



# CHARLESTON ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

## Minutes of Parent Council Meeting held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2013 at Charleston Academy

**Present:** Fiona Alexander, Anne Ashton, Andrew Barry, Robert Bowie, Jill Kent (Chair), Urszula Kozak, Fiona Malcolm, Linda McLean, Rona Macpherson, Kate McEwen, Alex Mezals, Susan Mitchell, Kate Morris, Katrina Morrison, Rona McWhirter, Julie Riddle, Gordon Stewart, Christian Wittke

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

**Apologies:** Yvonne Brown, Rita Farragher, Cathy Fraser, Sue Fraser, Lindsey Stout, Pauline Tuthill

1.	<p><b>WELCOME</b></p> <p>Jill Kent welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Andrew Barry, Minister for Kinmylies Church.</p>
2.	<p><b>APPROVAL OF MINUTES</b></p> <p>The minute of the meeting held on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2013 was approved with the following corrections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yvonne Brown had been omitted from apologies</li> <li>• Rector's Report – point 2. Mr O'Neill clarified that all schools in the region have been permitted to break from the original ICT contract</li> </ul> <p>Proposed: Kate Morris Seconded: Fiona Alexander</p>
3.	<p><b>MATTERS ARISING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Art Exhibition went very well and it was reported that S1 parents very much enjoyed this event which raised £404.82. Thanks to everyone who helped to make this event a success.</li> <li>○ Thanks were also given to Vue Cinemas for donating the prizes and displaying the winning artwork in the foyer.</li> <li>○ Mr O'Neill reported that Hugh Fraser, Director of Education, Culture &amp; Sport Service has asked for some of the artwork in order that this can be displayed at the Highland Council Headquarters.</li> <li>○ The winning entry will feature as the graphic for the front of next year's school planners which are issued to all pupils.</li> </ul>
4.	<p><b>RECTOR'S REPORT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mr O'Neill reported that this had been an extremely busy term. The S4 prelims have been moved from November to January and intense teaching is continuing until the last week of term.</li> <li>○ Festive activities will all take place during the last week of term. These will include charity events, a Christmas lunch, Christmas Dances, followed by an inter-house quiz on the last day of term. 34 staff have volunteered to silver serve Christmas lunch to the students.</li> <li>○ Students who went on the Battlefield Trip held two Armistice Assemblies to share their experiences. These assemblies were attended by the Provost, local Councillors, Callum Mackintosh (Area Education Manager), and representatives of the British Legion. The feedback was very positive and students did themselves proud. Two of the students played the pipes 5 minutes before the 2 minutes silence on Armistice Day – Mr O'Neill stated that this had worked very well and it is hoped to repeat this in future years.</li> <li>○ Fundraising activities undertaken for BBC Children in Need raised in the region of £1200.</li> <li>○ 80% of the lighting in the school has been replaced since October. Mr O'Neill reported that this has been a significant investment by the Highland Council which has not only made the school much brighter but also reduced noise. Mr O'Neill is now hoping to negotiate the replacement of the lighting in the car park.</li> <li>○ Fujitsu are currently installing wiring for a new telephone system and switchboard. The new digital call system will allow messages left on voicemail to be picked up by e-mail, with phones linking to desktop computers. The next phase will see the installation of telephones in each classroom.</li> <li>○ PC Elliott gave a drug awareness talk to pupils, the focus of which was the legal perspective. This included aspects of law, types of issues and also reporting matters. Youth Action will also come into the school at a later date to give a drug awareness talk, but from a different perspective. This will focus on how people at risk can be supported.</li> </ul>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ RoWAN visited the school in the first week of December to undertake a waste audit. They found that there was very little food waste although there was room for improvement with regards to packaging. Mr O'Neill reported that soup is still being served in polystyrene cups but it is hoped to change this in the future. Plastic bottles and waste from items purchased at the local shops continue to be an issue.</li> <li>○ The refurbishment of the cafe in the complex is progressing slowly with the launch now being postponed till late January. The cafe operation is very successful and it was noted that the canteen at Charleston is the busiest of all the schools in the Highland region.</li> <li>○ Representatives from CAP Gemini have visited the school to talk to senior pupils about opportunities for ICT apprenticeships. The school also has an excellent relationship with Skills Development Scotland which allows for the sourcing of further opportunities of this type.</li> <li>○ The monitoring system is now up and running. Mr O'Neill reported that this has had an excellent impact on behaviour throughout the school. Both negative and positive monitoring is recorded in a factual, objective way and shared with all staff. Continuous negative monitoring can lead to the withdrawal of privileges such as attendance at the school dance. Mr O'Neill stressed that confidential information is not shared and would only be available to the Senior Management Team / Guidance Staff as appropriate.</li> <li>○ Consideration is being given to changing the structure of the curriculum for senior pupils. Pupils are currently extracted from lessons in order that careers advice, drug awareness education etc can be delivered. In addition it was felt that pupils would benefit from additional support in order to identify potential difficulties at an earlier stage. The restructure would incorporate 2 periods of support from Guidance / SMT, 2 periods of core PE and 1 period of PSE each week. In order to accommodate these additional periods the teaching of subjects would be reduced from 6 periods to 5 periods per week.</li> </ul>
5.	<p><b><u>FINANCE REPORT</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sue Mitchell reported that the bank balance at 20<sup>th</sup> of November was £4437.01</li> <li>○ The balance after payment of outstanding cheques in respect of Bus Monitors, Art Department and Clerk is £4187.68</li> </ul>
6.	<p><b><u>DISCUSSION –CAN THE PARENT COUNCIL DO MORE TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE SCHOOL?</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Jill Kent stated that the ethos of the school is that it creates rather than follows best practice. As a critical friend to the school the Parent Council wishes to support the work the school undertakes. Mr O'Neill asked if the Parent Council would consider the formation of a quality assurance questionnaire for parents. The school's Improvement Plan is coming to the end of its three-year cycle and the new cycle will commence in June. An audit would be very helpful as the results would inform new developments. The school feels it would be useful if this comes from the Parent Council rather than the school as it is likely to generate a more open response. Anyone wishing to be part of a sub-group to take this forward should contact either Jill or Margret.</li> <li>○ A representative is required for the Community Complex Committee - anyone who would be willing to undertake his should contact Jill</li> <li>○ Interest was shown in holding a 'Parenting Teenagers' event at the community complex</li> <li>○ Suggestions for other initiatives from the Pupil Council would be welcomed</li> <li>○ Jill Kent also drew attention to the grant writing expertise that exists within the Parent Council should staff like some support with funding applications.</li> </ul>
7.	<p><b><u>CORRESPONDENCE</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No correspondence has been received</li> </ul>
8.	<p><b><u>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There will be no change to the arrangements for study leave for this academic year. The Local Authority is consulting with schools regarding arrangements for following years. It was clarified that the timetable for S4 – S6 is suspended for the period during which exams take place and pupils are only required to come in to school to take exams. Pupils are welcome to come and see teachers during study leave if they would like support with aspects of their learning. Study leave does not apply to prelims. Mr O'Neill advised that the SQA has changed the exam timetable for this session with National 5 and Higher Exams now being scheduled for much the same time.</li> </ul>



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	<p>The exams start 4 days after the Easter holidays.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Clarification was sought by a number of parents on the content of subjects - particularly those that are 'newer' subjects. Gordon Stewart explained that course choice booklets which provide more in depth information will be issued prior to students making their subject choices. In addition an information session will be arranged for parents, and pupils will also have the opportunity to discuss their options with guidance teachers. Mr Stewart advised that the recent audit was purely for planning purposes. The school uses this audit to ascertain where the demand is likely to be which in turn informs timetabling and recruitment decisions.</li><li>○ Discussion took place on the '20s plenty' flashing lights. It was noted that both lights flash in the morning and at lunchtime but only one at the end of the school day. This may be due to the fact that Kinmylies Primary School finishes earlier. It was agreed that Robert Bowie would contact PC Elliott to explore the possibility of extending this time so that both lights flash as Charleston pupils make their way home.</li><li>○ It was reported that there had been vandalism at the Future Forest. Two benches that had been concreted in had been removed and set on fire. This follows the vandalism of the xylophone last year. Parents have been asked to be vigilant and pass on any information regarding these types of incidents to Robert Bowie.</li><li>○ It was reported that the Muirtown Community Council currently has some budget available to fund initiatives / projects.</li></ul>
<b>10.</b>	<b><u>DATES OF NEXT MEETING</u></b> Monday 27 <sup>th</sup> January 2014 – 7pm