

**Madras Parent Council**  
**Meeting Wed 21<sup>st</sup> January**

**MINUTE**

1. Apologies received: Karen Barnett; Sam Byers; Fiona Day; Calum Macleod; Jo Secker; Cllr Margaret Taylor, Scott Wilson.

**2. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

There were approved, subject to review of annual prizes and awards ceremony c/f.

**2.1. Matters Arising**

**a) Response to Fife Council budget cut proposals (cf Paper A circulated)**

Fife Council is required to save £77M over 3 years; 52% of the annual budget is education related.

The main item on the list of proposed cuts proposes to reduce the contact hours in the school week. There was general agreement that the proposal to move to half days on Fridays were unlikely to produce benefits either to staff or pupils; that suggestions that this could result in improved staff CPD were unproven and unconvincing. The engagement meeting with Madras cluster parents in December had highlighted acute concern about the impact on younger children, low income families, and rural areas without extensive afterschool care provision. Moreover, staff input to extracurricular activities such as homework clubs etc, highlighted as a strength in the recent HMI report, depends on spreading staff contact and preparation time more evenly over the working week.

The Rector explained that some savings could be achieved at Madras increasing the efficiency of the timetable; The current split site at Madras College imposes limitations on timetabling, and this was recognised by education services; a move to 4.5 day week would be unlikely to occur while the split site remains an issue.

Responses are due by the end of January. It was agreed that Paul Brown's minute of the Madras Cluster Parent Forum engagement meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> December should be submitted as representing the community response.

Action: Paul Brown to submit paper to Fife Council.

**b) HMI inspection report.**

The HMI report summary awarded 'very good' to 2 categories (learners'

experience, and improvement in performance) and 'good' in 3 categories (meeting learners' needs, curriculum, and staff improvement through self-evaluation). Key strengths listed were the leadership of the head teacher, links with the University of St Andrews, pupils' opportunities for extracurricular development, liaison with local armed forces and forces families, and attainment in S5/6. Under the 'learners' experience' heading, inspectors praised positive pupil/teacher relationships, behaviour, ethos and expectations.

The following points were noted in respect to the three categories marked 'good'.

- *Meeting learners' needs*: HMI noted that the reorganisation of Guidance structures had produced clear rationale and frameworks; these needed to be monitored to ensure continued success. It was, however, suggested that there was not a consistent level of challenge in some classes observed, where the pace of learning had seemed slow for some pupils. The Rector explained that as the CfE syllabus matured this should improve.
- *Curriculum*: inspectors praised the breadth, depth and progression opportunities presented by the Madras curriculum, particularly at Higher level. The Rector explained that consolidation of CfE would feed back into the broad general education phase, and that the school would follow up on the HMI suggestion to develop a unit of integrated science for years S2/3 as early subject choices reduced subject coverage. At senior phase, HMI had suggested that more options were needed for less academic pupils. In response, the school was looking to develop better links with college courses and local businesses. Possible future course in N5 childcare and sociology might be delivered in partnership with Fife college. The Rector welcomed suggestions for possible partners in local businesses who might assist the school to identify skills for work and encouraged email contact with additional suggestions.<sup>1</sup>

*Note*: Fife College is reducing its involvement with Elmwood, Cupar; the current assumption is that this will not adversely affect the provision of Fife College teaching on secondary school sites, but this should be monitored.

- *Self-evaluation*: inspectors praised the commitment of the HT to a culture of self-evaluation and to quality assurance processes, and encouraged continuing engagement with formal sharing of good practice. HMI had approved of baseline testing and target setting practices. The Rector explained that his next priority was to involve partners more in reviewing

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<sup>1</sup> Suggestions for local business partnerships included: St Andrews Partnership (Manager Patrick Loughlan, Chairman Jim McArthur); Cosmos Centre Fife College IT courses (Larry Reid); St Andrews Botanic Garden Trust (James Hirscham, President, or Nikki Macdonald, Education Officer); Estates Dept, University of St Andrews (John Maguire); Links Trust (Gordon Moir, Greenkeeping, and also volunteers for the Open Championship).

development plans and policy (e.g. parents, local colleges, etc). HMI recommended more detailed recording of bullying incidents, and the generation of management reports from accident logs to spot any trends; the Rector undertook to follow up these points.

**c) Articulation between old Highers and new CfE Advanced Highers in 2015/16 for current S5.**

Rebecca Trengove and Paul Brown's letters to former Scottish Minister for Education Mike Russell had received routine responses which stated there was no plan to continue old-syllabus Advanced Highers after this year. The issue had also been discussed at the Scottish Parent Teacher Association, where there had been few parent representations, but concerns had been raised by e.g. Physics. At Madras, the pressure subject is Biology, where one additional unit would be needed to prepare pupils sitting old Highers for new Advanced Highers. It was proposed to lay on this transition teaching towards the end of study leave 2015. The Rector explained that the teaching should be scheduled for the end of the period. Estimated numbers affected were 18-20 pupils.

Points raised included:

- concerns about minimising pressure on pupils during this already stressful time;
- was it possible for Madras to share material with other Fife schools in the area to make more efficient use of teacher time?
- was it possible for some material to be served up online in case some pupils had late-scheduled Highers?

Action: Rebecca Trengove and Paul Brown offered to prepare a presentation to the Scottish Executive and/or the Scottish Parent Teacher Association on this issue.

**d) Tayport Buses – provision shortfall.**

A letter was circulated from Colin Hamilton, Service Manager for Passenger Transport Services, undertaking to improve the provision of single deckers (bad weather provision) and also to monitor and hopefully improve late bus services. The Council expressed thanks to Cllr Tim Brett for pursuing this issue, which seems to be settled for this year. Councillor Brett agreed to follow up on the following points:

- to identify the source of funding for the additional buses, in order to ensure that this continued next session without further representation;
- to press Transportation Services to communicate with operators that bus passes for pupils should be valid at ANY point in the day (it appears that some bus drivers query this, which might affect pupils travel to examinations);

- to press for better communication of road closures affecting routes (e.g. closure of St Michaels-Tayport road and rerouting through Newport from 28/1);
- to ask Transportation Services to look into uneven ticket pricing between the same stops serviced by different providers.

#### e) Update on planning appeal for new building

NE Fife Planning Committee has passed the application, which is now awaiting the judge's decision from the judicial review, due by end March. The latter process looks at process only, not principle. Other factors included approval for diversion of Right of Way (decision due in February).

### 3. Chair's remarks – n/a

### 4. Rector's Report

- INSIGHT system – carried forward
- Transition to SEEMIS reporting system (from E1): problems remain with the production of key reports on attainment and target setting not yet available. The Rector and Hugh Watson are following this up with Fife Education Services (who liaise with the supplier).
- The Rector presented a table showing attainment figures for 2014 compared with previous years. The comparison basis has changed and rather than looking at comparator schools now looks at similar cohorts of pupils. Madras was significantly ahead of Fife and National trends, and close to if slightly below (most) virtual comparator trends on attainment at both level 4 and level 5 (see below)..

S4	% Level 4 (Literacy and Numeracy)			% Level 5 (Literacy & Numeracy)		
Year	2012	2013	2014	2012	2013	2014
Madras	69	68	88	30	32	52
Virtual comparator	70	69	85	33	34	52
Fife	62.25	66.48	81.91	23.03	24.61	38.49
National	61.01	62.64	77.09	23.71	25.05	37.55

- Annual Prizes and Awards Ceremony: the staff group had met and made some recommendations which now need to be refined against parent response. This was set for the next meeting of the Parent Focus Group, Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> January 6pm Kilrymont.

## 5. Treasurer and Fundraising Reports

5.1. *Income.* Dawn Waddell reported £3722.61 in the bank. This had been boosted by £404.35 from one Christmas shopping transaction alone. The 50/50 club is being wound up, and the closing balance will be available after 6 months when the account is closed.

### 5.2. *Expenditure*

- £24.19 was approved for the subscription costs of the new website.
- The Council approved a subsidy of c. £250 for bus transport associated with the Madras Pipe Band attendance of the Scottish Schools Pipe Band Championships in March. (Proposed: Rebecca Trengove; Seconded: Andy Primmer)

Councillor Keith McCartney reminded members that several other local sources of funding could be applied to for these sorts of projects, and the Rector agreed to try to make key staff (e.g. PT Music) aware of these so that timely applications could be made in 2015-16. E.g.

- the Madras College Trust Endowment Fund
- the East Fife Educational Trust

## 6. Secretary's Report

Formal thanks were recorded to Graeme Kirby for designing and implementing the new Parent Council website, and for offering to maintain this for the next year.

## 7. AOB

7.1. *Break Policy.* A parent asked the Rector to check whether Prefects were clear about when pupils might be allowed inside at breaks – the Rector agreed to follow this up.

7.2. *Prelims Scheduling.* A parent asked for earlier notification of the Prelims schedule. The Rector explained that the calendar was still setting with CfE and this should be more stable next session. However, although outline dates might be known several months in advance, final scheduling will always be much later as it depended on enrolment and progression.

7.3. *Date of next meeting:* Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March, 7pm Kilrymont.