

Madras College Parents' Council

DRAFT Minutes of Meeting 6 February 2008

Present:- Roger Coultherd, Cllr Ron Caird, Ian Green, Alistair Black, Gillian Bowman, Iona Smith, Alison Scott, Dorothea Morrison, Catherine Dunn, Marjory Finlay, Joanna Wright, Eric Bowman, Katy Pitman, Mary Scott, Adam Alexander, Robin Dewar, Andy Herd, Ian Jones, Jackie Himpson, Olav Darge, Lynsey Seeley, Calum Gibbs, Cllr Robin Waterston, Alex Slawin, Bruce Sinclair

Apologies:- Rebecca Bransby, Fiona Roger, Jack Lyden, Heather Marriage, Iain Collie, Geraldine Wooley, Christine Rawlinson, Fiona Rogers and Phillip Williams.

1. Tour

Members of the Parent Council (PC) had had a tour of some of the facilities at South Street, ably led by school pupils.

2. Welcome and thanks

The chairman thanked the Rector for organising the tour and the pupils for being such good guides.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes were taken to be an appropriate record of the last meeting, proposed by Eric Bowman and seconded by Alex Slawin.

Councillor Waterson updated us on what was happening in Fife Council about the proposed development of the school Estate in North East Fife. It is currently expected that proposals will be brought to the Area Committee Meeting on 5 March, with no prior consultation with the Parent Council. The proposals will then be in the public domain, and the Parent Council and others can comment on them before they are likely to be considered at the Education and Children's Services Committee on 10 April. There is no formal consultation process, but the views of the School and the Parent Council need be taken on board. The Chair suggested that this item should be the major item of business at the next Parent Council meeting.

4. Report from Meeting of 5 February

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Parent Council had had a meeting on 5 February with the Rector and the Area Education Manager about the role of the Parent Council.

At today's meeting, the Chairman of the Parent Council emphasised that Madras is the best school in Fife, and one recent indication of this was the School's standing at the top of the league tables for Fife School results in Standard Grade and Highers. Teachers and pupils work together well to get good results. The Parent Council seeks to work in partnership with the School to make things even better.

Concerns had been expressed at the publishing on the Parent Council Website of the notes of the first meeting of the Policy and Communications Group. Some saw these as being unduly negative, and potentially giving ammunition to detractors of the School. In future such notes should not be published directly, but should first come to the full Parent Council for discussion and possible amendment. All meetings of the PC and its Sub-Groups remain public meetings.

The following will become standard procedure for dealing with minutes of the PC and its sub-groups:-

- i PC Draft Minutes go to the Chair and Rector for comment and then go as draft minutes on the PC website.
- ii Meeting notes from fund raising and social sub-group go directly on to the website.

- iii Draft Minutes from the other two subgroups are circulated around all members of the PC by e-mail and then, possibly following amendments, passed at the next PC meeting and put on the website as separate Minutes.

5. Rector's Report

The HMIE inspection follow-up happened on 18 and 19 December. The Rector and Senior Management Team have had sight of the draft report. They are happy with the contents, which contained no surprises to them. The expectation is that this will be published at the end of March or start of April.

The Rector had had a constructive meeting with the new manager of Tesco's. The manager had been unhappy about the way that the previously reported problem had been handled by his store. Queuing of School pupils outside the store has now reduced and the hope is that after planned refurbishments this will be reduced further.

Parentmail has now been purchased using PC funds, and letters should go home to parents next week.

The Rector has had two positive meetings with the Rev Rory McLeod of Holy Trinity Church about setting up a team of chaplains for the School, particularly for their input to religious and moral education and for assemblies. There will be a major assembly of the upper years of the School in Holy Trinity Church on 27 March.

Fife schools are making progress on putting together development plans which will run over a three year period and will look at developing and refreshing a range of policies and practice. The Curriculum for Excellence will impact on this.

6 Sub-Groups

i) Infrastructure

The infrastructure group held two meetings on 2 December 2007 with Fife Council officials. The first meeting discussed possible solutions to littering and the second meeting discussed the condition of the two sites and the required repair work. Full details are in the separate minutes, which were approved by the Parent Council at this meeting. The PC also approved the aims of this sub-group to be as follows:-

The aim of the MCPC Infrastructure Sub-Group is to support Madras College by:

1. Monitoring the condition of the two sites and reporting back to the PC and annually to the Parent Forum.
2. Lobbying Fife Council to address the unsatisfactory split site accommodation.
3. Encouraging Fife Council to maintain the current sites to the highest possible standards.

At this meeting all were urged to write to the School if there were any particular issues that they wished to see addressed.

The Chair commented on the problems faced by the School such as the vandalism in the recently refurbished boys toilets by the South Street Hall. The Rector agreed that if people knew the names of those involved in antisocial behaviour he should be told about them. He commented that significant damage had been caused to the girls toilets in Kilrymont the previous day, and that this could be done in a very short time.

Alan McNish, Madras College Business Manager, and the Rector have recently surveyed the two sites to look at floor coverings and decoration, and have drawn up a priority list for action.

A member asked about the stability of the lockers that had been provided in Kilrymont using PTA funds. The Rector offered to check, but believed that all was well.

A member asked if there was sufficient resource allocated to cleaning the school buildings. The PC was told that the overnight cleaning team was currently short staffed, and the Community Use facilities were missing weekend cleaning staff. There was hope that the situation may improve.

A member commented that he felt that the state of the floors and the decoration in the South Street buildings was significantly better than that seen recently in Kilrymonth. The Rector disagreed.

The meeting was told that there is not enough space in the South Street building for adequate provision of lockers.

ii) Fund Raising and Social Sub-Group

The PC agreed that the remit of this group was to raise funds for the benefit of the School and to promote social contact.

The PC agreed that this sub-group was permitted to spend up to £500 of the money they had raised without needing to get approval of the PC. Due to the nature of the work done by this sub-group, it was agreed that their minutes and actions did not always need approval by the full PC.

Current projects include:-

- Recycling of mobile phones in collaboration with the School and Community Use
- Ceilidh, which will need at least 100 people. The proposed March 14 was felt to be too early, so May 9 is being explored. The group was congratulated for finding a band willing to play at low cost.

A barn dance was suggested as a possible future event.

The sub-group chair appealed for more input from members of the PC, including teachers. She commented that the PTA had always had valuable support from teachers and the Rector.

The recent internet safety meeting had gone well, but attendance levels (16 people) were disappointing. A member commented that his wife had found the meeting valuable. The Rector said that these sorts of events could be flagged up in the School calendar if they were booked far enough in advance. The PC suggested that we try to run a repeat event in the autumn term.

The minutes of the Fund Raising Group still await formal approval by the PC.

iii) Policy and Communications Sub-Group

The chair of this Group endorsed the PC Chair's earlier comments about the role of the PC being to support the School. He considered it unfortunate that comments from the sub-group had been received as being overly negative.

There were six members of the PC at the first meeting of the group, and there had been intense discussion on a number of issues. These were not individual gripes, but issues that the group felt were important to discuss. The notes from this meeting had been circulated to all on the PC, with no concerns raised at that stage. The chair of the group re-emphasised his wish to support the School, and commented on his role in taking the local paper to the Press Complaints Commission a few years back about their negative reporting of the School.

The PC agreed the aims of the Sub-Group to be as follows:-

1. To support the aims of the Parent Council by forging and maintaining effective communication links with and between the Parent Forum, staff, pupils and the wider community, to inform and to seek feedback where appropriate.
2. To support the interests, needs and welfare of the pupils by working with the school to help develop and refresh its policies and procedures.
3. To take a pro-active role in fostering good community relations.

Aim two will need to dovetail with the School and Fife Council three-year rolling improvement plan that will review all the HMIE quality indicators.

The next meeting of the Sub-Group will be at 4 pm on 12 February in an attempt to make it more accessible to teacher and pupil members of the PC.

The chair of the sub-group encouraged members of the Parent Forum to look at the PC website.

Geraldine had offered to put together a PC newsletter, and the Rector was happy for this to go out via the School.

The sub-group chair has written a piece for inclusion in the Madras Diary in the Citizen, and this is set to go once some practical matters have been sorted out.

Progress on the School website is likely to be via new School information websites being started up by Fife Council. The School is not able to provide dedicated resource to keep the current site up to date. Fife Council is not going to participate in the Scotland-wide GLOW project for web-based communications, as Fife is reported not to have the necessary infrastructure.

Members commented on the excellent maths department section of the current website.

The sub-group wished to raise the awareness of bullying in the community. Eric had produced a draft questionnaire that could help inform this process. Eric and the Rector will discuss further the details of the survey form and at what stage in the new three-year plan this would be most appropriate to put out.

The School was asked to look at homestudy policy and its implementation. The Rector commented that this would be included somewhere in the three year development plan. He was also willing to discuss particular issues with those concerned. He agreed that a fundamental review of home study policy would be useful, and might address the reported differences in amount of homework required between different subjects and across different sets and classes within subjects.

The Rector asked that the notes about the sub-group meeting should be removed from the PC website [achieved later that evening].

The minutes from the sub-group meetings are to be redrafted and brought to a subsequent meeting of the PC.

7 AOCB

A member asked if a new “continental” timetable was still being considered. A Fife-wide group is still looking at this.

A letter from a future parent asking about the IB qualification had been received. The meeting approved the Chair’s suggestion that he write to the person to thank him for the offers and to invite him to stand for election to the PC once his child was at the School. A member with experience of the IB supported the School in its continued use of the Scottish National Qualifications.

Members were reminded of the Quiz night on Friday 8 February. A team from the PC would be appreciated.

Members were asked to help man the PC stall at the parents’ nights on 19 and 27 February. Offers please to the Chair.

8 Next Meeting

The PC agreed that the main agenda item would be Fife’s plans for secondary school provision in NE Fife. The meeting will be on 20 March 2007 at 7 pm in the Kilrymont building.