

MADRAS PARENT COUNCIL
Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 4th September, 2013
(7pm, Kilrymont School)

Present:

Parents: Karen Barnett, Paul Brown, Debbie Cumming, John Duthie, Jayne Fraser, Charlotte Kirby, Kate McGladdery, Callum MacLeod, Rachel Naismith, Colin Palmer, Andy Primmer, Susan Simpson, Carol Urquhart, Dawn Waddell, Sally Walker, Scott Wilson.

Interim Rector: David McClure

Teaching Staff: Hugh Watson

Councillors: Tim Brett, Bill Connor, Keith McCartney, Dorothea Morrison, Brian Thomson

In attendance: John McLaughlin (Area Education Officer)

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks and appointments to be confirmed/made

Paul Brown took the Chair – no further appointments were confirmed/made at this point.

2. Apologies – Sam Byers, Lynn Christie, Councillor Elizabeth Riches, Barry Millar, Jane Pettegree, David Rickman, Rebecca Trengove.

3. Minutes of previous meeting held on 22nd May 2013 and matters arising

The minutes were approved and there were matters arising as follows:

Repairs to building/s façade - Councillors Brett and Thomson confirmed that this was raised with Joe Fitzpatrick. The Rector will also follow this up.

IT Provision – John McLaughlin confirmed that additional expenditure (a 5-figure sum which is **not** drawn from the new build capital budget) has been secured to make improvements. The situation will continue to be monitored.

Additional Staffing FTE – this was chased up by Councillor Brett and a response provided to the Parent Council Secretary. John McLaughlin confirmed that the way the Rector hopes to restructure the timetable (see also item 4. Rector's Report) means that this is no longer an issue. The Rector assured Council that he is being supported on this matter.

3A. The Rector

The Rector agreed to leave the room while John McLaughlin had a discussion with the Parent Council. Those present confirmed that they supported the Rector's focus on learning and teaching and raising attainment. John McLaughlin assured Parent Council members that he and the Education Department had every confidence in David McClure's ability to take the School forward.

There was praise for the Rector's presence in classes and it was confirmed that this will continue to happen throughout Mr McClure's time in post. Pupil feedback suggests that the Rector is strict, but they like it. There is a sense that problems are being dealt with quickly and the appearance and behaviour of pupils has been transformed.

There was a unanimous vote of confidence from Parent Council members and John McLaughlin was pleased that this mirrored his own views and those of the Education Department.

Council members were informed that the Association of Teachers' rules do not allow the post of Rector to be filled without going through due process, which could mean that Mr McClure will not be appointed. He emphasised, however, that that opinion is an important part of the process. The search will be national and Mr McClure has confirmed that he will apply for the post. An advert will be placed very soon with interviews taking place soon after the October schools break.

Prior to his departure, John McLaughlin thanked Council for allowing him the opportunity to take soundings and invited the Rector to return to the room.

4. Rector's Report

The Rector spoke at some length about his priorities as follows:

Improving the School Image – the wearing of School uniform will continue to be promoted over the long term by persistent persuasion. With the wearing of uniform come a sense of belonging, respect and impacts positively on the teaching and learning and upon wider community groups associated with the School. Praise has been received from parents and people have stopped pupils in the street to say how good they look. Support is in place (e.g. through the commission earned from M&S sales) for those who have difficulty with uniform expenses. It is intended that the school shop will be set up as an enterprise project. The Rector outlined the link between the wearing of uniform and the School's Security Policy (a draft copy was circulated to those present) – South Street is an open campus and it is important to identify those who have a right to be in the School. In the case of pupils, this is done through the wearing of uniform. The Policy is already active but there is still the opportunity to submit comments and Parent Council members were encouraged to do so by emailing the Rector.

The Rector picked up on Agenda item 11 (c) **Uniform: M&S Supplierst**. He reported that the school has been let down by M & S, but they are keen to make amends and keep the Madras business (Madras is the single biggest school customer in the UK). A meeting with sales representatives from London has taken place and problems relating to quality, colour, sizing, and order waiting times were discussed. Though still awaited, M&S has promised to provide a letter to forward to parents. M&S reps will also attend some of the open evenings in January to allow parents to ask questions. M&S has agreed to everything that has been asked of them and it is hoped that the School can be confident that they can deliver what has been agreed over the rest of this year and the following session (the remainder of the 3-year contract). The Rector assured Council that none of these issues will impede the uniform drive.

It was confirmed that, in the meantime, the School is within its rights to recommend alternative uniform suppliers since things have not gone smoothly with M&S. One parent did point out, however, that the new blazers from the last uniform supplier (Academy Uniforms) were no longer tailored and the lining was not as good as before.

Attainment – the Rector reported that last year's results were much better across the board than the year before. They were the best in Fife – but Madras should be the best in Fife, and by a bigger margin. (He made reference to a Scottish Schools S4 Standard Grade Mathematics results table (circulated and on file), which correlated affluence and credit level attainment.)

The attainment drive, and staff efforts, of last year has paid dividends, but there is still room for improvement. Deputies have worked hard to improve attainment, and more use has been made of multiple forms of baseline data (e.g. AfE, MIDYIS) so that the School can better understand what pupils should be achieving when they reach S4/5. Better attainment results should be an expectation.

The Chairman asked what factors contributed to the Rector's belief about where Madras should be in terms of attainment. The Rector responded that this is based on what he has gleaned from available base line scores, which are very good, and on his personal observations around the School.

A paper detailing **Senior Management Team (SMT) Remits** was circulated. It was noted that a new Depute (Mr Watson) has been appointed and that Mr Urquhart will be the Depute in charge of liaison on the new school, and timetabling. While the Rector will not be involved in issues relating to the site of the new school, he will be closely involved in accommodation issues.

The Rector spoke about his **vision for a new secondary school for NE Fife** which would include a vocational element (e.g. a hairdressing salon with full-time hairdressers). Pupils following vocational programmes would also continue with Maths, English etc. NE Fife doesn't have a college and it would make sense to address vocational programmes when considering the accommodation in the new school, allowing pupils to follow these in school rather than travelling to a college. However, this would not be viable unless pupils from other schools (e.g. Bell Baxter, Waid) supported it. Furthermore, there is the question of the amount of space required and how this would impact on available space for other uses. The Rector emphasised that the new build should cater for the NE for the 21st century and he emphasised that the issues outlined above should be explored - pupils who wish to pursue vocations programmes are not adequately catered for at present.

25-Period Week – Parent Council members reviewed a copy of the Powerpoint slides of the Rector's presentation to teachers as part of the consultation process (see also item 3. Additional Staffing FTE). The 35-week period is not sustainable and would require extra cash to pay for the equivalent of 1 FTE.

The disadvantages of the 35-period week are many: more time spent on travel between classes, less class time with specialist teachers, a reduction in the range of subjects, and additional administrative burdens on teaching staff. Additionally, the S5/6 pupils are disenchanted about being in classes with S4 pupils.

Teaching staff have been asked to provide feedback on the 25-period week proposal which would bring with it a seven subject base (21 periods) with three for Social/PE/RE classes and the others for skills developed, the Scottish Studies Award, Business Education and IT. With only five classes per day there would be less travel time, less admin for teachers, and much more class time with specialist teachers. The Rector asked Parent Council members to provide feedback on the 25-period model, which he believes will be of huge benefit to Madras (responses to date have been very positive). He concluded his remarks on the 25-period week by emphasising that this proposed change **will not** benefit the current S4 cohort.

One parent raised the point that the 64 minute period might be too long for younger pupils. The Rector provided assurance that the teaching of these double periods would be "chunked" in such a way as to make them diverse and interesting.

The Rector concluded his report by explaining that his Improvement Priorities will be taken forward and included in the Standards, Qualities and Improvements Plan. He also confirmed that he would be addressing the P7 role loss and one element of this will be to visit primaries and take along pupils in uniform to promote the school.

5. New Madras Consultation Discussions

It was confirmed by Councillor Brett that the planning application has been lodged and a timetable has been set: 12 March 2014 (NEF Planning Committee); 3 April 2014 (Full Council). No further discussion took place and the Councillors were able to remain in the room.

6. Chairman's Report

Paul Brown confirmed that he had nothing to report at this stage.

7. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer confirmed that the starting balance for the year is £2686.78. The Fundraising group

will be meeting soon to discuss how to disburse the money (£1500) raised through the Quadfest event in June.

Support for S6 Fashion Show - a request to support the S6 Fashion show on 23 November by paying for the insurance (approx.. £50) was agreed.

Parent Council Administrative Support Funds - it was pointed out that the money credited each year to the School Fund to pay for administrative support for the Parent Council had, in recent years, been used up to pay for Parent Mail. It was agreed that Group Call could be paid from this money and that the Parent Council should discuss at the next meeting what it could do with any monies that are left over. **In the meantime, the Rector agreed to find out the current amount available for administrative support and also how much it costs to run the new Group Call mailing system.**

8. Secretary/Webmaster's Report

No report was provided since the Secretary/Webmaster could not attend the meeting due to a family emergency.

One parent pointed out that the Parent Council website did not seem to be working and it was agreed to pass on this observation to the Webmaster.

9. Fundraising Group Report

Debbie Cumming reported on the success of the Quadfest which was a great evening and raised £1,500. Thanks are due to Carol Harrower, Kyle Galloway, Gillian Fyfe, Emma Henderson, Jackie Himpson, Sandy Wilson, Callum MacLeod, Colin Mackay. She also reported that Easy Fundraising has generated £1132 to date and will be promoted to parents in the near future. The 50/50 Club will be promoted again in the new year.

10. Reports from working Parties and Sub-Groups

None.

11. AOCB

(a) **Study Books** – an enquiry was made about the availability of N5/Standard Grade equivalent study books. This information was made available at the recent S4-6 curriculum evening and it was pointed out by parents that a similar evening for S3 would be much appreciated since much of the information would be of great interest to those parents and pupils.

(b) **'Today's Notices' Webpage** – it was pointed out that this is a valuable source of information, which appears not to have been updated recently.

(c) **Uniform (M&S Suppliers)** - discussed in the Rector's report (item 4. Above).

(d) **Facebook/social Media Issues** – it was agreed to postpone discussion of this item until the next meeting.

(e) **School Diary of Events** – this has disappeared from the *St Andrews Citizen* and Mr Darge has put forward a plea for parents to write to the editor to say how much they miss the Diary page and also to suggest that it is included in the *Fife Herald* which covers part of the School's catchment area.

(f) **Marking of Homework** - there was concern about homework being issued but not marked in some subjects. The Rector confirmed that it should be standard practice that homework is issued and subsequently marked. He encouraged parents to email him directly if this is not happening.

(g) **Staffing** – it was confirmed that there were a number of vacancies in different subject areas which the Rector will be following up with the Area Education Officer.

12. Date of Next Meeting – 2nd October at 7.00pm.

20th September 2013