

Madras Parent Council

Wednesday 2nd March 2016
7.00pm – Kilrymont Campus

Minute

1. Apologies received. Karen Barnett, Georgiana Mazilu; Heather Moffitt. Jonathan O’Riordan; Susan Simpson; Rebecca Trengove; Jo Secker Walker; Dawn Waddell; Cllr Bill Connor; Cllr Dorothea Morrison; Cllr Margaret Taylor;.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting. Adopted as published.

3. Matters Arising.

3.1. School Website. The Rector reported that this had been updated with dropdown menus to make content easier to find, including easier navigation to the maths toolkit and policy. However, extracurricular activities had not been updated due to limited staff time and other priority tasks. The school was reluctant to insist that extra-curricular activities should be coordinated centrally as this would inhibit initiatives, but that the summer planning period would provide an opportunity to collate such information as was available in advance of the new school year. It was noted that the website template used the shell laid down by Fife Council and that the member of staff currently responsible for maintenance does this alongside carrying a normal full teaching load.

3.2. Pipeband competition bus funding. In hand, application by PT Expressive Arts for external funding.

3.3. Sports Strip (rugby). The Rector reported that the school would fund socks, but that pupils (parents) would be expected to launder these themselves. Councillors urged application to the Community Trust for funding by June 2016.

3.4. New Madras local development group. The response to the Chair’s letter to Derek Brown (Head of local Education Services) requesting the Council’s participation in a small working group to review the internal configuration plans for the new school build at Pipeland had been referred to Louise Playford, Schools Estates Officer. The outcome of the judicial review is still pending but the Council intend to move the project forward quickly if the ruling is in their favour.

** The following parents volunteered to sit on the working group: *Andy Primmer, Sally Walker, Anna Moss*

3.4. Buses / Guardbridge Road closure. Delays were inevitable but it seems as if the new bus schedules are coping and pupils are still getting to school for the start of the school day.

4. Office-holder Reports

4.1. Chair's Remarks – n/a.

4.2. Treasurer's Report.

Balance (unchanged): £4548.50

Grant for Ohio exchange – awaiting confirmation of fundraising by pupils/any need.

4.3. Secretary's report – n/a.

5. Rector's Report

5.1. Prelims. These had run smoothly – unaffected by road closures. The school is considering ways to move some syllabus delivery back to S3 to relieve pressure on the upper school, but that internal assessments for SQA qualifications needed to take place towards the end of the course to ensure the best outcomes.

The case for providing formal prelims was laid out. Although no longer used as the basis for grade appeals (except in exceptional circumstances where other work is also taken into account), prelims give pupils the opportunity to practice their exam skills under timed conditions. The Rector suggested that shortening both the length of the prelim exams and (pro-rata) the length of the prelim papers could still help pupils practice exam skills while reducing the marking load on staff. This will be considered for next year, so that prelim results can be tied more quickly into pupil's progress reports.

5.2. Course Choices. The process was on target (lower school forms sent out, S3/4 interviews conducted, S5 forms due imminently) and pupil consultation is showing that most pupils are happy that they have secured the subjects they want/need, with some final tweaks needed to resolve some queries.

5.3. Reports. Parents in receipt of pupil's progress reports praised the helpfulness and thoroughness of the comments. The default SEEMIS format is not elegant – in particular, it produces a comments in a tiny font. Two options are possible. A: no restriction on the size of the free comments, which allows a lot of detail to be typed in but uses small font: or B: a format that uses larger font and less white space but which restricts the amount of free format text that could be added. Teachers preferred (A) as this allowed staff the most freedom to comment in detail on pupils who might need additional space. If the (B) option were chosen, it was felt that teachers would need more standardised compressed wording which would not be as helpful to pupils or parents. Parents present agreed that (A) was better, although parents with sight impairment may need to contact the school if they need larger format (A3) reports.

5.4. Easter study school. Following the success of this scheme last year and in October, the school management has put the call out to staff, and plans to run (2 x 3 hour) sessions on 4 days each week. Information will be sent to pupils. No uniform necessary; bus passes cannot be used, but pupils should contact the school if this creates a real barrier to engagement. Parents thanked staff for generously giving their time to this initiative.

5.5. Building and estate.

- £50K IT expenditure has put in place e.g. overhead projectors in classrooms.
- Easter period will see a spring clean following a fire survey identification of places where storage should be consolidated and fire doors fitted in the South Street maths corridor.
- Previously reported work on the stage at Kilrymont is completed.
- South Street hall will no longer be used for sport; instead, the Cosmos Centre games hall is in use. This means that PE at Madras now uses 4 different sites.

6. AOB

6.1. Prefect appointment process – c/f.

6.2. Meningitis vaccinations for upper school. These had happened just before the prelims and had adversely affected some pupils. Study leave meant that the full impact of this was probably not known to the school. The Rector reported that this had not been anticipated (the NHS schedule had driven the timetable) but that this year had been an unusually large process (all of S4 to S6) as a new strain of the virus was being covered. Next year, only the S4 pupils should be targeted, and attempts will be made to keep this clear of exams.

6.3. Study leave: from Wed 4th May to first week June.

6.4. New Parent Council office holders (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer): call is out – volunteers please for the next meeting in May.

6.5. Fife Education Budget. Councillor Thomson reported that the Council had been required to make savings of c.£39 million, and decisions had been made that will affect the education budget, amounting to c. £6 million in total. Although upsetting, this amounts to a smaller percentage cut on the specific education budget in comparison with other services, as efforts have been made to give education some degree of protection. Cuts include:

- £1 was being cut from the general education unearmarked budget;
- £1.5 million from the early years budget;
- £100K p.a. from music services;

- The building maintenance budget for schools in Fife was shrinking from £2 million to £1 million;
- £1.5 million to be achieved in 'vacancy management' i.e. not replacing staff when they left.

This last area was one that worried parents, although the Rector explained that creative timetabling and use of supply teachers could in part compensate. This is an area that next session's parent council should continue to watch.

6.6. **Sports success.** Thanks to teachers and congratulations to pupils as follows.

- S5 pupils now playing tennis weekly at the university sports centre.
- Netball – senior girls won the Fife Netball Cup for the first time since 1959.

*Minute submitted to Chair for clearance and
Subject to adoption in next meeting*

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 18th May 2016