

**Minutes of the Grantown Grammar School Parent Council meeting.
Held at the school on 19th March 2013 at 8pm.**

Apologies

Sally Pilkington
Robert Brown
Catherine McAuly-Brand
Claire McGonigal

Present

Giles Baker	Chair, Parent Council
Irene Carson	Head Teacher
Karen Smith	Treasurer
Lindsay Coleman	Clerk
Ollie Bray	Depute Headteacher
Elaine Cullen	
Anne Sullivan	
Zoe Cooke	
Ene-Karmen Forsyth	Vice Chair (Policy and Planning)

1. Approval of the minutes dated 27th November 2012

Fundraising Meeting:

Proposed by Karen Smith

Seconded by Giles Baker

Policy and Planning Meeting:

Proposed by Karen Smith

Seconded by Zoe Cooke

Claire McGonigal agreed to send Lindsay the email addresses of the school captains so that they could receive invitations to future meetings.

2. Head Teacher's Report

Staffing

Mr Wood who taught Maths and Physics left at Christmas.

Unfortunately the school has been unable to since get specialist supply for these two subjects. Irene explained this is due to the new pay structure whereby supply teachers are placed on the lowest pay level whatever their rate should be, unless they are contracted from blocks of more than 5 days.

With internal changes and the use of Mrs Grant back from maternity leave, maths is covered. However physics has proved impossible to fill. Mrs Sutherland who has a Physics qualification and Miss Paterson who has physics in her degree is supporting physics classes. S4 has a particular problem as 2 classes are timetabled together.

Home Economics – no supply cover is available and Miss Clark in PE is picking up some junior HE classes to support Miss Boyle.

Irene has drafted the school timetable for the next session and the school will not be able to run an appropriate curriculum without going into an overstaffing situation. Highland Council has been advised. The extent of overstaffing will depend on how many pupils stay on and how the classes balance out. The good news is that there has been an unusually high number of placing requests which should help reduce the impact of the falling roll.

It is forecast that the school will end the year with a £16k overspend due to overstaffing which has been unavoidable.

Curriculum

Highland Steer

Irene explained that the Highland Steer was a starting point for auditing and for future planning amongst teachers. It came about as a result of schools asking for more direction from the authority – mainly in relation to the curriculum options for the Senior Phase and for S3. All schools will be working towards moving from 6 courses in S4 with 5 in S5 being the norm.

Irene handed out several documents regarding the new Curriculum of Excellence including an Aberdeen University briefing paper. A discussion took place about the stage at which parents should be advised about course choice and the implications for future career routes and the format such advice should take. It was agreed that the UCAS information evening planned for June should be open to all interested parents – not only for those of pupils in S5 as had been the case in the past.

Highland Curriculum Review

In the latest review, the Highland Quality Improvement Team was very satisfied with where the school is at with plans for curriculum delivery. Irene explained that a review of our flexible afternoon arrangements is currently underway and handed out a document 'Extract from Minute of Staff meeting March 2012' and an overview of progress to allow members to read this prior to next Parent Council meeting.

Courses for next session

The school is into the first year of S4-S6, 6 column structure for the senior phase. It is easier to timetable than previously and it is hoped the school will be able to offer an appropriate range of courses for pupils. This will become clear over the next few weeks.

The Parents Information Evening for S4/S5 seemed to go well and hopefully the options presentation for S3 parents on the 20th March would be helpful to parents too.

The course information booklet and options forms for Senior Phase are now on the school website as the school must now look at reducing the amount of photocopying.

S2 courses for S3 will be shared with pupils this week with a package going home to parents next week for return after Easter. It will be very similar to last session but with some adjustments due to staffing constraints.

MPS

The Managed Print Service has arrived and phase 1 complete. While support has been good there have been teething problems and unfortunately there is not a way of tracking costs for printers (without the scanning facility). Honesty boards will be used in some places which will increase the workload of office staff. The accounting process for the printers which do have the accounting facility is also set up in a way that adds time to office staff too.

Colour printing is 10 times more expensive than black and white – 7.5p per copy plus cost of paper. Overall the costs are significantly higher than the previous contract and the school is being forced to reduce printing. Another issue is the time it takes for invoicing for printing to reach schools. Some schools are only now being invoiced for 2010 printing.

Aruba Wireless

WE are pleased to report that this is now in school and has been fully funded by Highland Council. This is the second school in Highland to get this system and the school will soon be able to use the 77 netbooks.

Pupils Views

At the last inspection the school was criticised for not taking enough account of pupils' views, so a survey has been undertaken with S2. Each pupil had to answer certain questions for each subject they are taking. Teachers were then shown their own results against the average results. Irene handed out the average results of the survey which were fairly positive. The departments will now review and consider their own next steps. Apparently the children took this very seriously and it was a positive exercise and something we intend to build on.

3. Web Communications update

Ollie has now updated the Parent Council blog. When someone updates it, this will appear on the Parent Council website and also the schools website's news section. Anyone can update (subject to 'moderation') if they know the email address to do so. It was agreed that only trusted Parent Council members should be able to update it, without moderation. Ollie is going to change the domain name of the

Parent Council site to make it more user friendly. The new name will be www.ggsparents.org.uk.

Ollie has also set up a Facebook page and it has been designed to be a news outlet only. This page is invisible at the moment and Ollie is concerned that this will need someone to update it regularly to keep it a worthwhile medium.

Ollie showed the Council the new blog and agreed to change the link at the bottom of the school website that currently links to the old Parent Council site, not the new one.

The question was then raised about who would be responsible for overseeing the blog and Facebook content and regularly updating both with new information. Anne Sullivan suggested advertising for someone as for the Clerk's position. It was agreed that this could also be flagged up at the meeting on June 19th with new parents, when the Parent Council will also be looking to sign up new members. All that is needed is for the person to have their own Facebook account and time to add weekly content.

Action: Sally

A discussion was then had about how much control Andy has had in the past overseeing comments from bloggers. Did all parents have access to the site? Ollie agreed to check this out with Andy.

4. Funding Requests

Ollie suggested that as an idea for the future, fundraising for a new projector and electronic screen for the hall would be good. This would cost approx £5000. Giles suggested speaking to outside companies for possible grants or support for this. Ene agreed to look into grants from Karen.

Action: Ene

Irene asked for funding for a PA that was broken at the school disco. Giles proposed to reimburse up to a value of £300 on production of a receipt. Agreed.

An electronic piano was broken recently and a new one bought to replace it. If the broken one is repairable the school would like to keep it, and so Irene asked if the Parent Council could cover these repair costs. Kirsten the music teacher will get a quote.

5. Proposal to change the school newspaper

It was agreed to change the newspaper that is stored in the library from The Scotsman to The Times. This will save £110 per year and will cost only £104 for the year.

6. Matters arising from previous minutes

Giles enquired as to whether Kirsty Laing has spoken with local engravers. Irene said that she would ask Claire McGonigal and Ollie would check that it is still on their agenda.

7. AOB

Giles asked Ene if there was any update on the issue of Autism. She is keeping in contact with The Pines centre in Inverness who will let her know what they would like to do in the future with schools.

Giles asked if Driving Ambitions happened. Irene confirmed that they had done their annual input to S6 as usual but there had been not word about the simulator. Giles agreed to contact Jaci for an update.

Action: Giles

Giles went through a selection of post he had received. An invitation from the Scottish Parent Teacher Council to join. It was agreed not to.

Parent and Teacher magazine – Ollie has read it and said that it is mainly for the English market and full of advertising. Ollie then recommended the Parent Forum conference. Irene recommended their website and the information they provide. Irene suggested putting this site as a link on the Parent Council website.

The Yearbook Machine information was discarded as Seniors organise their own year book.

8. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting must take place in time to arrange the date for the AGM in September. The AGM must appear on the agenda for the next meeting in order to set the date and to spread the word at the Primary 7's Parents Night on June 19th.

The date was set for 23rd May at 7.30pm.

The meeting closed at 9.45pm