



Charleston Academy Parent Council

Minutes of Parent Council Meeting held on Tuesday 29th November 2011 at Charleston Academy

Present: Anne Ashton, Suzanne Barr, Marie Bisset, Yvonne Brown, Pip Farman, Jill Kent (Chair), Rona Macpherson, Susan Mitchell, Kate Morris, Fiona Morrison, Jan Patience, Gordon Stewart, Roz Wilde, Christian Wittke

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

Apologies: Cllr Helen Carmichael, Cllr Margaret Davidson, Rita Farragher, Sue Fraser, Cllr Alex Graham, Kate McEwen, Liz Syred, Mieke White, Trevor White

1.	<p><u>WELCOME</u> Jill Kent welcomed everyone to the meeting, and in particular the students giving a presentation on their experience of Columba 1400.</p>
2.	<p><u>PRESENTATION BY DUNAIN COMMUNITY WOODLAND</u> Sonia Rose explained that the Dunain Community Woodland is a voluntary organisation and a company limited by guarantee with charitable status in Scotland. Robertson Homes purchased the former Craig Dunain hospital grounds, which include the woodland, for redevelopment. Ms Rose stated that the planning permission was granted on the basis that the woodland is leased to the charity. The charity's aim is to manage the woods for the benefit of the local community – in particular for education, training, and recreation, providing open access for members of the local community. In 2007 a steep slope of land to the north of the Great Glen Way on Dunain Woodland was chosen to create a forest of the future. Children from 3 local schools; Muirtown Primary, Kinmylies Primary and Charleston Academy, each planted a native tree sapling. It was reported that £50,000 of public money was raised for this purpose. Sonia Rose reported that to date Robertson Homes had not made the lease available to Dunain Community Woodland. In addition, Robertson Homes is now seeking planning permission to build fifty holiday chalets adjacent to McGruer's Pond, the upper reservoir and chambered cairn. Access routes and car parking would also be required. In order to ensure that these areas remain available for community use Dunain Community Woodland is recommending that the distance between these areas of local interest and the proposed holiday chalets be increased. The organisation is seeking the support of the parents and wider community members to assist in their campaign. Further information on the work of the charity can be found at www.dunainwoods.co.uk</p>
3.	<p><u>PRESENTATION BY D&E COACHES</u> Norman Gollan (General Manager) and Willie Bell (Operations Manager) informed the Parent Council that D&E Coaches have secured the school transport contract from January 2012. They stated that the routes and times would remain the same as they are currently. The majority of the transport will be 75 seater single decker buses, however double decker buses will operate on the Beaully and Struy routes. All buses are fitted with seatbelts, good heating systems, CCTV, and most have air conditioning. Mr Gollan asked parents to impress upon their children the necessity to wear the seat belts. Parents were advised that this service is dedicated school transport and that buses will be at the school prior to the end of the school day. It is hoped to secure the services of regular drivers so that it is the same driver on each route as far as possible. Further to safety concerns raised by parents Mr Gollan agreed that the dedicated drop-off point for Beaully would be 'The Square'. In the event of adverse weather conditions affecting school transport D&E coaches will liaise with the school. Charleston Academy will continue to advise parents as per current arrangements. D&E coaches will also place bulletins with MFR should it be necessary to cancel school transport. Parents were advised that the provision of a late bus is not included in the contract.</p>
4.	<p><u>COLUMBA 1400 REPORT</u> The Parent Council were provided with the opportunity to see a short film highlighting some of the activities pupils took part in while at Columba 1400. The film also incorporated a number of 'pupil voices' reflecting their learning.</p> <p>Pupils reported that while at Columba 1400 they were working on the development of a house system incorporating school values. Ideas generated were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The house groups could be renamed and feature a mascot. • Homework diaries could be colour coded to house groups in order to promote a sense of identity and belonging.

- Registration classes could be in house groups thereby encouraging interaction between pupils in the various year groups
- Assemblies / Sports days in house groups to promote team work and celebrate achievement

Students explained that they had sought the views of other pupils and staff for this development. This was carried out by talking to other pupils in their PSE lessons and undertaking a number of Columba style games with them to get their ideas. They were keen to get new ideas that they had not thought of themselves and felt it particularly important to ensure that S1 pupil views were incorporated, as the house system would make the biggest difference to them, as they would be at the school the longest. As only 12 pupils attended Columba 1400 they also shared their learning in order that everyone can benefit from the experience. Some Columba style exercises were also carried out with staff on the last in-service day.

The Parent Council advised that they would like to offer their support to pupils in this exciting development and would be willing to help out / provide funding for any ideas that they may wish to take forward. It was felt that it would be very beneficial to have a pupil representative on the Parent Council and Jill Kent informed students that any pupils wishing to join future meetings would be most welcome.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minute of the meeting held on Wednesday 24th August was approved

Proposed: Yvonne Brown

Seconded: Sue Mitchell

6. MATTERS ARISING

School Transport

- Gordon Stewart reported that the bulk SMS messaging system which allows the school to inform parents of school closure / transport issues in severe weather is now operational. A number of parents advised that they had not received a letter to register for this service – a further letter offering the opportunity to sign up for this service will be circulated via pupils.

Art Exhibition

- Jill Kent thanked everyone involved in the Art Exhibition. Although the turnout was smaller than last year's it was a very enjoyable and successful event. A number of pieces of work are now on display at the Scottish Natural Heritage offices. It was noted that for future events it was necessary to review communication / advertising to ensure people are aware of exhibition. It was felt that there was also a need to make it clearer that artwork is for sale and signage informing people how to purchase items would be useful.

Transition Programme

- Mr Stewart advised the Parent Council that pupils attending St. Joseph's, Bishop Eden and the Gaelic School who live in the Charleston Academy catchment area, or who have been granted a placing request, would be welcome to join in the transition events.

7. RECTOR'S REPORT

- Mr O'Neill reported that during the October break History pupils visited the World War 1 battlefields in Belgium. This was a very successful trip with the exception of a bed bug infestation experienced by a small number of pupils. The hotel has assured the school that this will not happen again. The pupils followed up their trip by leading a series of assemblies to mark Remembrance Day. Head Girl, Brittany Thomas was invited by Provost Gray to read an epitaph at the Town House on 11th November, and in addition all the Senior Prefects represented Inverness Schools at the British Legion parade on Sunday 13th November.
- As part of it's eco work the school hosted a series of assemblies to raise awareness of the implications of dropping litter. These were led by representatives from the Highland Council and consideration is now being given to the location and servicing of the bins In order to prevent littering. Mr O'Neill informed parents that the Highland Council's recycling policies are being extended into schools and businesses. These come into effect in April and the school is now looking into replacing the polystyrene trays currently being used by the canteen.
- The Albert Roux Celebration Dinner took place in the school at the end of October. It was a very successful evening attended by approximately 100 people. This was a fundraising event for the refurbishment of the Home Economics Department that would see the installation of a hospitality kitchen. A further event is being planned for next year.
- A Tapestry Learning & Teaching Group has been formed by the school. This is being led by three members of staff to take forward aspects of the Curriculum for Excellence.

- A group of 14 – 15 staff are currently meeting after school to discuss and engage with ideas in relation to ‘co-operative learning’ and ‘Assessment is for Learning’. They are looking at good teaching practice, and how this is embedded in school. These ideas and developments are shared with all staff to ensure that practices are used uniformly across the school in order that a consistent approach is achieved.
- The pupils who attended Columba 1400, together with Ms Aileen Thomson (PE teacher) are organising a sports event for June to tie in with the Olympics. It is intended to appoint four ambassadors to promote ‘Olympics 2012’.
- Mr O’Neill reported that six teams took part in the finals of the North of Scotland Debating Competition. The debate was outstanding and he was delighted to advise that the Senior Team entered by Charleston Academy were runners-up. Students from the Home Economics Department catered superbly for over 100 pupils and staff from other schools that attended the event.
- The overall winner of the First Year Art Exhibition was Scott Manson whose prize was an afternoon workshop with local photographer Glen Campbell. It was reported that a number of the artworks have been sought after by an SNH employee.
- The scheduled ICT refresh was cancelled last week. Further to a number of discussions this will now take place from Friday 2nd December to Monday 5th December.
- Interviews for a Head Janitor to replace Colin Stein will take place in mid-December.
- The Standard & Quality report will be published on the school’s website before Christmas. Parents will be informed when this is available.
- The School Improvement Plan for the next three years, which includes the development of a house system, has almost been completed.
- Mr O’Neill stated that in line with the school’s aims to improve home – school communication it was acknowledged that the school website requires a radical overhaul, however this work cannot be taken forward until new servers have been installed. Parents’ views outlined in the home-school communication have been noted. A representation has been made to the Director of Education seeking consent to include Facebook and Twitter on the new website. Mr O’Neill stressed that these would be used for posting forums only and would not include discussion forums. Other forms of communication currently being considered are e-mail and the ‘Group Call’ texting facility. The school also wishes to make changes to the main entrance of the school in order to improve security and address issues with regards to access for wheelchair users. It is intended to convert the current janitor’s room into a reception area and create a new waiting area.

8. FEEDBACK FROM PARENT’S EVENINGS

- It was reported that the pilot of the new times for parents’ evenings has been very successful. The feedback indicates that an overwhelming majority of parents attending preferred the earlier start time – the remainder of the parents’ evenings scheduled for this academic year will now also be held from 4.30pm – 6.30pm. It was noted that feedback gained was from parents who were able to attend the parents’ evenings and that it was important to also ensure that feedback is sought from those parents who were unable to attend.
- Forms to allow parents to indicate which teachers they would like to see will be issued prior to pupils making appointments.

9. FINANCE REPORT

- Yvonne Brown reported that the Parent Council fund currently stands at £5045.05. £300 was secured from the Discretionary Fund towards the purchase of display boards for the Art Exhibition. Yvonne Brown explained that approximately £2000 is received each year from the Highland Council to assist in the running of the Parent Council. Additional income is generated by ‘Friends of Charleston’ and through Easy Fundraising. Jill Kent reported that there is no apparent security issue associated with using Easy fundraising. Although Easy fundraising stores an individual’s shopping history credit card details are never submitted to the site. Transactions are carried out with stores in the normal way – Easy fundraising acts in a similar way to a search engine.

10. PARENT COUNCIL FUND - how money is to be spent

- Discussion took place on the distribution of Parent Council Fund. Consideration was given to allocating money to a variety of small projects undertaken by the various departments within the school, or funding a larger project. It was agreed to fund a larger project – possibly the refurbishment of the school hall. This could incorporate new curtains to improve soundproofing / acoustics, new speakers, screens etc. It was felt that a project of this type would ensure that all pupils benefit from the funding contribution.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was also agreed that the school SMS service and some transition events would be paid for from Parent Council monies. Yvonne Brown reiterated that principal teachers continue to be welcome to approach the Parent Council for funding for particular projects.
11.	<p><u>CORRESPONDENCE</u> None</p>
12.	<p><u>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents reported that they were very pleased that an information evening explaining the new qualifications and associated courses has been arranged for January.
13.	<p><u>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</u> Wednesday 22nd February - 7pm</p>