

Minutes of the Grantown Grammar School Parent Council AGM which was held in the school on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2011 at 7.30pm

**1. Welcome by Chairman**

Mr McCook welcomed everyone to the AGM of the Grantown Grammar School Parent Council and was pleased to see some new faces this year.

Mrs Tucker proposed the adoption of the minutes of the last AGM and Mrs McAuly-Brand seconded the proposal. The minutes were duly adopted.

**2. Apologies**

Cllr Jaci Douglas  
Miss Kendal Delaney

**3. Headteacher's comments**

Mrs Carson echoed Mr McCook's welcome and made the following comments:

PC is a very important body and we really need parents to work with us if we are to do the best for pupils in this community.

Thank you for taking the time to be here.

The Parent Council over the last few years has made an enormous contribution to the school in many ways and I hope that by the end of this evening we will continue to have a strong group of parents to help us move forward in what is certainly a challenging time for schools.

As you are all aware we had a very sad start to the current session with the death of Rona Milne. This has had a huge impact on the school, emotionally and operationally. So I will apologise now for not being as well prepared for this evening as I would have liked to have been. I would however like to take this opportunity to say how proud I was of our pupils, those who represented the school at Rona's memorial service in Cromdale, the school and house captains who led our service in the school and the 100 or so pupils who opted to attend. It was really all very special.

So to a quick report on last session.

- Last session began with a number of staff changes, 3 resulting from maternity leaves and I am pleased to say all the mums have now returned.

- We completed our first year of full engagement with the new Curriculum for Excellence with S1 pupils and continue to build on this.
- We enjoyed our sponsored walk in September thanks to the support of parents – it was not only a good fun event it was also a great fund raiser
- Our Chaplaincy Team up was established last year and this has moved us a long way toward meeting our obligations for religious observance.
- By this time last year there was already an embargo on the purchase of new ICT equipment and we were due to have had our computers refreshed. We are still not there yet, but we have a proposed refresh date of 11 November. Dugal will give you more info about where we are with this shortly.
- Last year we were having real headaches with reporting through our new MIS system and although there are still some teething problems the system has significantly improved and should give us a state of the art system to meet our current needs – eventually!
- This hall has seen a new floor and new windows and the ground floor is now fully double glazed. We are not yet sure what is going to happen with the upper floors.
- Winter came early last year with 2 snow closure days in November.
- Two school buses went off the road in less than a year luckily with no injuries. A further Stagecoach bus also went off the road in the area and a passenger went through the front window. Despite this and really strong messages about the importance of wearing seatbelts, this still remains an issue with many pupils. I am really not sure what more we can do on this one but I dread the day I get the phone call that another bus has gone off the road.
- We tried a new approach to parents evenings last session with an earlier start and interviews more spread out. This seems to be viewed as an improvement. Staff certainly prefer it.
- During the session we ran a very successful evening with advice on how to keep your child safe – with a focus on internet safety, drugs and alcohol. We hope to be able to repeat this but the time has just not been there for us to look at this so far this term.

- We had another year of excellent music concerts and the S6 production of Tutti Frutti was highly entertaining.
- The school continues to do well on the sporting front with pupils competing at national and international level in a range of winter and summer sports.
- At the end of last session, the new seniors continued the work started by last year's S6 to review the senior uniform and I am delighted that we now have the vast majority of seniors turning up in shirt tie and blazer. This is rubbing off on younger year groups whose standard of dress has also improved.
- Over the year there has been a lot to celebrate, but we recognise that we need to continue to build on our strengths and address areas where we know we need to improve.

I am currently consulting with staff on our draft improvement plan which is now in a more user friendly format some of you will be pleased to hear. This improvement plan and the draft standards and quality report will be the main topic of discussion at the next Parent Council Meeting (copies of SIP available).

- One of the major areas we are consulting on as many of you know is our future curriculum structures, to meet the new qualifications framework. After refreshments the plan is to do a couple of presentations about where we are with our thinking at the moment and offer the opportunity for questions and discussion – hopefully you will stay for this.
- The other major area we are consulting on is the ICT refresh and believe it or not we still do not have all the information we need to make decisions but we have moved on a long way in the last week or so. Dugal has been given some additional time to help us with this project and I am grateful to him for the time he has put in to this so far.

Mr McCrow explained the ICT refresh, which is imminent, and said the school has been looking at ways of using ICT effectively. There has been a lot of staff consultation in the planning. The refresh should happen in November. The school hopes for continued support from the Parent Council. For example, cabinets will be

needed to store laptops in different classrooms. This would be a one off payment, rather than a contract as with the computers.

#### **4. Introduction to current Parent Council Groups**

Mr McCook explained the Parent Council had been established five years ago to replace the School Board. A loose Constitution covered all important aspects but meant that everyone could play their part. In the change to charitable status the Constitution was re-written and more clauses protected the members of the Parent Council. There are three groups: Policy & Planning, Fundraising and Communications. All the Groups have been meeting on the same nights. Reduced numbers were in attendance at the Fundraising Group meetings so it was decided that they meet with the Policy & Planning Group. The Fundraising Group is critical to the Parent Council and in this way more people would be present to make decisions. The biggest problem has been to get people involved in Fundraising events. It will become more critical in the years to come as Government funding becomes less.

#### **5. Policy and Planning report**

Recently we have been getting to grips with OSCR. Two years ago the Parent Council acquired charitable status, which meant we could make more money by fundraising. This is a valuable tool.

A pending problem is the new windows in school, which should have been completed in the summer holidays.

#### **6. Fundraising report**

Mrs Tucker re-iterated how important the Fundraising Group is and for people to be involved. She thanked the people who help at discos and other fundraisers. She said she does one big push for helpers a year. New parents receive help forms and can supply their contact details if they are willing to help. Mrs Carson said the Fundraising Group organise the Sponsored walk and the S6 pupils organise the discos. However they can't run them without parents' help. Mrs Tucker said it fundraising events are more successful where pupils are involved.

#### **7. Communications report**

Mr Liggat explained the Communications Group remit is to improve the flow of information from the school and Parent Council to the parents and back again. School bag mail has been found to be the most constant and cost-effective. Although high tech methods have been tried, these have waned. The Parent Council newsletter is distributed with the school newsletter. There is a link to the Parent Council website from the school website and on this can be found minutes of meetings, newsletters and a feedback mechanism by blog. The blog is open to all and is fully moderated by Andy Liggat. There is also webshop access where commission is paid to the Parent Council when you buy through this site. At present there is no-one else in the group but Mr Liggat would welcome volunteers. Mrs Carson said the school website is now being managed by the school media group and it would be worth getting in touch with them.

## **8. Treasurer's report**

The last sponsored walk raised £3473, the discos - almost £700, the Lucky Numbers - £440 and the Christmas concert - over £200. There has been no general expenditure in the year but at the May meeting up to £8000 was spent on departmental development bids for items such as kayaks, which are over and above what the Highland Council would pay for. Items bought were for additional items to what is required for a "normal" education. This illustrates the importance of the Fundraising Group.

Mrs Carson acknowledged the huge efforts of Heather Tucker and Sandy McCook. On behalf of the Parent Council she made presentations to Mrs Tucker and Mr McCook. Both received a piece of art work by one of the pupils. She explained the huge contribution they had played, particularly in the acquisition of the new STEM building. Mr McCook had been involved for fourteen years, twelve of those as Chairman. He is also Chairman of the Former Pupils Club. Mr McCook advised his successor to forget about National Policies but think local and what you can do to help our own Headteacher. He said a phone call often achieves far quicker results.

## **9. Format for Parent Council Session 2011-12**

This was covered in item 4 of the agenda.

## **10. Membership of Council and Executive Positions**

Mr McCook explained there are two positions – those of Chair of the Policy and Planning Group and Chair of the Fundraising Group. Mrs Tucker explained the Fundraising Chair distributes and collates the help forms and contacts parents, requesting help at events. She also writes something for the newsletter, explaining forthcoming events. She said it isn't a huge, time-consuming role.

Mrs Carson said that the Parent Council meetings run as informally as they can. Mrs Carson attends as an adviser.

Mrs Amphlett asked if we had to have a Chairman. Would it be possible to have a core group and regular meetings? Mrs Carson replied there are real advantages to having one person to act as spokesperson. Mrs Wharton said we need four executives to act as trustees to fulfil OSCR requirements.

Mr McCook suggested a break for refreshments at this point and invited any suggestions of possible candidates.

## **11. AOCB**

There was no other current business.

At this point the meeting had a break with refreshments

## **Future Curriculum Structure: Presentation and Discussion**

Mrs Carson introduced Thea Searle, from the Curriculum Architecture Group, to talk about the new qualifications to be introduced in 2013.

The school is looking to consult with parents on the subject. Mrs Searle explained the key points of the Curriculum for Excellence. We will be looking at S1, 2, 3 then S4, 5, 6. The new S3 will have a different structure to the present S3. Pupils in the new S3 will carry on a broad curriculum but probably with some choice within that. Inhibiting factors such as timetabling, staffing and budget constraints need to be taken into consideration. The staff must develop the courses and the new qualifications will be introduced during the school year 2012/13. The possibilities for S3 pupils are core subjects and some options or to continue a broad education. The new qualifications will be taken at the appropriate stage for individual learners over the three year period – S4, 5, 6.

Mrs Searle explained that a key aim of the Curriculum for Excellence is to reduce the quantity of assessments pupils undertake.

Possible models:

S4 – study 6 subjects. This might provide deeper learning and specialism, increasing pupil motivation.

- study 8 subjects. Timetabling this is more restrictive and would have a negative impact on what we can offer in S5/6. We cannot afford to maintain the status quo particularly with a projected falling roll. Staffing constraints will also have implications to S3.

Next steps – ongoing consultation with staff, with parents and with pupils.

GGs is in a similar or better position compared to other schools. There has been a high level of consultation with staff.

### **6-column structure**

Mrs Carson invited Fiona Sutherland to explain the 6 column structure. Mrs Sutherland said this structure is more cost-effective and provides more choice for S5/6 pupils. Last year there were five columns, one of which could be supported study for S6. Universities like students to achieve five Highers. The 6-column structure would actually increase the number of pupils able to do five Highers in one year.

There would be some recognition even if the pupil dropped a subject before completing it. Mrs Sutherland explained the pupils would have more choice and would be able to push forward or take their time. Classes would be mixed year-groups – S4-S6. Mrs Sutherland illustrated the 6-column structure by showing what choices and levels pupils might opt for and comparing it to what is available now.

It is hoped that pupils will be able to achieve a National 4 qualification, which is internally assessed. All new courses will involve an interdisciplinary project. Some pupils could gather evidence of this at N4 level during the course of S3

The SQA website contains the latest round of draft documents.

Mr McCook thanked Mrs Searle and Mrs Sutherland.

Since no-one had approached Mr McCook with regards to taking up the posts of Chair he asked Mrs Buxton to convene a meeting of the Parent Council within the next month to discuss the issues. He added there are two places for Parent Council members to represent the school on the Craig McLean Sports Centre Board, emphasising the need for the school's view to be represented.

Mr Baker asked if someone should volunteer to Chair the next meeting. Mr McCook replied that Mrs Buxton would open and Chair the meeting and it would be an open session to decide the way to go. Mr McCrow suggested it would help if there was a remit of the posts. Mrs Cooke asked when the names would be needed for OSCR. Mr McCook replied that he and Mrs Tucker would remain as trustees until the change is made, but it would be preferable if this was as soon as possible.

The next meeting of the Parent Council will be on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

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