

# **Madras College Parent Council**

## **Meeting 18 January 2012, South Street**

### DRAFT MINUTES

#### **01 Welcome by the Vice-Chairman, Introductions and Apologies for Absence**

The chair of the meeting welcomed Fiona Paterson to talk about the school's Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. He thanked the school for the tour of the site that many members had been on, and asked the Rector to convey thanks from MPC to the sixth year student Max who had been the tour guide.

**Present** – Dawn Waddell, Linda Hardie, Florence Tanniou, John Barnett, Paul Brown, Andy Primmer, Karen Barnett, Jane Pettegree, Fiona Paterson (part), David Rickman, Cllr Ron Caird, Cllr Dorothea Morrison, Cllr William Sangster, Andy Herd, Hugh Watson, Jo Secker Walker, Olav Darge, Emma Henderson, Jayne Fraser, Barry Millar, Lynsey Seeley, Ian Jones, Callum McLeod, Cllr Tim Brett, Cllr Elizabeth Riches, Cllr Robin Waterston, Charlotte Kirby, Rebecca Trengove, Jackie Himpson, Debbie Cumming, Barbara Dritschel, Scott Wilson, Rachel Naismith, Bruce Sinclair  
**Apologies** - Rory MacLeod, Sam Byers, Rhona Froom, Frances Melville

#### **02 Presentation on the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme as it applies to Madras College by Fiona Paterson**

This scheme has been running for over 50 years nationally. It gets young people involved in multiple activities, including volunteering in the community, skills outside normal school work, physical activity outside timetabled day, all on a regular basis for a significant time, and an expedition. From 14 years old. Here start in S3. S4 go to second level. S6 third level. Completion by 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. Team of 10 staff here involved. Core staff of 4/5 with a minimum of 1-2 hours per week training pupils and doing paperwork. Six expeditions a year. Madras is one of the biggest providers in Fife, 58 active new intakes this year. 120 in total in process. Bronze intake – open meeting in Hall. Ask for letters of application to show effort in applying, but not used significantly in the selection process. Check with guidance, then first 20 names out of hat, with couple of reserves. Can do direct entry to silver or gold. More selection at silver and gold. If have completed bronze by October holds then guaranteed place on silver. Last year one of 20 had met the deadline, a further 13 have since completed. Those not yet completed go into hat with direct entrant applicants. Biggest number in hat 56. October just past had 30 in Bronze hat and took 20. Gold have 11, not needed to limit. If parents express interest then they may be able to help. One year took 48 out of 48 Bronze but logistics of tents and route was difficult. If parents can help with transport that can sometimes help increase numbers.

Callum offered to assist at the last meeting. Andy Herd explored this via community education in terms of an open group towards Bronze, and discussions are continuing. The PC thanked Fiona for her presentation and also thanked her and her colleagues for doing all the (voluntary) work that they do running this scheme for the benefit of school pupils.

**03 Appointment of Chairman of the Parent Council.** It was intimated that, if no person could be found to fill this important position, then the Vice-Chairman would demit office either immediately or at the end of the meeting, as it is his opinion that if there is no Chairman, then there can be, by definition, no Vice-Chairman, a view which may or may not be held by the Council. No nominations were received. The meeting was happy for Callum to chair the meeting tonight. Attempts would continue to find a Chairman.

#### **04 Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of Wednesday 2nd November 2011 and matters arising therefrom not covered elsewhere in the Agenda**

Minutes approved once two spelling mistakes in surnames had been corrected. Matters arising not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda included:-

- a) “Interpretation of the School Performance report to the June 2011 meeting of the North East Fife Area Committee, particularly the apparent contradiction of the same statistics being flagged as being both strong and in need of improvement.  
For example: Strong - by end of S4 5 or more awards at SCQF level 5 was above national pattern.  
Need of improvement - by end of S4 5 or more awards at SCQF level 5, attainment is in the bottom 25% of comparator schools and in all previous years has been in line with middle 50% of comparator schools  
(brought forward from Minutes of the meeting of 21st June 2011)  
Ref: <http://www.fifedirect.org.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=publication.pop&pubid=4BC08B90-EDFA-74A5-EE11A07BF4CF6C38>  
Rector - There are three different measures on which performance can be compared – Fife, Scotland, and comparator schools. It is not unreasonable to highlight performance that is good relative to the national average and that is at the same time a concern relative to the comparator schools.
- b) Support for learning post has now been appointed.
- c) Science Block – Changing situation. As of today one lab currently not used - D1 – remains mould to be investigated. Contractor to be here this weekend. Science block difficult to keep wind and watertight – leaking windows. Need wind and watertight integrity of whole building Rector suggests that it may be useful to have a letter from the Parent Council to the Executive Director of Education. This is first request for general look at science block.  
Music House – half roof repair has done, other half needs week of main entrance closed, to be done over Easter holidays.
- d) The Rector has met with Director of Education et al regarding attainment. A private letter of outcomes of that meeting was passed around. The Rector will meet with councillors soon. The Rector will report to councillors on 28 Feb. MPC 10 March meeting for debate of that.
- e) Schools online website stuff has now been published, and incorporated into data set that has been circulated to MPC members by the Attainment Sub-Group.

## 05 Treasurer's Report

£1851.33 in account including about 2 pounds of petty cash. Main income is 50/50 club. Since last meeting we have paid for web hosting, and licence for summer fair raffle. Chairman happy that MPC members agreed to buying copies of year of Madras. The meeting was willing to commit for three more copies.  
It was suggested that some funds could be usefully bid for in connection with:-  
Dyslexia support, Rector will talk with PT.  
Support of art activities. Ask PT art to put in specific request.

## 06 2011 - 2012 School Improvement Plan - formal report from the Rector

This was the main subject of the Rector's report to the Parent Forum.

For 2010-11 the school's priorities had been

- **Attainment** - better target setting now in place and good to see this working
- **Curriculum for Excellence** - S1 course implemented and S2/3 agreed. S1 liked the elective element. Discussions about the senior phase
- **Care and Welfare** – house system working. Inclusion agenda taken forward.
- **Improvement through self evaluation**– reliable data is now available in the school with more evidence-led decision making happening.
- **Leadership** – Principal Teachers Curriculum have more accountability and responsibility

For this session focus is on three elements

- **Attainment** - continuing last year's programme, reviewing SQA results and setting targets for individual pupils, making more use of PIPS data from P7, and SOSCA as standardised assessments in S2. Review prelim results as before. S4 currently being reviewed. Hope to achieve continued incremental improvement in overall results.

- **Curriculum for Excellence** - reviewing and amending S1 curriculum, not making major changes. Half way through implementing S2, ensuring assessment and reporting integrated. Discussion on senior phase inc parental consultation.
- **Improvement through self evaluation** - following on from last year. Reviewed quality assurance calendar and internal communications. Reviewing how and when evidence gathered. Gather, evaluate, decide, let people know what decisions are and why. Encouraging personal evaluation of teachers by themselves as part of a national framework.

A member asked that while SOSCA and PIPS works for individuals, can the school provide summary figures for a year group? Not from PIPS. SOSCA will predict SQA results. The Rector is less concerned about year groups and more about individuals.

Do SOSCA prediction go to parents where there may be issues? Yes. Target setting is now part of the reporting process. SOSCA is for many subjects. Both have been in Fife for some years, SOSCA in just S2.

How does it now map in with CfE? Not yet known what Fife says. But with change of assessment in S4 difficult to know exactly how to make predictions now, but assume will be similar to the past.

**07 Secretary/Webmaster's Report** – nothing significant to report

### **08 Rector's Report**

**Curriculum for Excellence** Open meeting on 22 Nov to look at senior phase of CfE. About 120 joined from parents, university, colleges, industry. Ran through a) info and where going and b) discussions designed to help the School determine framework for the curriculum. Notes from meeting compared with and added to staff discussions. Now on school website to state what is to happen in senior phase here. Will meet again provisionally 26 April. Look at CfE rationale, stuff being firmed up on, populate framework how course choice can fit for S4,5,6. Test the proposals against the rationale there.

Mr Jones' Presentation slides and a report are on the Madras Website at

[http://www.madras.fife.sch.uk/pupil\\_parents/documents/CfE\\_Nov\\_11.pps](http://www.madras.fife.sch.uk/pupil_parents/documents/CfE_Nov_11.pps)

[http://www.madras.fife.sch.uk/pupil\\_parents/documents/CFE\\_senior\\_phase\\_rationale.pdf](http://www.madras.fife.sch.uk/pupil_parents/documents/CFE_senior_phase_rationale.pdf)

**Staffing** – English and Support for Learning staff appointed. Mr Duffy (physics) is now on a 22 month secondment to Auchmuty. Mrs Lindsay is stepping up to PT, and Mr Clifford had been appointed with no gap.

**Maintenance** – see above. Some maintenance on English corridor now complete. KR high wind damage in windows now repaired. Damage to highest roof in KR – flashing has given way and wind got under covering. Scaffolding up there tomorrow.

### **09 Fund-Raising Sub-Group report**

Meeting on 24<sup>th</sup>. 50/50 club now finished for 2011. New one about to start. Hope for more take up this time – meeting suggested trying more parentmail reminders. Shopping via website could be helpful if more people did. Repeat as parentmail. Has raised 55 pounds with few members.

Links now on MPC Website

[Fund raising while you are shopping online](#)

[Find and remind](#) [Spread the word](#)

### **10 Attainment Sub-Group report**

This group was set up after the last meeting. Paul noted his background as a former secondary school teacher and now in careers in HE. He noted that this makes him aware of the challenges of teaching and the importance of qualifications. His son has had some great teachers at Madras, but there were also some issues, he thought it might be helpful to produce data to help discussion, as anecdotes can get people only so far.

The group has taken data from publicly available sources to compile the tables that were distributed to members looking at attainment in SQA qualifications at various levels as a function of time. There were various things in that data that the school can be pleased about. However, the data as presented may show that there are places where there may be useful questions to ask in terms of raising attainment in some areas. The subcommittee was set up and has met twice. There is a welcome spectrum of views within the group. There are also varied views within the group as to what the data may indicate. Most think the data deserves scrutiny. However, to see what it fully means more information would be useful.

All would like to get better outcomes for pupils in school, how could parent body support efforts of school to get all pupils to achieve more highly? The request for additional data was sent to the Rector in December asking for a wider data set and could some joint structure be set up for discussion parent/senior management team. The Rector's reply stated that Fife Council officials do not wish him to share the further information but that he could meet with the group in the future. It was asked should such a meeting be in the whole MPC or in the attainment sub-group

A graphical representation of the data set mentioned above was circulated today, thanks to work by John Barnett. It remains basic overall data without drilling down into elements of sample size, subject groups, etc. John commented that the older data may be less reliable due to an exceptionally bright cohort in 2005-6, as reported by the Rector at the last meeting. John would also like to see the data compared with the comparator schools, as well as the Fife and Scotland averages. Fife often slightly underperforms the Scottish figure. Sample size can be important, and we don't know that detail.

In Higher and Advanced Higher the school is doing well, and it is good to see the school in newspaper league tables in the top 50. At standard grade the picture is different.

The Chair thanked Paul and John, and suggested that detailed discussion was better in the subgroup rather than this forum.

A member asked councillors why information should not be made available. The Rector suggested that it is because individual teachers could be identified. Cllr Waterston commented that understanding the figures better would be good. But how much detail will help individual parents see how school sets about strategy? Fife Education has the data but it is not made available to parents or councillors. But what could be done helpfully with the data if it were made available? The PC can be useful as part of school community, but looking at subject results makes parent-teacher relations difficult. If X dept is better than Y why would it help if parents know? There comes a point when it becomes an unreasonable amount of detail especially regarding subjects. Cllr Waterston says more detail may be possible, but not at subject level. A member suggested that where departments are large enough it would be useful to see. If there are some subject areas where there has been lower performance for some years, how do things get better? Anecdotes suggest there are some issues, but hard data may help. No one wants to identify individual teachers.

How can we ensure that everything is being done to maximise the performance of all the pupils? Cllr – how do Higher grades do well when Standard Grade not so good. Have parents looked at that? A parent suggested that there may have been some form of problem in the past in lower/middle school with pupils of middle/lower ability. Might Curriculum for Excellence be helping now, is there a positive narrative that the Rector could tell us about? The Rector stated that he was willing to engage in discussion but not on statistics, and offered no more comment at this stage.

The meeting chair invited members to read a letter from the Executive Director of Education about a Madras Attainment Review. The letter noted 13 agreed points that the school is focussing on to maintain the focus on raising achievement.

A member asked about what happens after pupil progress has been checked, gathering evidence, and reviews. The Rector noted that this gives a realistic and challenging target for each pupil. If a pupil is not achieving, guidance staff talk with them, and may involve parents. There may be additional strategies in eg lunchtime study support. To make this work as well as possible there needs to be a good central IT system, but this has not yet been provided by Fife Council. The E1 system is now introduced in Fife Council, but the monitoring and tracking system there is not properly developed. The school is doing the best it can with what is there. Parent – S4 pupils were told in assembly last week that some were not doing as well as they should – is it too late? Rector – no. Issues will be dealt with. It is normal for prelims to be a wakeup call for some pupils. Rector delivers that message to the pupils. Original plan was to analyse data and report to parents before Christmas, but slower due to lack of IT. Some prelims here earlier than usual to get an earlier wakeup call.

A parent asked if classes are tracked? Where appropriate the school will track classes, but the emphasis is on the individual. More information is now available to subject staff about how learners are doing in other subjects.

A member asked about the classroom visit programme This consists of agreed visits by members of the school's senior management team and principal teachers (curriculum) to classes. There is an agreed frequency and theme of visits and follow ups. They get information on quality of learning and teaching and the pupil experience. These staff members get to see a longitudinal view across the school. Identified pupils at risk of not getting 5 passes – looked to see how those pupils experienced things in the classroom.

The letter suggests parental stuff – school calendar being set to get parent etc views at set times. Study support and study skills building in to parent evenings to allow parents to find out more.

A member asked if more setting would help? What is the school policy? Rector says no convincing evidence one way or another. Maths and Science departments say that due to the linear nature of progression of their subjects sets are needed. English and linguists say that setting is less important, and broader ability range classes have less able pupils pulled up and more able not pulled down. A parent noted that the fall of second language to two periods a week was done on the basis that they were set. Rector says that if case made by subject teachers for setting then the senior management team will consider it. The agreed modern language setting in lower school will continue with CfE. It is currently only maths and modern languages that are set in lower school. Further up may be some setting, esp in science and maths. S3 upwards have some setting due.

Paul welcomed the offer of the Rector to talk with the attainment group, and will liaise with him to find an appropriate date. The Parent Council anticipates a fuller discussion of the 2011 SQA results at the 7 March meeting following the Rector's discussion of these results with councillors. The nature of the results is already known after they were published nationally, and the Parent Council looks forward to hearing the Rector's interpretation and comments.

## **11 The New Madras – developments**

Factual updates. Major thing was lack of info on decant. Consultation will not end before decant details published. Some concern about how all the pupils will fit on the South Street site. Will squeezing all the pupils on the site affect educational attainment? Rector takes issue about comments that the educational experience will not be good. He claims it will be better on a single site without the need for teacher transport and time between sites. There have been two meetings with architects about where to get modular accommodation in. They have mapped out the wishes of the school, but now need to check with suppliers. Everything has to meet building control and fire regulations. There is a hope to have information available by end of month. In response to a question it was noted that the modular accommodation will contain science labs. Would the current huts at South Street be replaced by a multi-storey modular accommodation block – this may be the case.

## **12 Fife Council's Consultation on its proposals for the New Madras –**

A decision is required on when and how to respond to the Consultation Question as a Parent Council - it was proposed that, as our next scheduled meeting will take place after the end of the Consultation period, we really had to decide what our response was at this meeting. It had been proposed that if this timing is agreed, a secret Yes/No ballot would then be held in answer to the Consultation Question after any Parent Council Member who wishes to speak had addressed the meeting.

A long discussion took place where it was suggested by some that we needed to see the decant arrangements first, by others that if we don't know decant arrangements we should say no, and by others that it was not appropriate to take a majority decision at the Parent Council to give a single PC view to Fife Council. The discussion was held with no clear consensus. There was no objection to the chairman's suggestion that the meeting should be reconvened once decant arrangements are known, at time to be decided. The chair stated that he would take advice.

## **13 AOCB**

No time.

## **14 Next scheduled meeting - Wednesday 7th March 2012**

Note re Draft Agenda Item 5: SQA Results 2011 - the Rector has intimated that it would be inappropriate to give a formal report to the Parent Council before he has done so to the elected Councillors, probably in February 2012. A report to the Parent Council will therefore be made at the earliest opportunity thereafter, most likely the next scheduled meeting in March 2012

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## **Actions and possible matters arising for next meeting:-**

03 – Appointment of new chairperson

04 – Science block. Bruce drafted letter at suggestion of Rector and instruction of Parent Council, met on site to discuss with relevant school staff. Draft letter passed by acting chair and Rector.

05 – Rector to talk with school dyslexia unit and arts department, PC to consider any funding request. Funding request received from Duke of Edinburgh Award team

08 – Bruce has linked to relevant documents on Curriculum for Excellence, after Rector identified.

09 – Bruce has asked Debbie for details on 50/50 and shopping and has put on PC website and minutes. Parentmail on 50/50 sent at Debbie's request.

10 – Attainment group – meeting to happen, date for meeting with Rector to be agreed. Information to come on how parent opinions to be sampled, and on parental guidance on study opportunities.

11 – Awaiting information on decant arrangements, Fife Council has published some information.

12 – Callum taking advice on Fife Council consultation document and setting time of meeting to determine response. – later determined to be 7 pm on Wednesday 8th February 2012 at Kilrymont School.