

Madras Parent Council
September 2nd 2015
7.00pm – Kilrymont Campus

Minute

1. Apologies received

See 2015 AGM minute.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting – adopted.

3. Matters Arising

3.1. Articulation between old Highers and new Advanced Highers

Advanced Higher Computer Science – not running at Madras for reasons laid out at May meeting. The 2 pupils affected are being taught material from the old advanced higher so that their skills can continue to develop, but this will not culminate in a credited examination. This should not affect their University eligibility.

In addition, it was explained that the Advanced Higher in Graphic Communication was not able to be offered this year, as the nationally authored teaching resources had not been delivered (the author having moved to another placement). Although some schools had been writing their own material, the Madras department had been fully engaged with developing an Engineering Science course, and had concluded that they were not therefore able to deliver a robust Graph Comm. Course in session 2015-16. This has affected 1 pupil, who has passed a Higher in the subject that qualifies them for their destination course. Although the accredited course is not available, the school has bought in some commercial packages to deliver skills development as per Comp. Sci.

3.2. SPTC strategies for parent engagement.

HT and Chair to review material – action point c/f to next meeting.

3.3. Careers Information.

Charlotte Kirby presented a case that the school should be doing more both to advertise careers and UCAS conventions, and to facilitate pupils' attendance at these. Law and medical aptitude tests also, she felt, were under-advertised. These events were argued to help pupils to make informed decisions about future courses and careers.

(Note: the UCAS convention taking place in Edinburgh this week brought together many universities and colleges from all over the UK, and also delivered training

sessions in e.g. writing personal statements).

The HT responded that the school was delivering careers guidance in-school and was reluctant to encourage pupils to take days out of school for this purpose; university open days also ran at weekends and during the October holidays and he recommended these.

3.4. Awards Ceremony

This ran successfully in June to the new format agreed last session. The HT thanked the parent council for suggestions that had allowed a wider range of pupils to receive recognition for attainment.

4. Office-holder Reports

Chair's Remarks, Treasurer's Report and Secretary's report – all fell under the AGM minute reported earlier in the evening's proceedings.

Action point:

- Carried forward to next meeting: summary of income from Quadfest.
- Carried forward to next meeting: spending discussion for Parent Council funds.

5. Rector's Report

5.1. SQA exams 2015: re-marking arrangements

In the past, schools had been allowed to put forward evidence to support poorer performance against predicted outcome based on attainment during the year. The new regime in this area allows only for re-marking rather than full appeals. Nb marks can go down as well as up.

There is a cost for each remarking request, payable by Fife Education Service:

Priority re-mark: £40 per script (deadline within 2 days of results)

Non-priority re-mark: £30 per script

(Mark re-totalling: £10)

Year	#Madras scripts remarked	Outcome
2014	60	1/3 increased grade. Of priority re-marks, 1/4 increased grade.
2015	63	Priority re-mark – none increased.

There is no obvious reason for the drop in successful re-marks but it is clear that this process is not guaranteed to produce an improved outcome for the pupils.

The HT emphasised that cost was not a factor for the school in determining which requests were put forward for review and that it would not be next year, although the cost is going to be transferred from the central Fife education budget to the school budget. SQA guidelines now suggest that re-marks should only be requested if the pupil's attainment levels were higher consistently throughout the year – but that no supporting information is put forward. i.e. this is simply a remarking of the exam.

The parent council was asked to suggest what the basis of re-mark requests should be. The following points were made:

- a) that the current cohort affected by the transitional arrangements for CfE exams should be helped where possible to overcome implementation glitches by sympathetic hearing of requests;
- b) that pupils whose grade had fallen into the lower part of a grade band were more at risk of the re-mark resulting in a lower grade than those placed towards the top end of a band, and that pupils and parents should be made aware of this risk in their particular case when requesting a re-mark;
- c) that parents not content with a school decision on whether to progress a re-mark request could appeal to the area education officer, and that the school would respect the recommendation of the education officer;

d) that the system continued to advantage assertive, confidence parents and pupils. The chair suggested that school might consider targeting pupils who might benefit from a re-marking request and provide timely guidance to them on the process.

The Parent Council heard that pupils were given access to their bands within a grade if they approached departments, but it was reported that some departments had been less willing to give this information. It was strongly urged that all departments within the school should be consistent in this area, and that access to their own data was a basic right of the pupil as the data subject. A group particularly affected were school leavers: the SQA advice to schools is not to contact leavers to prompt re-marks.

(Note: currently the SQA does not supply component marks to pupils, only to schools, although pupils may request this information from the school).

5.2. Staffing and School Roll

The HT reported that the school had successfully appointed a replacement Latin teacher. Overall staffing levels were stable, with gaps in English now filled, and a temporary technical teacher appointed with a good experienced candidate. However, although a support teacher with particular experience in behaviour support had not been provided; instead, a generic learning support teacher had been allocated by education services. The staffing request computer system, apparently, only has the generic learning support option on its drop-down menus. Parents shared the HT's opinion that this was unhelpful.

2014-15 roll c.1260

2015-16 roll 1283-88 and growing.

The school is currently operating within optimum size parameters.

5.3. Budget

Although the HT reported at the previous meeting that the school was going to be allowed to carry forward a budget surplus into the new session, that this arrangement had, late in the session, been reconsidered. Fife Council's budget cuts had reallocated £240K. The school was still solvent for the year ahead, but anticipated additional expenditure on staff (to maintain lower class sizes) would be affected by this cut. The HT expressed his disappointment with this outcome; however, departments were being asked to suggest how they would spend their running allocation of between £1 and 2K this session.

In response to questions raised:

a) the MoD is allocating funds to assist with new army families' transition to the area, including into school.

b) grant and gift funds might be useful to offset against other budget areas although

not applied directly to staffing.

5.4. Systems changes

The new data tracking system (SEEMIS) was due to generate pupil attainment reports this session. Parents heard that this system does not have the design facility of the old system and that the layout of the new reports was therefore a bit clumsy. However, the new system was better at holding certain types of data (e.g. attendance) and so although the layout might be weak the data should be robust.

New versions of Glow, and computers with Windows 7, had been introduced.

5.5. Timetable

Thanks were recorded to Hugh Watson for the timely production of a new session timetable which had delivered over 90% pupil satisfaction (i.e. course choices provided) alongside efficient use of staff and rooms. Given this also coped with a change of subject choice pattern for S4s (from 6 to 7 subjects), and linkage with the SEEMIS system, this is a job well done.

5.6. SQA Results.

Table 1: S4 5+ passes at N5 (Grades A to C)

2014	[2015]	2015
Enrolled Sept 2013 ⁽¹⁾ : 42.7%		Enrolled Sept 2014 (218): 48%
Enrolled April 2014: 42.7%	[N5 D passes : 9]	Enrolled April 2015 (208): 50%
Adjusted net of DAS ⁽²⁾ : 43.5%		Adjusted net of DAS(203): 51% ⁽³⁾

Notes

1: Percentages in public reports will use % pass against the start-of-session September cohort role rather than the number who were still in the role in April at the start of the diet. The April figure is therefore more realistic.

2: DAS = Department Additional Support. Not all schools have a DAS unit. Pupils in this unit more realistically aim to sit N2, N3 and in a few cases N4 exams.

3: Figures in brackets are total numbers of pupils in this enrolment category.

Table 2: S4 5+ passes at N4 or above

2015
Enrolled Sept 2014(218): 92%
Enrolled April 2015(208): 96.6%
Adjusted net of DAS (203): 99%

Notes:

(1) Local comparison figures for 2014 not available; lost in transition to INSIGHT

system. The secretary after the meeting referenced the September 2014 PC minute which had on record for 2014 (but without a note of the enrolment time): **N4s:** 5 or more N4s: 92%. **Overall:** 5/6 National Awards at S4 – 96%. This does suggest an improvement on last year at the upper end.

Table 3: S4 20-60-20 comparison (top-middle-bottom)

20% (top)	42 pupils	7+ N5s
60% (middle)	124 pupils (running total 166)	17 with 7+ N5 21 with 6+ N5 19 with 5+ N5s 20 with 4+ N5s 19 with 3+ N5s 12 with 2+ N5s 18 with 1+ N5s
20% (bottom)	42 pupils (running total 208)	6 with 1+ N5s 26 with 5+ N4s 1 with 3 N4s 2 with 2 N4s (+ 2 school refusers who nevertheless took units in literacy and numeracy + 4 college entry)

Note

(1) This is a high-achieving bottom end.

(2) Overall, 172 pupils achieved at least [1 N5 + 4 N4s] = 83%.

Table 4: Comparison between Madras and rest of Fife

	Madras		Fife
	2014	2015	2015
5+ N5s	43.5%	51%	32%
6+ N5s		40%	
7+ N5s		30%	

This shows Madras attainment to be significantly higher than the rest of Fife secondary schools.

Table 5: Highers at S5

	Madras		Fife
	2014	2015	2015
1+ Higher	58.7%	66%	52%
2+ Highers	39.6%	44%	30%
3+ Highers	21.3%	28%	13%

Note:

(1) Percentages here are of the cohort who started in S1.

Table 6: Advanced Highers at S6

	Madras		
	2014	2015	
1+ Adv Higher	31.8%	33%	
2+ Adv Higher	<i>?Not available</i>	18%	
3+ Adv Higher	<i>?Not available</i>	10%	

Notes:

(1) Figures for Fife not available.

(2) Percentages again are of S1 entrants.

(3) 2014-15 had a large S6 – again, a feature in 2015-16. Retention rates in S6 can be problematic if grade achievement in S5 is sufficient for college / university entrance.

Summary

The 2015 results show an improvement across all levels. It was noted that the statistics do not break down into grade achievement – information necessary to forecast possible destinations.

Action point carried forward:

The HT was asked to provide statistics on leavers' destinations (% college, etc) for the next meeting.

5.7. Attainment in English.

Angela Robertson, PT English, presented the results of SQA exams this session in English – a subject that had seen high results.

- Prelims were sat and marked early
- This allowed for early identification of borderline and underachieving pupils (tracked against base-level SORSCA testing carried out in years 1 to 3)
- All pupils discussed targets with teachers, and completed a target sheet which listed specific skills in each teaching area. Pupils and teachers both

- used traffic lighting (red/amber/green) to highlight areas for particular work, and set target grades. They also discussed strategies for improvement.
- Pupils at risk of underachievement were invited by letter to extra help at Easter study school.
 - In Higher, from the targeted group, 66% (27 out of 41) beat their target.
 - In N5, from the targeted group, 68% beat their target.
 - 158/200 of S4 pupils got N5 English, and 80% of these achieved A or B.

Aims for this year:

- Earlier support put in place – October holiday study schools
- Earlier in years 1 to 3 – identify groups needing early intervention e.g. 'reading boost' schemes.

HT overall summary – where from here?

- S5 and S6 achievement figures are probably close to their limit.
- S4 will be targeted.
- Careful tracking S1 to S3 in all departments to develop core skills.
- Maths is intensifying core skill development and target group tracking, using after school help classes, and planning an October study school for S4 (3 to 4 days) to prepare for the November assessments.
- Column tracking – ensuring that all subject choice columns have options that allow for good achievement outcomes for pupils. Some current combinations may not be optimum (e.g. some subjects only available at N4 may add in an N5 option).
- Monitor staffing ratios carefully in English and Maths to keep class sizes as low as possible and minimise mixing qualification levels as far as possible.
- Look carefully at S1 to 3 courses to improve core skill development.

Parent points:

- Study material for some new Advanced Higher courses is still not published.
- Can the school track attainment for those taking 4 Advanced Highers (i.e. is this too much?)

8. AOB

8.1. New Madras.

The STEPAL appeal will be heard January 2016; the outcome will be known March/April 2016.

8.2. Closure of Guardbridge Mainstreet and affect on school buses.

Brian Thomson reported that Guardbridge Mainstreet would be closed to traffic for c.8 weeks in October/November for work on a new combined heat and power unit, with significant detours for buses around prelim time.

Action point: the school will make enquiries about the impact on bus routes.

8.3. Date of next meeting: Wednesday 28th October