



Charleston Academy Parent Council

Minutes of Parent Council Meeting held on Tuesday 8th February 2011 at Charleston Academy

Present: Fiona Alexander, Suzann Barr, Marie Bisset, Yvonne Brown, Caroline Crawford, Elaine Donnelly, Pip Farman, Rita Farragher, Cllr Alex Graham, Kate McEwen, Russell McFee, Linda McLean, Rona McWhirter, Susan Mitchell, Fiona Morrison, Mairi Oakley, Jan Patience, Dougie Robinson, Tom Speirs, Diane Stewart, Gordon Stewart, Roz Wilde, Christian Wittke.

In Attendance: Chris O'Neill (Rector), Margret MacRae (Clerk)

Apologies: Leona Boa, Cllr Margaret Davidson, Linda MacLellan, Kate Morris, Kate Short, Liz Syred, Mieke and Trevor White, Cllr Hamish Wood.

1.	<p><u>WELCOME</u> Jill Kent welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the excellent turnout.</p>
2.	<p><u>APPROVAL OF MINUTES</u> The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 27th October 2010 were approved, with one amendment being required – Point 5 – should read “He (Callum White) is currently raising funds to allow him to take part in World Schools Orienteering Championship in Italy.” Proposed: Caroline Crawford Seconded: Yvonne Brown</p>
3.	<p><u>MATTERS ARISING</u></p> <p>a. Report from Art Exhibition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Art Exhibition was very well received. Feedback was very positive and all who managed to attend very much enjoyed the evening. Jill Kent thanked Leona Boa and Marjory MacLeod for all their hard work in making this event so successful. The sale raised £523, which will go towards the purchase of school lockers. • A number of pieces of artwork created by pupils studying Higher Art were displayed at Eden Court over the Christmas period. This opportunity was as a result of the school’s Art Exhibition and the Art Department was congratulated on this wonderful achievement. <p>b. Update on Lockers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project to source space and funding for additional lockers for the school is on-going. Anyone wishing to assist with this development should contact Jill Kent. <p>c. Update on transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues with school transport are ongoing. Mr O’Neill, Gordon Stewart, Jill Kent and several parents from various bus routes met with representatives from Stagecoach to address concerns and explore potential solutions. Many different issues were raised, including winter tyres, road conditions, and improving communications both between mini buses and Stagecoach and also with parents. Stagecoach often don’t know the condition of the roads until they set out in the morning. Gordon Stewart will be following up concerns raised at the meeting. Parents are again requested to inform the school when they feel the service has not been satisfactory because there are some cases when the bus company is fined for not fulfilling the contract. It was reported that the contract is due to go out to tender shortly with the appointed provider commencing in January 2012. • Parents reported that they were pleased that buses on some of the more rural routes now have winter tyres. However, the Beaulieu Bus is causing concern as pupils are being dropped off in middle of the road, and there are also persistent difficulties with the Struy bus both in terms of lateness and breakdowns. <p>d. Fundraising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robertson Homes has alerted the Parent Council to the fact that they have a community fund and would consider sponsoring future sporting or art events on submission of a funding request <p>e. Any other matters arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents reported how much they had enjoyed the Winter Concert. This took place in January due to the adverse weather before Christmas. Feedback from parents was that this event cheered up January and it was felt to be a less stressful time than December. Enquiry was made with regards to holding this event in January again in future years. It was appreciated that January / February is always a busy time for the school with pupils preparing for their prelims and that this might not be possible. Mr O’Neill agreed to pass these comments on to the music department for consideration.

4. RECTOR'S REPORT

- Chris O'Neill reported that he has been in post just over 4 weeks. During this time he has:
 - Met with staff and attended departmental conferences. Staff were asked for their opinions on what worked really well in the school and what they would like to see progressed (two stars and a wish).
 - Attended a series of registration assemblies for all year groups
 - Met with some of the local councillors. A meeting with the Ward Manager, Stewart Wardlaw has been scheduled for 10th February.
 - Attended the first meeting of 2011 for the Highland Secondary Heads Association on 18th January.
 - Attended a Ministerial Seminar on Curriculum for Excellence at the Drum Mossie Hotel on the 25th January. Angela Constance, Minister for Skills and Lifelong Learning, addressed this seminar.
 - Met with Margaret Barclay, Quality Improvement Officer for the school
 - Attended a meeting organised by Highland Council for all newly appointed Head Teachers at Council Headquarters. This was the first of a series of eight meetings that will take place this session.
 - Together with other Head Teachers and Deputies took part in a workshop at Milburn Academy. The main focus was the development of curriculum models for the senior phase. It was reported that the Charleston model is already very advanced thanks to the excellent work carried out by Tom Speirs.
- Mr O'Neill stated that main theme for all of these meetings has been the need to continue the school's developments associated with Curriculum for Excellence. However, there is also an acknowledgement that with budget and staffing cuts about to impact quite significantly over the next few financial years, this will be a very challenging time for Scottish Education
- **Budgets and Staffing Cuts.** At the recent Primary 7 Parents Information Evening, Mr O'Neill emphasised the very good, high quality aspects of the work done at Charleston Academy and the need to retain what is good at a time of cutbacks. The school faces a 5% cut in staffing and a 5% reduction in capitation budgets. A 20% cut in the Community Learning and Leisure budget is proposed with a decision being made by the Highland Council on 10th February. Additionally, a review of teacher conditions of service is also being undertaken and will be completed before the summer.
- Chris O'Neill reported that he met with the head teachers of the primary schools in the Charleston Cluster last week. On Thursday 17th February staff from the associated primary schools will meet with a number of staff from Charleston Academy to look at literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. This will focus on the P6 – S2 transition. Other activities planned for the inset days include:
 - Subject specific meetings
 - Health & Wellbeing,
 - The S3 curriculum with particular focus on how this relates to the new qualifications that are now being published by the SQA
- The final inset day this session will take place on Monday 6th June 2011
- The school held a very successful Winter Concert on 27th January. This was organised by the Music department. Mrs Stewart, Mr Nairn, together with other staff in the school put on an outstanding concert. This included a Pipe Band, soloists, various musical groups, dancers and choirs.
- The School Cross Country was held on 31st January. Pupils from all year groups took part and medals for the winners across all year groups were given out at assemblies the following week.
- Mr O'Neill was delighted to report that Gary Millard, S3 pupil won the Regional Heat of the Rotary Young Chef Competition. Gary will now go on to take part in the Scottish Final which takes place on the 13th March in Dundee.
- A January / February edition of the Charleston News will be circulated to all parents after the long weekend. This will feature Gary Millard's winning menu as well as reports on the Winter Concert and the recent Maths trip to Disneyland.
- The school has supported the bid submitted by the Highland Football Academy for new changing facilities and toilets. The Highland Council ECS Capital Board will shortly consider this application. If successful, the school will be able to start looking at the provision of additional lockers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing Update. Mr McFee will continue in his role as Acting Depute Rector until Easter. This will allow Tom Speirs to continue the development work for LTS on the Charleston Curriculum model. Mr John Mackay will continue as Acting Principal Teacher PE until Easter, with Scott Wilson providing long-term supply in PE. • Mr O'Neill consulted the Parent Council with regards to the lunchtime closure on the last day of the school year. He explained the purpose of the half day and there were no objections to this continuing.
5.	<p>FINANCE REPORT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yvonne Brown reported that the Parent Council fund currently stands at £4329.71. This includes monies raised at the Art Exhibition and the Highland Council allocation awarded to Parent Councils. • It was reported that 'Easy Fundraising' had raised £69. This money will be donated towards the schools South Africa fund. (Trip to the Tsakane Township and return visit by a group of South African children). Parents were asked to consider using the 'Easysearch' search engine when making purchases via the internet as currently only 23 parents have signed up to this fundraising initiative.
6.	<p>REPORTS TO PARENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr McFee informed the Parent Council that a 'reporting group' has been formed to look at the way in which the school reports pupil progress to parents. The longer-term vision is that reporting will be done electronically and will incorporate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ongoing continuous reporting throughout the year ○ An emphasis on pupil self-evaluation including 'next steps'. (The teacher will have agreed these with the pupil) ○ A summary report at the end of the session <p>Teachers will update pupil profiles and parents will be able to log into their child's e-portfolio to see how they are progressing. It is hoped that this will be live by 2013/4. Paper reporting will continue in the meantime, and it is this report for which parent consultation is now being sought. Parents are asked to consider what they would like incorporated in the new reporting format.</p> • Discussion took place with regards to assessment. Some parents raised concerns that with 5-14 assessment having been phased out that there is no way of 'measuring' progress. There was discussion about the need and uses of a baseline assessment or cognitive tests. Tom Speirs reiterated that the school strives to treat individuals as individuals. He stressed the importance of encouraging pupils to achieve their full potential by promoting the positive, and setting achievable but challenging goals for youngsters. • Mr O'Neill informed the Parent Council that guidelines for the new exam structure have now been published. He explained that as the spirit of Curriculum for Excellence is that it is not driven by assessment, it was important that it was allowed to develop and become embedded in schools prior to the publication of the exam structure. This was to ensure that teachers do not just teach to exams. • Parents are invited to join the school 'reporting group'. This will focus on developing a report that incorporates the needs and desires of parents in relation to assessment and reporting. The group will also engage with the guidelines issued by the Highland Council strategy group and those issued by the SQA. Parents interested in joining the working group are asked to advise Russell McFee or Jill Kent. A meeting, which is likely to take place before the Easter break, will then be arranged.
7.	<p>CORRESPONDENCE</p> <p>None</p>
8.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jill Kent informed the Parent Council that volunteers are being sought to work on a number of different projects. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developing and maintaining the Parent Council pages on the school website ○ Assisting the school review and consult on the issue of school dress code ○ Becoming a member of the management committee of the Charleston Community Complex to assist with the review, development and maintenance of community facilities. • Mieke and Trevor White thanked Jill Kent for donating her winnings to Callum to help him go to the World Schools Orienteering Championships • Discussion took place with regards to the text messaging service that would inform parents of school closure in adverse weather conditions. It has been difficult to put this into operation as

the information received from Stagecoach is not always clear, and is often subject to change once buses set out / encounter problems etc. The school is also under time pressure first

thing in the morning as it is necessary to post announcements on the school messaging system, website and MFR. Parents are advised to check with the schools messaging systems in the first instance.

- It is has not yet been confirmed if the date of the Royal Wedding (29th April 2011) will be a school holiday. Each local authority will make its own decision with regards to school closure and the Highland Council will inform schools in due course.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To be arranged