

## Press Statement

Madras College Parents' Council is extremely pleased with the positive comments from HMIe for the Rector, staff and Fife Council for the way they have improved on three of the four main action points identified in the original May 2006 report. We also acknowledge the efforts of Fife Council officials in addressing those issues. However, we are very concerned about the lack of discernible progress towards a resolution of the unsatisfactory split-site issue.

In St. Andrews, we realise from experience that Fife Council move slowly. The replacement hospital project, when it is completed next year, will have taken nineteen years, seventeen of which represent arriving at a decision and two to accomplish the actual build. The hospital will cost approximately £27 million; a price similar to a new school. Does this mean that we will have to wait another seventeen years to get a new school in St Andrews? Not only will all the pupils currently in Madras College spend all their high school years in the unsatisfactory split-site school, but it is unclear how the school is expected to improve or even maintain the already poor quality accommodation with a decreasing budget?

That concern is exacerbated by the recent announcement from Fife Council that budget cuts will affect the school, over the next three years, to the tune of £190,937, £216,222 and £264,190 respectively. These cuts are appalling and extremely demoralising to the staff, who can hardly regard such cuts as a reward for their exceptional hard work in addressing the issues in the first HMIe report, especially as these savings of 3% in the school's operational budget will affect every element of the school's budget. How will the school manage to build upon, or even maintain the improvements that they have made in the last two years?

Henry Paul

Madras College Parents' Council

Dear Councillor,

I am writing to you to protest about the budget cuts that you are imposing on Madras College and, more importantly, to complain about how you have decided to make these cuts without involving the parents of children at these schools.

On Thursday 20 March, I attended a conference in Edinburgh organised by the Scottish Government and COSLA on the subject of "Building better outcomes for children, young people and families through partnership". Throughout the conference, the speakers from the Scottish Government and COSLA stressed continually that there was a new "Concordat" with an altered way of doing business, and that we would use a partnership model to reach decisions. Difficult decisions would still have to be taken, but these decisions would be reached through partnership with the relevant stakeholders and a process of give and take would be required. I was very impressed and left the conference thinking that gone were the days when decisions were taken in smoke-filled rooms with the results handed down with no consultation or proper explanation.

On Thursday evening, I chaired a Parent Council meeting at Madras College and during the Rector's report we were informed that Madras College had been told that it had to make significant financial savings over the next three years, amounting to £190,937, £216,222 and £264,190 respectively. These savings of 3% in the school's operational budget will affect every element of the school's budget and will have a major effect on the school. However, what most concerns me was the lack of "partnership" between Fife Council and parents in arriving at this decision. It is quite possible (although debatable) that these cuts may be necessary, but where is the supporting evidence? Have these cuts been applied to the spending of the education department in Rothesay House as well as schools? How many senior managers will lose their jobs in order to save money?

The Parents' Council is extremely pleased with the positive comments from HMIe in the follow-up report for the Rector, staff and Fife Council, concerning the way they have improved on three of the four main action points identified in the original May 2006 report. However, the report makes very clear that Fife Council has made no discernible progress towards a resolution of the unsatisfactory split-site issue. We in St Andrews know that Fife Council moves slowly; the replacement hospital project, when it is completed next year, will have taken nineteen years, seventeen of which represent arriving at a decision and two years to build. The hospital will cost approximately £27 million, which is a similar price to a new school. Does this mean that we will have to wait another seventeen years to get a new school in St Andrews? All the pupils currently in Madras College will spend all their high school years in the unsatisfactory split-site school, but how is the school going to maintain the accommodation with a decreasing budget?

The Scottish Government has made much capital about its brave decision to freeze council tax this year, assuring us that extra money had been given to local Councils to compensate for this lack of rise in Council tax, so why are these cuts necessary? Last May, I attended several hustings of candidates for councillors in the local elections, but not one candidate said; "elect me, and I will make cuts to your school's budget". However, eleven months later you have agreed to impose drastic cuts for the next three years on every school in Fife. Where was the consultation, and what does "concordat" actually mean? Does it now mean decisions will be abdicated at Scottish government level and devolved to local government level where they will be made in "smoke-less" rooms and imposed on the people most concerned without consultation? Where is the partnership in this decision making process, and can we view such assurances as anything other than empty rhetoric?

Henry Paul

Madras College Parents' Council