

## **Madras College Parent Council**

### **Meeting Minute**

**Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

**Kilrymont Road 7.00pm**

Present: Paul Brown (Chair); David McClure (Rector); Dawn Waddell (Treasurer); Other members: Lorna Angus, Karen Barnett, Tone Brennan, Lynn Christie, Debbie Cumming, Fiona Day, Charlotte Kirby, Georgique Mazilu, Rachel Naismith, Colin Palmer, Andy Primmer, Andrew Roberts, Rebecca Trengove, Carol Urquhart, Joanna Secker Walker, Scott Wilson. Staff: Hugh Watson, Kenneth Wishart; Councillors: Tim Brett, Bill Connor, Keith McCartney

Apologies: Sam Byers, Callum Macleod, Jane Pettegree, David Rickman, Sally Walker; Councillors Dorothea Morrison, Margaret Taylor, Brian Thompson

#### **1. Chair's Opening Remarks.**

The Chair noted that the Rector would be delayed so the meeting began with an overview from Hugh Watson (Deputy Head).

Hugh Watson explained that the school had encountered various problems with the move to SEEMIS, the administrative software system now used widely across Scotland to track attendance and reporting. This had resulted in a lack of attendance information in interim reports and also means that the school can now only communicate with one parent rather than both (as was possible previously with GroupCall). Training will be given during the in-service days and the system should be fit for purpose by full report time, though a complete transition may take a couple of years.

#### **2. Minutes of Previous Meeting.**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

##### *2.1. Action points arising and resolved.*

- S5/6 career advice schedule/Guidance. Kenny Wishart outlined the current senior phase Social education provision, which includes career advice. The bulk of advice is in S4 through the "My World of Work" programme and a focus on skills. In S5 the focus is on communication, relationship and interview skills, while in S6 much attention is paid first to university entrance, then to college applications (the deadline for which is later).

Work experience for S4s has been withdrawn by Fife Council though there is still some possibility of work experience for "at risk" S4s, and S5/6 pupils can use the two activity slots on Tues and Wed afternoons for work experience or volunteering.

Monitoring and tracking is carried out for all pupils; targets for prelims are set before Christmas and there is a chance for reflection after prelims.

The system for generating the UCAS reference was explained – pupils can collect input from both their S5 and S6 teachers, and the reference is then written by Guidance staff in consultation with the pupil. If a pupil is taking a gap year or going from college to university they can come back to school to generate the reference.

- Graham Kirby (parent) is working on the new parent council website; much has been done and the project will hopefully be completed soon.
- Fall-back N4. The Rector confirmed that those pupils needing the fall-back N4 value-added units were taught these and their results were reported; also that value added N4 units in Business Studies had been lodged with the SQA. More N4 work is now being done in S3 and banked so the current S4 is in a better position.
- On the Scottish Studies N4 Kenny Wishart explained that the SQA had changed the administrative arrangements during the exam period. As a result some pupils' marks may not have been recorded. The school will follow up on this with that cohort.

## *2.2. Action points carried forward*

- Articulation between old Highers and new CfE Advanced Highers for current cohort S5. The SQA does not currently propose to allow those who are taking "old" Highers in 2015 to be offered the possibility of sitting follow-on "old" Advanced Highers in 2016. The school is making representation to the local authority to say that this will disadvantage S5 pupils currently taking old Highers; the old Highers do not articulate well with the new Advanced Highers so teachers must therefore prepare new materials to help bridge this gap, generating extra workload for both teachers and pupils. It was agreed that this is unacceptable and the Parent Council should also make representation.

**Action:** Paul Brown and Rebecca Trengove will draft a letter from the PC to Mike Russell MSP (Education Minister) and to the National Association of Parent Councils, as well as a pro-forma letter in case parents want to write an individual letter to Mike Russell. Cllr Brett suggested that the Rector lobbies Craig Munro.

- The Rector noted that the INSIGHT toolkit, the online benchmarking tool adopted by Fife for pupils in senior phase, is huge – he hopes to have more expertise by January and will present to the Parent Council in due course.
- School calendar (key dates inclusive of parents' nights, reporting, concerts, awards night, etc) will be put on school website. (Since done)
- Exam preparation advice: the Rector will cover this topic in more detail nearer the time.

## **3. Rector's Report.**

### *3.1 SEEMIS*

Covered above in the introduction by Hugh Watson.

### 3.2 School inspection

The letter to parents and a press statement are now finalised and will be issued on 4<sup>th</sup> November. The Rector was very positive about staff and pupils' contributions to the inspections.

The Chair noted that the PC's only interaction was the layperson on the inspection team (as was the case for the meeting with Head Boy and Girl), and felt that there should have been more engagement.

## 4. Treasurer's Report

4.1 *Treasurer.* Dawn Waddell noted there was now £3,232.95 in the account, following a donation of £73 from the 50/50 club.

4.2 *50/50 Club.* Debbie Cumming is seeking someone to take this on from January. Currently it makes £36.50/month for the school but there is considerable potential to expand this.

**Action:** Please advise Debbie Cumming if you are willing to take on the running of this scheme.

## 5. Madras New Build

Andy Primmer noted that the judicial review is now set for 15 December and has been allocated three days of committee time. This has led to a delay of at least a year on the project – 2017 is now the earliest likely completion date. In the meantime further work has been done on drainage issues and the design team is working on the detailed design.

## 6. Parents' Focus Group

A meeting was held just before the HMI inspection, at which several issues were raised around one particular subject area and one year.

The regularity of homework comes up frequently; some subjects (Maths, Chemistry, Physics, French, Geography) do give regular homework, whereas others (English, History, Classics, Modern Studies) is less regular.

The group had asked for an S1-3 assessment calendar. Kenny Wishart has nearly finished the senior assessment calendar.

The late bus is an on-going problem, particularly the bus to Tayport which now goes via Gauldry. Cllr Connor is raising this with the council. Although transport is not within the Rector's jurisdiction, he asked parents to contact the school first, and he will take it up with the council. Councillor Brett has since been in communication with the bus company and has received this communication from the relevant council officer:

"The report I have about standees is for the orange National Express bus. I have allocated 61 pupils to this bus and it was tendered as a 70 seat vehicle. When planning the North Fife tender I left an average of approx. 10 spare seats on every bus because the tender is for seven years I wanted the buses to be flexible.

I have advised the bus company about this problem and asked them to remind their drivers to check passes when pupils are boarding.

PS On the morning of the 28/10/14 a single decker arrived to uplift the pupils this may have caused pupils to stand on this bus. However upon contacting the bus company they advised me that they sent two single deck vehicles. Pupils would not have known this though as the buses did not arrive together and the driver of the first bus did not tell them that another bus was coming.

**Action:** Rector to invite Fife Council transport person to address the PC. The designated person should be Colin Hamilton.

#### **AOCB**

- Annual Prizes and Awards Ceremony: Rachel Naismith felt that the awards ceremony last year had presented far fewer prizes in fewer subjects and had not recognised pupils' non-academic or sporting contributions to the school.

The Rector has a working group looking at this, which will report by Christmas and he will discuss the points raised with the working group. He agreed that there should be recognition for non-academic achievement.

- South Street Lockers: Carol Urquhart asked what the locker provision is. The Rector replied that there is no locker provision for boys and no space to provide it. He agreed that this is unsatisfactory.
- Debbie Cumming reminded everyone to sign up for EasyFundraising before they begin online Christmas shopping. Sign up at <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/> and choose Madras College. Since Nov 2011 this has raised £1,960 for school funds.

**Date of next meeting: Wed 21<sup>st</sup> January 2015**