

Madras Parent Council

Meeting Wed 4th March

MINUTE

1. Apologies received: Lynn Christie; Georgiana Mazilu; Calum McLeod; Jo Secker; Dawn Waddell; Cllr Tim Brett; Cllr Margaret Taylor.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

These were approved.

2.1. Matters Arising

a) Update on Fife Council budget cut proposals

Fife Council has rejected proposals to move to a 4.5 week for primary schools in the current round of budget cuts; although secondary schools have not been specifically exempted, the Parent Council heard that there did not appear to be plans to introduce the restricted hours in the immediate future.

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

The Parent Council heard that in addition to Biology, which was discussed in the last meeting, there were even more significant syllabus differences between the old and new Highers and Advanced Highers in Computer Science. The Rector explained that the old Higher had allowed schools to opt for either information systems or computing, and that the new syllabus combined these two strands. In addition, the new Higher/Advanced Higher has also launched an entirely new coding language. While transition to the Advanced Higher in Biology was possible by patching in one additional module, the gap between the old and new computer science courses was too great for pupils to be able safely to shift from old Higher to new Advanced Higher. Madras College Computer Science department were not able, therefore, to progress pupils sitting the old syllabus Higher in Computer Science in 2104-15 onto the new Advanced Higher in 2015-16. This would affect about 5 students.

The Rector proposed two possible local solutions:

- The school could run the old syllabus Advanced Higher for skills acquisition only, not accreditation/exam, in 2015-16
- Pupils who had already passed the old Higher could sit the new Higher to gain the additional skills

Neither option was likely to produce additional leverage for university entrance via UCAS, but both could help students gain skills that would be useful for University study. The school would work with the pupils affected to see which option was preferable.

The Parent Council felt that there was still time to lobby the Scottish Government and to write letters to the national press urging the Scottish Education Secretary to reconsider the decision not to run the old qualification for one further year. The Chairman has written to the SPTA as requested at the last meeting.

Action:

- Rebecca Trengove and Paul Brown offered to write again to the Scottish Executive and also to national newspapers.
- The Rector was asked to brief pupils planning to go forward to Advanced Higher Biology on the additional teaching arrangements in June.

c) Tayport Buses – provision shortfall.

The PC was read an email from John McLaughlin, local area education officer, which confirmed that the additional Tayport buses would continue in future sessions.

d) Update on planning appeal for new building

None to report - c/f.

e) Prizes and Awards Ceremony

The Rector reported that meetings had taken place both in school and with the parent focus group to discuss proposals for the new format awards.

It was proposed that there should be one annual ceremony for the whole school, rather than two separate lower and upper school ceremonies, although additional awards might be made at year assemblies.

i: Years S1 to S3

Bell Awards would be made either for academic achievement, and for effort/improvement.

Each Faculty would nominate up to 12 students for each category (academic or effort).¹

¹ Subject-based faculties at Madras are: Creative & Expressive Arts (including art, drama and music); English; Health & Wellbeing (Home economics and PE); Mathematics; Modern Languages (French German and Spanish); Science (including biology, chemistry and physics); Social Sciences (including classics and latin, geography, history, modern studies and RMPS); and Technologies (Business,

These nominations would be counted and pupils receiving nominations for several Faculty areas would be put forward for Bell Awards.

The certificate of award would then state that the pupil had gained a Bell Award for academic achievement or effort/improvement, in [list of nominating departments].

ii. Years S4 to S6

Awards in the upper school would again be for academic achievement or effort/improvement, but nominations here would be by subject rather than Faculty. Each subject area would be able to nominate up to 6 pupils in each of the two Bell Award categories, except Maths and English, who could nominate up to 12 pupils.

iii. Bequeathed Awards

The school was maintaining its current stable of bequeathed awards but had matched this so that academic subjects currently unrepresented would be represented, and ensuring that academic achievement could be fully recognised alongside sporting achievement. *There are a few bequeathed awards in areas other than sport that also contribute to the life and culture of the school.

The PC agreed that this system was an improvement on last year. However, there was still some concern about the following points.

- The new system of nominations counting would not recognise exceptional achievement in a single subject (upper school) or faculty (lower school) area. A student with exceptional craft and design skills, for example, might benefit from this being recognised if seeking a job or apprenticeship placement.
- At N4/5 level, the new awards for achievement would be likely to recognise N5 level rather than N4 level academic achievement (although the N4 pupil might still be nominated for effort).
- It wasn't transparent how the system would feed into the nomination of School Duxes in Arts and Sciences.

The Rector undertook to feed these points back to staff prior to implementation.

3. Chair's remarks – n/a

Computing and Design & Tech). Guidance and Support for Learning are also presences: it wasn't explained how these areas contribute to the new awards.

4. Rector's Report

4.1. INSIGHT system: this is still not fully bedded in and staff training remains to be done. In theory should be available for parents to access some reports from the end of March.

ACTION: DM to email all parents once the system is live, with a simple explanation of what it is and what information it shows.

4.2. Schools in Partnership. Madras is part of a small group of schools (including Grove Academy, Dundee and the Royal High School in Edinburgh) which share similar catchment and attainment profiles, and which are meeting to discuss best practice. These discussions involve both staff and pupils, and the PC heard that a group of pupils from Madras were attending a group meeting on leadership skills.

4.3. Attainment Strategies. The Rector circulated a list compiled by the Extended Management Team in the school of activities underway in every faculty to support and improve attainment. The Easter School was highlighted, which will provide additional support for pupils sitting exams this May and June. Staff are being paid for their time, but were thanked and commended for this additional effort. It was noted that this might benefit from Education Trust support in future years. Parents noted in particular the availability of past papers on a variety of media, and a drive for targeted homework, both listed areas.

4.4. Projected Roll 2015-16. The school roll for next year should rise from 1260 to c.1280.

S1 intake: rise 208 in 2014 to 258 in 2015.

S5 intake: gaining about 20 pupils on placement requests.

The arrival of army personnel at Leuchars is adding between 30-32 additional pupils.

These figures are encouraging and suggest that Madras is gaining ground as a preferred first choice for families in the area.

4.5. Course Choices and Reports

The upper school course choice grip was circulated, which remains unchanged against last year. Interviews with pupils currently in S5 and S6 had indicated that it provided them with a robust framework.

Reports are due c. Tuesday 17th March, and the grid should be circulated by Friday 13th March for return at the end of the next week.

The Rector remarked that it appeared that pupils who were doing 5+ Highers in S5 seemed to be needing a bit more support than in past years, suggesting that the S4 pattern of taking 6 N5s had not prepared them for the extra workload in S5. The number of N4/5s being sat is being revised upwards.

Several parents praised the S3 and S4 reports and parents' evenings this session.

5. Treasurer and Fundraising Reports

Figures supplied by email.

5.1. *Income*. No change - £3722.61 in the bank. The next bank statement might show additional Easy Fundraising income.

5.2. *Expenditure*

- As the Pipe Band is no longer entering the Scottish Schools Pipe Band championship, the subsidy of c. £250 agreed by the last meeting is no longer required,

The Rector asked the PC to carry forward funds to next year, as although projects in the school in the current year have been funded, the Regional budget cuts next session are likely to leave some areas short-funded.

6. Secretary's Report – n/a

7. AOB

7.1. *Education Trust Supports Juggler*. Councillor Bill Connor highlighted an award for pupil Luke Davis which was allowing him to go forward to an international juggling competition.

7.2. *Scottish Parent Teacher Council*. Sally Walker has attended the SPTC conference in Glasgow and offered to brief the PC at the next meeting about strategies for parent engagement.

7.3. *Date of next meeting*: Wednesday 20th May, 7pm Kilrymont.