



Charleston Academy Parent Council

Minutes of Parent Council Meeting held on Wednesday 24th August 2011 at Charleston Academy

Present: Anne Ashton, Leona Boa, Yvonne Brown (Treasurer), Dawnmarie Cameron, Rita Farragher, Sue Fraser, Jill Kent (Chair), Rona MacPherson, Kate Morris, Mairi Oakley, Jan Patience, Sinead Robertson, Gordon Stewart, Christian Wittke

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

Apologies: Marie Bisset, Cllr Margaret Davidson, Cllr Alex Graham, Holly Grey, Paula Mackenzie, Sue Mitchell, Fiona Morrison, Kate McEwen, Trevor & Mieke White, Cllr Hamish Wood,

1.	<p><u>WELCOME</u> Jill Kent welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Rona MacPherson who joins Charleston Academy as Depute.</p>
2.	<p><u>APPROVAL OF MINUTES</u> The following amendments were made to the minute of 30th May 2011: Point 6 – Parent Council Fund £300 was awarded to the Duke of Edinburgh initiative to allow for the purchase of three pairs of binoculars for group leaders £300 was awarded to the Home Economics Department for machine embroidery threads, traditional components and card for the creation of 'Christmas Cards' for parents</p>
3.	<p><u>MATTERS ARISING</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• School Transport.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ A new SMS messaging system will be piloted this year to notify parents in the event of changes to school transport in severe weather conditions. Parents have been invited to submit their mobile phone numbers and this information is currently being collated. Text messaging will not replace the current telephone system; it will be used to update parents of any late notices received from Stagecoach.○ There were no concerns with regards to school transport this term.○ The school has successfully negotiated the re-routing of a service bus to allow pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities. The service which will operate from Monday to Friday commences next week. The bus will stop across the road from the school at 5pm and will run to Beaulay. There will be no charge to pupils as they are able to use their school bus passes. Mr O'Neill asked parents to encourage their children to use this service to ensure that provision can be sustained.• Meeting of Associated Parent Councils Jill Kent reported that a meeting attended by the chairs of the Parent Councils in the associated schools group took place at the end of last term. This was very successful and will help Parent Councils support each other and promotes positive relationships.
4.	<p><u>RECTOR'S REPORT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exam Results. Mr O'Neill reported that staff are delighted with this years results. S4 results were in line with expectation and achievements were as follows:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ 90% of S4 pupils achieved English and Maths at Standard Grade○ Over 80% of S4 pupils achieved five or more standard grades at general level or better○ 33% of S4 pupils achieved 5 or more Standard Grades at credit levelIt was noted that that this figure somewhat disguises outstanding results from a number of pupils. The current economic climate has meant that there are less job opportunities / college places. The knock on effect is that an unusually large number of pupils, of mixed ability, have elected to stay on at school and proceed to S5. The challenge for the school is timetabling learning opportunities at a number of different levels to ensure each pupil is able to achieve their full potential.

Results at Higher level were as follows:

- 40% of pupils achieved passes in English (this is the highest percentage in Inverness and the second highest percentage in the local authority)
- 40% of pupils achieved three or more passes at Higher level (Highland average 26%)
- 14% of pupils achieved 5 or more passes at Higher level
- 3 pupils achieved 5 A's at Higher level

Mr O'Neill confirmed that the benchmark for university entrance remains the Higher qualification. It was acknowledged that the pressure for places has increased and universities now require students to achieve the entrance qualifications in one sitting. Previously some pupils elected to take some exams in S5 and then study additional subjects in S6. The quality of the personal statement is also taken into consideration. For courses that have a tendency to be oversubscribed some universities have added an aptitude test and/ or interview to the selection process. Extra curricular activities, work experience, and achievements such as the 'Duke of Edinburgh Award' may also be helpful. Mr O'Neill explained that this information is shared with pupils at assemblies and during PSE where they will be assisted by their guidance teachers. Useful information for parents can also be found on the UCAS website.

- **School Improvement Plan.** The focus of the school improvement plan is as follows:
 - Developing Learning and Teaching
 - Sustaining and improving attainment
 - Assessment and reporting arrangements
 - Curriculum structure – as the availability of resources may impact on the curriculum it is essential to ensure that the structure is sustainable
 - Embedding the 'house' system. Funding has been secured to allow 4 pupils from each of S3, S4 and S5 to attend Columba 1400. This opportunity will enable youngsters to develop leadership skills. The school is also looking at how the pupil voice is represented throughout the school with a view to extending this across all year groups to ensure more even participation in decision making.
 - Monitoring and Tracking achievement and behaviour. The senior management team will share information on new strategies with department heads shortly and these will be implemented during September.
- **Communication.** (This is part of the Improvement Plan)
 - Under the new contract with Fujitsu all schools have incurred a higher level of printing costs. Alternative and more cost effective methods of communication are therefore being sought. Discussion took place on the use of e-mails which will include hyper-links to the 'Charleston News' and other articles.
 - The school website will be redesigned and updated. Parents will be consulted regarding the content, and pupils will be given the role of creating the new design and keeping the site up to date.
 - The Highland Council has allocated £10,000 for the refurbishment of the foyer and a new signing in point for parents. This will not only be easier for parents to find but will also increase school security.
 - Mr O'Neill suggested the use of websites such as 'Twitter' for the sharing of information such as the safe arrival of pupils at their destination if they are on a school trip. The school is conscious that parents like to know how their youngsters are getting on when they are away from home and it was felt that 'twitter' is a fast and cost effective way of sharing this information.
 - Parents commented on the very useful letter that had been issued by the school. It was felt that Charleston News is a very good media for celebrating achievements and that the more formal letter was better at imparting information of a more serious nature.
 - Discussion took place on the resources currently available on-line from the Chemistry Department. This includes the issuing of homework. Mr O'Neill explained that it is hoped to extend this further and advised that the department will also serve as a model for other departments within the school.
 - Members of the Parent Council confirmed that they had no objection to parents taking photographs of their own children during school events.
 - Mr O'Neill advised that the school assumes automatic consent for trips or visits that take place in the local area during school time and that do not require additional supervision. The Parent Council agreed that this would allow the school to maximise opportunities.

5.	<p><u>FINANCE REPORT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was reported that the Parent Council fund currently stands at £3205.13. The accounts for the last academic year have been finalised and checked in readiness for the AGM. • Yvonne Brown advised that she had received very nice letters of thanks from the rector, heads of departments and Mr Foster in respect of funding awards made at the end of last session. Elaine Bremner was also delighted and has passed on her gratitude. • The Parent Council currently pays £100 per year for 'Backchat'. The main benefit of membership is insurance and public liability cover. It was agreed that as the Highland Council now arranges insurance and public liability cover for all parent councils renewal at the reduced rate without insurance cover will be considered. • Yvonne Brown reported that less than half of the 'Friends of Charleston' had renewed their membership for this session. Discussion took place with regards to continuing with this fundraising initiative. It was agreed to continue for the time being. A membership drive aimed at parents of the new S1 pupils will also take place.
6.	<p><u>COMMITTEE REPORTS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art Exhibition. This will take place on Wednesday 16th November and follow a similar format as last year. There will be displays of work produced by S1 students – these will be for sale on the night. In addition there will also be refreshments, musical entertainment and a number of stalls selling gifts items. It is hoped to secure sponsorship by Robertson Homes for this event. If anyone would like to help organise the exhibition please let Leona Boa know. • Transition. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gordon Stewart reported that the new S1 pupils had settled in well. ○ He thanked the Parent Council for their financial support for the Nordic walking and yoga activities which were included in the health & wellbeing day. These were added to ensure a positive experience for pupils who prefer non-competitive sports. ○ It was felt that the pastoral transition from primary to secondary is good. The Associated Schools Group is now looking at curricular links in terms of transition. Gordon Stewart informed parents that Rona MacPherson has been assigned responsibility for the transition process at Charleston Academy as part of her remit. ○ It was confirmed that pupils from St Joseph's Primary take part in the two day visit, however they do not currently join in other transition activities. The Parent Council enquired whether it would be possible for pupils who live in the catchment area, and who are enrolled at Charleston Academy to also take part in these events. • School Dress. The review of the school dress code has been successful and it was noted that nearly all pupils have adhered to this. Parents were advised that school dress is available from both the Highland Schoolwear Shop in Academy Street and Gilmour Sports on Harbour Road. • Lost property. Items of lost property will be available on tables in the hall on parent's evenings.
7.	<p><u>CORRESPONDENCE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification has been received that there will be a meeting of the National Parent Forum from 9.30am – 3.30pm on 1st October in Bishopbriggs. The meeting is entitled "Curriculum for Excellence One Year On – How is it affecting our children?" Anyone wishing to attend this conference should contact Jill Kent.
8.	<p><u>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of the reporting calendar for parents had taken place. Mr O'Neill advised that new arrangements are currently being piloted. The aim is to ensure that there would no more than half an academic session between formal school contact with parents. Such formal contact includes the written report or a parents' meeting. New appointment times are also being piloted for the first three parent evenings this session, starting at 4.30pm. Parents reported that they were very pleased with the advance notice given of dates arranged for parents' evenings. • A request was made for information with regards to school trips provided by the school. This is to enable pupils and parents to discuss choices and help with financial planning. • The voting system for the selection of prefects is being reviewed. The school also wishes to create more leadership opportunities for pupils in all year groups. • It was acknowledged that there is insufficient space in the school for the provision of lockers for all pupils. Lockers are allocated on a first come, first served basis. There is a big demand across the school but priority is given to 5th and 6th year students due to the amount of books they require for their studies.
9.	<p><u>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</u> The next meeting will be the AGM and will take place at 7pm on Monday 3rd October 2011</p>