



Charleston Academy Parent Council

Minutes of Parent Council Meeting held on Wednesday 22nd February 2012 at Charleston Academy

Present: Fiona Alexander, Anne Ashton, Marie Bisset, Yvonne Brown, Sue Fraser, Jill Kent (Chair), Rona Macpherson, Susan Mitchell, Jan Patience, Gordon Stewart, Marie Waugh, Christian Wittke

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

Apologies: Cllr Drew Hendry, Kate McEwen, Kate Morris, Fiona Morrison

1.	<p><u>WELCOME</u> Jill Kent welcomed everyone to the meeting</p>
2.	<p><u>APPROVAL OF MINUTES</u> Clarification regarding money raised for the Dunain Community Woodland was received as follows: The £50,000 raised was for all the projects undertaken by Dunain Community Woodland. (£10,000 of which was for the children's forest). The rest of the sums were for path making, signage, felling trees, clearing the duck pond and a feasibility study for the reservoir and matching work in kind. Included in the total is a £10,000 award from the Big Lottery which currently remains unspent as permission for the work to be progressed has not been granted by Robertson Homes) The minute of the meeting held on Tuesday 29th November was approved Proposed: Jan Patience Seconded: Sue Mitchell</p>
3.	<p><u>MATTERS ARISING</u> None</p>
4.	<p><u>LATE BUS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Parent Council was advised that there is currently no late bus provision for pupils attending extra curricular activities. Due to budget cuts the school is no longer in a position to fund this service. Although negotiations with Stagecoach to re-route a service bus past the school at approximately 5pm had been successful, this was withdrawn at the end of 2011 when D&E Coaches were awarded the school transport contract. The school and Parent Council have continued to contact Stagecoach with a view to negotiating the reinstatement of this provision, however, they were advised that Stagecoach no longer has the capacity to offer this service due to the sale of a number of its buses. • It was reported that most teachers felt that there had been no noticeable decrease in attendance of revision classes or activities where pupils were committed to a team. There has been a slight decrease in attendance of activities which don't require regular attendance. It was noted that some parents were car pooling when collecting pupils, and that some students were walking to Blackpark Filling Station to catch the 5.30pm service bus. • There have been a number of meetings for parents to explore options re the late bus provision. Quotes in the region of £15,000 per year have been received. Discussion took place on the purchase of bus passes (in the region of £30 per term) however it was felt that this is only suitable for pupils who attend on a regular basis. Fiona Morrison has volunteered to assist with the submission of funding bids for this project. Any parents who know of potential funding sources or wish to help out should contact Jill Kent.
5.	<p><u>THE ROUX KITCHEN</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr O'Neill reported that a proposal for a hospitality kitchen had been received from the Roux Consultancy. Albert Roux has managed to negotiate a price of £80,000 through Kenwood / Electrolux – this is a heavily discounted price and represents a saving in the region of £40,000. The school has raised approximately £10,000 towards this venture by way of fundraising events. Although this quote is viable difficulties have arisen in terms of maintenance work required to be completed prior to the installation of the kitchen. The Highland Council has estimated that an additional £130,000 is required for the removal of asbestos, re-wiring and re-roofing of the Home Economics Department. Mr O'Neill has met with Clifford Cooke, Area Education Manager, who has added these works to the capital expenditure list – however, funding for this work is unlikely to be available imminently. Mr O'Neill has arranged to meet with David Haas and Jimmy Gray to discuss possible sources of financial support, and joint initiatives with professional partners are also being considered. • It was noted that the benefit of a fully refurbished hospitality kitchen was recognised by all, particularly as 21% of GDP in the Highland area is hospitality based. This would not only be an

excellent resource as a training kitchen for students but would also give added value to the community as it would be available for use by community groups. Discussion took place on potential sources of funding, however, it is difficult to fund raise / make bids to charitable sources without assurances that this project can be progressed. As the total bill is in the region of £210,000 the school clearly cannot commit to such a venture without substantial funding for maintenance work being made available by the Highland Council or professional partnerships.

6.

RECTOR'S REPORT

Staffing.

- Mr O'Neill reported that Miss Lauder has been appointed Acting PT English at Millburn Academy. Brian Yates is currently covering for Miss Lauder, but a permanent position may be advertised in due course if applicable. A number of parents expressed how pleased they were to see Mr Yates back at Charleston Academy.
- Mr O'Neill also advised that the following teachers will be retiring at the end of this session: Mr Copland, Mrs Lewery, Mr Hines, and Mr Cripps. The school is currently reviewing staffing structure and job sizing. Charleston Academy currently needs to make savings which are equivalent to one full time member of staff. Mr O'Neill confirmed that the school is free to make its own decisions on this issue and a decision will be made after the options have been fully evaluated.
- A strong leet has been drawn up for the position of head janitor following receipt of 18 applications. Interviews will be held shortly. Following appointment the school will have a team of three janitors. The team previously consisted of four staff members which covered the school and community complex, however, changes were made to the staffing structure following the creation of High Life Highland with one member of the team having their employment transferred to the new organisation.
- There are a number of school trips and exchange visits organised for this session. These include S3 pupils visiting Sweden and a ski trip to Lake Tahoe. In addition a group of 9 South African staff and pupils will visit Charleston Academy from the 17th to the 24th March. Activities arranged for the visitors include football at Inverness Caledonian Thistle Football Club, dance at Eden Court, and a trip on the funicular railway in the Cairngorms.
- Mr O'Neill explained that the new Highland Council recycling policy would come into effect at the beginning of April. The cost of emptying the blue recycling bins will be half the cost of a normal bin but the school will receive fewer collections. The issue of waste needs to be addressed as the school currently produces between 7 and 10 bags of refuse each day. This constitutes mainly of polystyrene and cardboard used by the canteen for food service. Although alternatives have been considered health & safety issues arising from the stairs prevent the use of plates. Another large source of refuse is the plastic bottles of fizzy drink purchased from the local shops. Mr O'Neill does not wish to deter pupils from purchasing healthy meal choices from the canteen and is therefore reluctant to stop pupils bringing bottles into the school. Nevertheless, the issue still needs to be addressed and it was thought better to try and encourage youngsters to make healthier choices when selecting drinks. To this end a number of health promotion and eco awareness talks will be held during March. Discussion took place on recycling and it was agreed that pupils being involved and taking ownership would help this initiative to succeed. Any parents who wish to get involved in this project should contact Rona Macpherson.
- It was reported that the Scottish Football Association has developed an initiative known as School of Football which aims to develop the social and academic skills of pupils through football. It is offering 16 places to pupils who are talented or showing potential in football. Pupils from P7 going into S1 this August would have an opportunity to take part in trials and would also be required to undertake an interview. Funding is in place for coaching during or after the school day for a 2 year period, and may be on-going. Charleston Academy has been selected to host this programme on the strength of its PE department and links with the Highland Football Academy. Further discussion will take place at the next meeting of the Associated Schools Group to consider how to liaise with parents of children who may benefit from this programme.
- The school is currently forming a team who will progress the development of a new school website. Mr O'Neill explained that individual departments would be responsible for the development of web blogs and items for GLOW. In addition there is also an opportunity for pupils and parents to get involved in the design and creation of the other aspects of the website. Anyone who is interested in contributing to this project should contact Mr O'Neill in the first instance and arrangements will be made to meet up with relevant staff members. It was suggested that meetings could take place either during lunchtime or at the end of the school day.

7.	<p><u>NEW NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS – UPDATE FROM SQA</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was reported that there had been negative coverage in the news recently but that Charleston Academy is committed to the new curriculum. An information session for S2 parents was held in January explaining the new structure and exam system. Mr O’Neill explained that although the new curriculum allows for pupils to make subject choices at the end of S3, Charleston Academy is continuing with the current practice of choices being made in S2. The Curriculum for Excellence is divided into 8 areas, and it was initially suggested that pupils should select one subject from each area. However, staffing structures do not allow for this, and it was agreed to give pupils greater flexibility in their choices, whilst encouraging them to select a broad and balanced curriculum. Parents were advised that students will continue to take exams (National 4 and 5) at the end of S4, and undertake Highers in S5 and S6. It may be that in the future students progressing to Higher may bi-pass National 5 exams, however, schools wish to become familiar and gain confidence in the new exams structure prior to this taking place. It was reported that the new qualifications were due to be published in April 2012. Jill Kent advised that information for parents, including an opportunity to raise questions / concerns, is available on the SQA website. In addition, there is one place available to attend a regional meeting about the Curriculum for Excellence at Fortrose Academy on Saturday 17th March. Anyone interested in attending this event should contact Jill Kent directly.
8.	<p><u>FINANCE REPORT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yvonne Brown reported that the bank balance at 31st January was £4644.38. ‘Friends of Charleston’ has 2 new members and it was reported that Mrs Lewery was the winner of the February draw. It was also reported that there had been an increase in the number of supporters of ‘Easy Fundraising’ with an additional 7 people joining this initiative. Charleston Academy earns in the region of £40 per quarter through Easy Fundraising but this has seen an increase since January and this quarter is expected to earn £60.
10.	<p><u>CORRESPONDENCE</u> The only correspondence received since the last meeting is an edition of the PTA magazine</p>
12.	<p><u>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charleston News is currently being issued once per term with the next edition being circulated either just before or just after the Easter break. The Charleston News will eventually be added to the school website.
13.	<p><u>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</u> Monday 30th April - 7pm</p>