

# *Madras College Parents' Council*

## Minutes of Meeting 3 October 2007

Present:- Adam Alexander, Alistair Black, Gillian Bowman, Eric Bowman, Roger Coultherd, Cathy Dunn, Emillia Ferraro, Marjory Finlay, Ian Green, Jackie Himpson, Angela Hodge, Louise Kay, Heather Marriage, Jackie Morrissey, Matt Paterson, Henry Paul, Kathryn Pitman, Brian Purvis, Fiona Roger, Alex Slawin, Aloson Scott, Mary Scott, Bruce Sinclair, Iona Smith, Phill Williams, Geraldine Wooley, Joanna Wright & Ian Jones.

Apologies: Rebecca Barnsby, Iain Collie, Lynn Hynd & Christine Rawlinson.

### **1. Welcome**

The Rector, Ian Jones, welcomed all those present to this, the first meeting of the Parent Council (PC).

### **2. Membership and Apologies**

Four members tendered their apologies. Some members declared possible conflict of interest as employees of the local University.

### **3. Appointments**

Henry Paul was appointed as chair, after first declaring his interest as executive member for Fife of the Scottish Parent Councils Association formerly the Scottish School Board Association, a national parent council body, and having been nominated by Philip Williams and seconded by Roger Coulthard.

Adam Alexander was appointed as vice chair having been nominated by Catherine Dunn and seconded by Henry Paul.

No member volunteered to be Secretary. The Rector undertook to try to find a member of the School admin staff who may be prepared to be paid to be clerk to the PC. Bruce Sinclair agreed to take the minutes of this meeting.

Mary Scott was appointed as treasurer having been proposed by Alex Slawin and seconded by Katie Pitman.

### **4. Co-opted Members**

It was agreed that Heather Marriage and Ian Green should be on the PC as full parent members, filling up the 30 available positions. There may have been an administrative problem which had resulted in their names not being on the list presented at this meeting.

Councillors who represent areas covered by the School catchment area will be invited by Henry to attend our meetings as co-opted members, but with the expectation that normally two or three being present would be appropriate.

Four teachers in the School will be co-opted on to the PC, and the Rector will endeavour to find suitable personnel.

Four pupils will be co-opted to the PC, two from each site. This is likely to mean two from S3 and two from S6, selected from pupils on the relevant Year and School Councils.

Andy Herd of Community use is to be invited to be co-opted on to the PC after nomination by Katie Pitman and seconding by Catherine Dunn.

Peter McKiernan, who was chair of the former School Board is to be invited to be co-opted on to the PC after nomination by Adam Alexander and seconding by Jackie Himpson.

Henry is to write to Andy Herd and Peter McKiernan to invite them to take up these positions.

Bruce Sinclair was co-opted onto the PC as webmaster after nomination by Eric Bowman and seconding by Emilia Ferraro. Bruce wishes to declare a potential conflict of interest as an employee of the local University.

Co-opted members will normally be invited to serve for a year at a time. Other members may be co-opted during the term of the current PC.

## **5. Matters from the Last School Board and PTA meetings**

It transpired that no-one had access to formal minutes from the last meeting of the School Board on 24 April 2007. Instead, those present who had been there suggested that the informal record published on the School Board web site gave a good record of the meeting, which had been dealing primarily with the transition to the PC, and which had now happened.

The last meeting of the PTA decided that that organisation would be formally wound up in November, meaning that the PTA and the PC would run in parallel for a few months. The PTA plans to spend some of its current funds on worthwhile projects to benefit the pupils before transferring any remaining money to the PC. Funds currently stand at about £5.5k. All members of staff had been asked where they felt the funds could best be spent, given that they were for special projects and not for doing things that Fife Council funds should be expected to cover. Pupil Councils and Year Councils had also been asked. The Rector reported that possible projects include displays and lockers in Kilrymont, and benches and tables for a new outdoor area at South St.

Adam and Henry were both planning to go to an anti-bullying conference on 10 November. It was agreed that their costs should be covered, but not by funds originating from the PTA.

## **6. Rector's Report**

### **i) SQA Assessments**

The Rector had recently met with Brian Kirkcaldy to look at the School's results in SQA. Comparisons with previous years should be done with caution, given that the expected appeals had not yet been processed.

There were many positive things to report.

S6 in Advanced Highers had done well across the board, with the School's pass rate comparing favourably to the Fife and National averages.

S5 Highers results were good, with particular successes in English, Maths, Chemistry, Physics, Modern Studies, Computing, Biology, and Drama.

S4 Standard Grades were looking good in Maths, Modern Studies, Chemistry, Accounts & Finance. There were also areas for concern with pass rates in some other topics at Standard Grade, and action plans had been agreed with relevant Principal Teachers, while noting that particular classes and individuals had excelled.

The PC congratulated the pupils and teachers on these achievements.

### **ii) Target setting and tracking**

Next term there will be more work in the School on target setting and tracking with pupils. This should feed in to the reporting system to parents in due course, and more easily once things are done via electronic systems.

### **iii) Behaviour for learning**

The Rector was pleased at the results to date on the "Behaviour for Learning" initiative, which has support from many pupils due to its aims, its clarity and simplicity, and the feeling that it is a fairer system with centralised systems meaning that repeat offenders are more likely to be dealt with appropriately. The Rector commented on the difficulty of getting 120 staff to buy into the scheme, and the Pupil Councils had commented on the fact that not all staff were applying the new rules consistently.

### **iv) School bodies**

The year and school councils are now up and running, and may be involved in going for Eco school status. A charities committee is working.

### **v) Standards and Quality report and development plan**

The Rector has been working on this, and a draft will be emailed to PC members before the next meeting. Some changes in use of space within the School buildings have been made, and there are plans for relocating subject classrooms to bring cognate subjects closer together. Some of these plans will depend on special funding from Fife Council.

#### **vi) Communications**

The PC welcomed news that the School is looking at ways of using email groups to communicate with parents. There were some concerns expressed about possible running costs and privacy of information, and about whether Fife Council should not be looking at running such things centrally. The Rector is looking into these issues. The overall feeling was strongly that this is the sort of development that the PC would like to see, helping communication between the School and many parents. If this went ahead, the PC could send messages to parents via the School office using this system.

### **7. Other Items of Business**

#### **i) Unsatisfactory Split Site**

Henry suggested that Ken Greer should be invited to the next meeting to update the PC on where Fife Council is with its response to the “unsatisfactory” status of the split site in the HMIE report. The Rector meets soon with Cllr David Chapman of the Education & Children’s Services Committee and his deputy Cllr Robin Waterson (a local St Andrews Cllr) and hopes to raise similar issues. There has been no obvious move over the last year. The HMIE is likely to come back to look for progress in December, having asked for a report by 12 November. The PC agreed to invite Ken Greer, but also commented that the School and Fife Council should be doing whatever is possible to maximise the effectiveness of the existing arrangements for the benefit of current pupils.

Members asked why teachers had to commute between the two sites, and were told that this was unavoidable. The Rector suggested that timetables were designed to minimise disruption to learning, but members commented on examples where this did not appear to be the case. The Rector invited members to let him know full details so that he could explore further.

#### **ii) State of Facilities**

A member of the PC suggested that the state of the outside-accessible toilets was “disgusting”, with occasions when no toilet paper was available. The Rector has spoken with janitorial staff to try to get a more reliable supply of toilet paper (note added in minutes – and soap?). One member of the PC urged us not to get bogged down in this issue, but a number of parents commented that their children so wished not to use these toilets that they worked hard to avoid the need to go to the School toilets through the day.

It was suggested that a Home Economics room was not up to commercial standards for food preparation.

The Rector agreed that it may be useful for the PC to be taken on a tour of facilities and for any problems seen to be minuted and be available for possible use in making arguments to Fife Council to sort them out. A tour of some Kilrymont facilities is arranged prior to the next PC meeting.

The new status of listed building at the Kilrymont site may cause problems in the future with the additional consultations etc needed. Currently it is changes to the exterior of the building that need to be approved by Historic Scotland, and plans to change two doors into windows are going through the system at present.

#### **iii) HMIE Survey**

Henry will scan and email out the survey form, and invites PC members to let him know their responses. He will take appropriate averages and respond on behalf of the PC.

#### **iv) Constitution**

The tabled version of the constitution of the PC has an error. In section 8 it should state “50 members”, not “50% of members”.

#### **v) Sub-Committees / Groups**

Discussions on sub-committees were largely held over to the next meeting, with members asked to consider what would be appropriate. The Chair suggested that such split groups should always come back together for a full PC meeting.

A proposal for a parents’ meeting on cyber-bullying was thought to be worth working on in association with similar meetings with children and teachers. The Rector accepted that the School policies on internet etc needed to be updated.

**vi) Insurance**

The PTA public liability insurance had been transferred to cover the PC. In due course the PC will come under the insurance cover purchased by Fife Council. Members noted that the PC should ensure that only one such policy was in force at any one time.

**vii) Treasurer's Issues**

The treasurer and chair will endeavour to determine what funds the old School Board has to transfer to the PC, and what funds can come from Fife Council. It was noted that any two of the Chair, Treasurer, and Vice Chair can sign cheques. The PC approved the Treasurer's request to locate the bank account at the Bank of Scotland.

**viii) Educational Issues**

It was suggested that Council should spend some of its time discussing current educational issues. The Rector agreed and offered to invite senior members of staff with appropriate expertise and responsibilities to help address these topics.

**ix) Contact with the School**

A member asked why it was so difficult to get a hold of email addresses for (for example) guidance teachers, but it was suggested that one of the School's generic email addresses should be used. These will be better displayed on the School website, which is being developed by a member of staff at the moment.

**x) Diabetes Awareness**

One member with particular interests in this area proposed running an event to raise awareness. The Rector commented that this would be better dealt with as a curriculum issue.

**xi) Citizen**

The PC was pleased to see the Madras Diary in the Citizen, and commended those involved in this bi-weekly display. Colin McKay is the person to see if the PC wishes to contribute to this.

**xii) Tesco**

Members expressed concern at the way in which Tesco is treating School pupils. It is reported that the shop is allowing only five pupils at a time into the premises. The PC did not like the concept of the store restricting the activities of all School pupils due to the alleged misbehaviour of a small number of pupils. The Rector is attempting to deal with the situation. A member of the public is reported to have commented very favourably on the patience shown by Madras pupils while queuing at the entrance.

**xiii) Prospectus Currency**

A member was concerned that the clubs listing in the prospectus was out of date. The Rector acknowledged this, but stated that with the need for the prospectus to be ready nine months ahead of time made this inevitable. It was suggested that better use of the School website might help alleviate the problem.

**8. Next Meeting**

Wednesday 14 November, in Kilrymont at 7.30 pm. Those that wish to take part in a tour of the building should meet at the main entrance at 6.45 pm.

If Fife Council put up someone to talk about their response to the "unsatisfactory" rating, this will be a major item. Sub committees and a plan of work for the year are likely also to be on the agenda.