Academy in the recent exams. Telford College presents candidates from Gracemount High School and Intermediate 2 and Higher candidates had done very well.

The Football Academy was now in place for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year boys and there are plans to try and expand it into 3<sup>rd</sup> year. 8 senior pupils were also being introduced as coaches for the Football Academy, which would result in Leadership Badges for them at the end of the year. Pauline commented on the respect and influence the Football Academy had on pupils and how this had contributed to the calm behaviour of pupils so far this term.

The Beauty School was now up and running with the School. It is used every afternoon from Monday to Thursday for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and Senior pupils. Parent Members expressed a wish to visit the facility, which Pauline welcomed. She also indicated that there was discussion of opening a vocational facility close to the school, which would offer interest courses in motor engineering, agriculture and the building trade for more vulnerable pupils. It could then be opened up to the wider community. Venues that had been suggested were the old Cadette Hut, Bridgend Cottage and an old house at Gilmerton. Gwen intimated that the South Edinburgh Partnership had been involved in the Arts Festival 'Out of the Blue'. She would pass on the names of those involved so as to promote a creative and performing arts aspect to this facility.

Pauline reported that all but 3 of this year's school leavers were in further education, training or employment. Percentage wise this was 97%. This figure was unprecedented and was an excellent result in today's climate. Pauline stated that this was a result of the Alternative Pathways available at Gracemount High School and thanked Maggie Bisset for all her help in this area.

e. Curriculum for Excellence

Pauline explained that the new intake of first years in June 2010 would be the first year to begin the new Curriculum model. There would be updates on this model at future meetings.

7. Any Other Business

Gwen raised the issue of when Glow, the new Internet based study aid which would be replacing Studywiz, would be up and running. Pauline stated that this would launch in January 2010 and there would be substantial parent area. A discussion of this would be held at the next meeting.

Lesley asked if the Scottish Schools Swimming Competition that her son had competed in could be publicised to try and recruit more participants from the school for the next competition. Pauline replied that as an Active School, Gracemount was looking to expand the school programme for sport and she would look into applications.

Ken advised the Parent Council about the Curriculum for Excellence Conference to be held on Saturday 26 September. If any member was able to attend they could advise Ken who would get them registered.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 26 October 2009.

Traditionally the first meeting after the summer was the AGM, however, due to the nature of the items on the agenda at this meeting this had not taken place. Ken suggested that the AGM might be held over until next term when the new Head Teacher would be in place. He would let the members of the Parent Council know.