

**Madras College Parent Council Meeting - DRAFT MINUTES  
8 October 2008**

**1. Present:-** Henry Paul, Ian Jones, Alex Slawin, Marjory Finlay, Lynsey Seeley, Cllr Robin Waterston, Gillian Bowman, Bruce Sinclair, Eric Bowman, Phill Williams, Jackie Himpson, Heather Marriage, Adam Alexander, Mary Scott, Andy Primmer, Jim Gray, Cllr Ron Caird, Robin Dewar, Linda Hardie, Eric Bowman.

**Apologies:-** Cllr Morrison, Olav Darge, Alistair Black, Andy Herd, Jackie Morrisey

**Resignations:-** Jo Secker-Walker and Roger Coulthard

**2. Minutes of Last Meeting**

The minutes of the last full Parent Council Meeting (28 May 2008) and sub-groups (Policy 23 June 2008, Policy 25 August) were approved (proposed Phil, seconded Eric), and the Chair asked for them to be put on the PC website.

**3. Election of new Office Holders**

Henry was elected Chair unopposed. Henry indicated that this would be his second and final year as PC chair. He also noted that he would not be around mid-February to mid-June of the coming session due to work commitments.

Phil was elected vice-chair unopposed, and Mary treasurer likewise.

**4. Structure of the PC**

After discussion it was agreed to disband the three sub-groups, and to have just the main committee with short-lifetime working groups as required.

**5. Rector's Report**

At yesterday's interviews for a new physics teacher position no appointment had been made. Future progress depends on what happens with tomorrow's interviews for Curriculum Leader in Science, which is the last senior post to be filled for the new staffing plan. Short term, pupils in affected physics certificate classes will continue to have a mix of science teachers qualified to teach physics. It had not been possible to timetable the remaining physics teachers to cover all the certificate classes.

The Rector indicated that the PT of maths, Ken Nisbet, would be retiring at Christmas. The aim is to appoint a new Principal Teacher to take post as Mr Nisbet retires.

The Rector hopes that in the near future the PC classrooms in Kilrymont will be moved to the third floor in order to allow learning support and guidance into the current rooms and thus bring pupil support and guidance into one geographic area. This is so important that it may be allowed to happen in term time. Today he learnt that these works had been permitted to go to the planning phase.

There are developments in the New Madras. The Council is about to survey all staff and pupils in relevant schools in Fife to gauge thoughts on what kind of specification is needed in a new school. A local group is expected to be set up early in the New Year.

The Rector spoke to the Standards and Quality report that he had just provided. A two-page summary will go home to parents. The full report can go on the PC Website after he emails it to Bruce. The new-style report looks back and plans forward. Three pages of School aims had been condensed to three broad principles in the report. An updated draft of the School aims will be brought to the next PC for comment.

There had been many positive things associated with "Improvements in Performance" in the School over the last year, and good reason to be optimistic for more in the future.

The monitoring and tracking that was priority 3 for last session has not yet worked through to reporting, as the School is still waiting for Fife Council to deliver a Management Information System.

The review of homework policy and practice is ongoing. The new diaries and traffic lights are considered important. It seems that a Parent Mail communication that the Rector had thought had gone to parents had not got through. He would investigate.

The current timetable has "The School's success in involving parents, carers, and families" as a major item probably in 2009/10, but is not currently being neglected. Parent Mail has been very helpful. There is the possibility of a parent night on the "A Curriculum for Excellence" developments.

The "Rewards and Praise" scheme was reported by one member to be inconsistently applied. "Good" pupils may also be more likely to get a row for a certain type of behaviour than "bad" pupils, it was suggested. The Rector aims for consistency amongst his staff.

S1 parents had still not been added to the Parent Mail distribution list. The Rector reported that this should happen soon, and acknowledged that it would have been helpful for these lists to have been finished earlier in the session. Next year it may be possible to work on them over the summer.

Now, at the end of first term, it seems that S1 pupils have still not been allocated a locker. The Rector reported that there had been difficulties in ensuring that girls had lockers at one end of the hall and boys at the other, but that this should now move forward.

It was suggested that the School or PC could apply to places like the Carbon Trust for funding for bicycle racks. It was requested that teachers cycling to School be encouraged to wear cycle helmets to set a good example to pupils.

The School's anti-bullying policy is to be addressed under the "Care and Welfare" agenda. The January meeting of the PC will hear more. An incident was reported to have happened outside the back gate of the School at leaving time. The School reported difficulty in getting the police involved in this and other activities as they were so heavily involved in the Dunhill championships. The Rector was not able to commit staff to monitor the back gate, so suggested that pupils may wish to leave by the main entrance instead.

A member reported concerns that in a number of instances classes with an absent teacher ended up just watching a video with no obvious educational relevance to the subject of the lesson. The Rector stated that this is not what is meant to happen; Principal Teachers should work with colleagues to ensure that pupils are gainfully occupied. He asked that reports of such incidents be sent to the School by letter, email ([madrascollege.enquiries@fife.gov.uk](mailto:madrascollege.enquiries@fife.gov.uk)), or phone (South Street Building, KY16 9EJ Telephone (01334) 659402, Kilrymont Road Building, KY16 8DE Telephone (01334) 659401). These contact details and reporting procedures might usefully go out in a ParentMail.

## **6. Scottish Parent Teacher Conference and AGM and Area Forum**

The PC is a member of SPTC through a block purchase by Fife Council. Their 8 November conference in Holyrood may be worth someone going to, please let Henry know if interested. They are also seeking directors. Fife Council seems to be slow at getting a meeting together of PC reps and senior Council officials. There is, however, a meeting of local PC reps and a Fife Council person employed to support PCs in Elmwood College on 29 October at 7 pm. Members please let Henry know if you would be interested in accompanying him.

## **7. EcoClub**

Good news just in is that Fife Environment Trust are considering giving £5000 in grant money to the EcoClub to develop an area of the South Street site into a herb and sensory garden. The application required PC members to state their occupations, a £110 registration fee from the PC, and a contribution of £500 that we will have as the R&A input to recent Eco activities. When all is done, Henry hopes to have someone from the R&A for a photocall. Volunteers may be needed on 8 November to collect tree saplings and build a nursery. It would be nice to have the sensory garden in the St Andrews Open Gardens afternoon next summer. The East Fife Organic Gardeners organisation may be able to provide some input.

## **8. AOCB**

### **Events**

There may be an interest from current primary school parents about what is coming with "A Curriculum for Excellence". What ACE means is still being consulted upon.

There was support from the PC for an evening meeting run by the School on a topic such as “How can you support your young person’s learning in X, where X might be English, Maths, or another core subject. Bruce offered to act as a PC contact for this. The target audience is parents, but pupils would not be excluded. This may happen in early January. This will be taken forward by the Rector and his colleagues.

There was also interest in a future meeting on learning techniques run by School staff.

### **Miscellaneous**

A member asked about involving pupils in the UNICEF “rights respecting school” scheme. The Rector reported that P7s on their visits had done some work in this sort of area.

A member suggested that the PC should write to retiring staff to thank them for their input. The meeting agreed, and the Rector agreed to pass the relevant information to the PC Chair. We will start with the last summer’s retirees.

A member asked how well the Faculty Heads Scheme was working. The Rector thought well, with tomorrow’s appointment being the last piece in the jigsaw.

A member asked about criteria for Dates Ties. Any queries on this should go to guidance teachers. The achievement has to be as part of a Madras College team/activity. Dates ties are being looked at for harmonisation with the new praise and reward scheme.

The meeting agreed to register the PCs thanks to Katie Pitman for all her work on the PTA, and last year on the PC. Henry will write to her.

A member reported that pupils still seemed to be the subject of hostility from some local stores. The Rector reported that Madras pupils had been informed that they were not to go to Aldi at lunchtime.

It seems that the ParentMail about the 50/50 club had not gone out. It was agreed to change the closing date to the end of October and have another go at ParentMail.

Cllr Waterston reported that the New School plans were progressing. An organisation had been created with officers and members working to look at the School Estate for all Fife in order to put in a business case. Madras and Dunfermline High are at the top of the list. It is hoped to have a local stakeholder group set up in January or February 2009. This should have representatives from the PC, staff, pupils, and from the PCs of local primary schools. This should consult and recommend options to the relevant decision making body. The Madras project was potentially made more complicated to take forward due to the potentially-valuable potential involvement of the University and local developers. The Structure Plan and the Local Plan also need to be developed and approved before serious planning can start. Cllr Waterston hoped that within two years we should know more clearly where we are than now. Some members expressed disquiet about the long time scales involved, and suggested communicating with elected representatives at local, Scotland and UK level. The PC noted pleasure that the process was proceeding.

Given the timescales involved, the meeting noted the importance of ensuring that the current Madras is made fit for purpose. The meeting acknowledged that there had been some welcome improvements to the fabric of the School. The Rector commended the high quality of the new office accommodation. Fife Estates do now seem to be responding faster than before on maintenance requests. Cllr Waterston noted that it was easier for elected representatives to respond to specific concerns rather than general ones. The meeting asked the Rector what were his most pressing concerns regarding the School estate. He said it was that South Street buildings were not all water and wind tight. The two Councillors agreed to press Fife Council on this particular matter.

The meeting thanked the co-opted members for their input, both the Councillors and the School Staff. It was hoped that pupils representatives might be involved again.

The PC agreed to support the School Burns night celebrations by £200.

The Rector noted that this year was the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the South Street buildings. He hoped to include this theme in a number of events.