

**MINUTES OF PARENT COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT GROVE ACADEMY
ON TUESDAY 10 MARCH 2015**

Members in Attendance

Dougy Agnew, Dawn Archibald, Gillian Boland, Debbie Clark, Valerie Clark, Cllr Ken Guild, Mary Holligan, Graham Hutton, Taletta Jamieson, Clare Jefferson (Clerk), Penny Lewis (Chair), Fiona McIntosh, Karen O'Rourke, Dorren Phillips, Richard Smith

1. Welcome

The meeting was opened by the chair, Penny Lewis. Everyone was welcomed.

2. Apologies for Absence

Julie-Anne & Kevin Alexander, Fiona Anderson, Cllr Kevin Cordell, Suzanne Duce, Lesley Elder, Sally Hart, Carole Jenkins, Susan Kidd, Elaine King, Clare Leslie, Rhona Merry, Deepa Narayanan, Cllr Derek Scott, Alice Turpie

3. Minutes of Previous Parent Council Meeting

There was brief feedback provided on the following items in the previous minutes:

3.1 Correction and accepting of the previous minutes:

There were no corrections made to the previous minutes. The previous minutes from 21 January 2015 were adopted as presented.

3.2 Matters Arising from Minutes of Last Meeting

3.2.1 Modern languages at Grove

Later in the year the Parent Council will make arrangements for a representative from the initiative to promote language attainment called the '1+2' to address the Parent Council.

3.2.2 Wifi at Grove

The provision of school wide wifi remains a priority for the Parent Council.

3.2.3 Meeting with Mr Hunter

Three parents (Penny Lewis, Clare Jefferson and Gillian Boland) attended the briefing by Dundee's education convener, Councillor Stewart Hunter, at City Square on 17 February 2015. Mr Hunter holds regular briefings with Parent Councils to inform them on current issues in Dundee education. Some of the issues discussed in the meeting related to citywide issues including: the relocation of the Young Mothers Unit, reforms to the school estate (rebuilding schools, merging schools, closer of schools), as well as initiatives to keep graduate teachers in Dundee and challenges of supply teachers in Dundee. The briefing was informative. Although not all the issues discussed were directly relevant to Grove Academy, the impact of these changes affect the citywide education budget which is relevant to Grove.

3.2.4 Supply teaching

Penny Lewis provided a copy of the letter she drafted to the Education Department (Angela Constance, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Life Long Learning) to express concern about the current provisions for certain subject teachers and supply teachers. This letter will be circulated to parents on the database to give others an opportunity to add their name in support of the letter (refer to Annex 1; Annex 2 for the response received).

3.2.5 Role of the Grove Parent Council.

The role of the Grove Parent Council is an on-going discussion. The Parent Council is guided by a constitution, which governs all its activities. Some projects and fund-raising activities are more suited to be undertaken by the Friends of Grove. The Parent Council and Friends of Grove do work closely together. The Parent Council will use their contact database to publicise the Friends of Grove's meeting as there is a great deal of synergy between the two organisations. The next meeting of the Friends of Grove will be held on 02 June 2015. Any parents that would like to be involved in the Friends of Grove can attend this meeting.

4. Report by the Rector of Grove Academy, Mr Graham Hutton

The Parent Council invited Mr Hutton to provide a briefing on recent activities and issues at Grove Academy (refer to Annex 3 for the notes from his briefing). The rector's briefing will be a regular component of the Parent Council meeting. The briefing was extensive. It dealt with inputs on the most recent achievements from the various school departments including

the modern languages, physical education, home economics, biology, science and music. It highlighted the achievements of certain pupils in the areas of academic achievement especially geography, debating, sports, dance, musical performance, leadership and fundraising. In addition to this, various additional activities which pupils and staff are engaged in were discussed including an extensive list of groups or clubs, including the eco-group, the S6 Nail Bar, the Bead group who made jewellery, as well as the various residential trips and day trips. The work of the eco-group was presented by Mary Holligan focusing on the Fairtrade Fortnight and the Queen Street Community Garden (refer to Annex 4.1/4.2 for the notes from her briefing).

Mr Hutton explained about the chronic staff shortages of last week which arose due to serious long-term sickness as well as short-term illness. He noted that last week none of the staff were on training courses or trips. In addition to this, he discussed the finalisation of the S4 choice of subjects. At present, 95% of the pupils will be able to take their first choice selection.

Questions and discussions:

How to get pupils involved in extra-mural activities? In the question session that followed, parents queried what they could do to aide their children in taking up some of the opportunities offered to pupils at Grove. In the discussion it was reiterated that pupils need to autonomously source the information that is available to them on activities and events on offer. Information is disseminated in tutor time, assemblies, on notice boards. Pupils are bombarded with information and opportunities, and although some activities have limited space availability, or restricted access, events do roll out throughout the year. Parents enquired about how to make children self-motivated to get involved? The school also uses Inter-house competitions to encourage participation and this often has a knock on effect on aiding pupils to get involved. Some activities are driven by the pupils, such as Table Tennis and Board gaming. However others groupings find it more difficult to initiate an activity such as the S2 girls' badminton. Sometimes the skill or interest level of staffing also impacts on the types of activities on offer.

School trips: Parents asked that the school provide an overview of the forthcoming trips and opportunities. It was felt that more communication on this would be useful for encouraging pupils at home. It was suggested that trips and space availability could be flagged up in the Parent Council minutes. For instance in June 2016 there is a trip planned to Czech Republic. Some of the recent or planned trips mentioned include: a four week trip to Uganda in July 2016, and an exchange programme to Japan in October 2015; a day trip for 6 pupils to the Anne Franck Museum in Amsterdam and a day trip to Auschwitz in Poland for 2 pupils. There were some Scottish trips such as to the Isle of Skye and to the Abernethy Bridge Outdoor Centre.

5. Friends of Grove

In recent months, the Friends of Grove have engaged in few activities. On 2 June 2015, the Friends of Grove are going to re-launch in preparation for the 2015/2016 academic year. This is an opportunity for parents that enjoy working on focused fund-raising events and initiatives to get involved. Parents are invited to come along to this meeting with ideas and thoughts for fund-raising. Some of the ideas that emerged in the discussion were the idea of selling second-hand blazers, or used study guides, to promote recycling and to raise money for the school fund.

6. Responsibility for Learning Policy

Additional copies of the responsibility for Learning Policy were circulated to parents in the meeting. A discussion on the document will be held over until the next meeting.

7. Facebook page

It was decided in the previous Parent Council meeting that we should consider establishing a Facebook page for the Grove Academy Parent Council. The foundations of the Facebook page can be found under a search for 'Grove Academy Parent Council' on the Facebook website. Membership of the page is established by 'liking' and 'following' the page. The page is still in its infancy. At the present time, there are a limited number of administrators that are regulating the content that can be put up on the page. The Parent Council will draw on the Facebook guidelines written by Claire Ramsey to setup some parameters to govern the use of the page. It is felt that the page will provide another avenue for information sharing and communication, and will complement the current forms of communication such as meeting attendance (next meeting on 20 May at 7pm in the staffroom), the Parent Council page on the Grove Academy Website (<http://grove.ea.dundee.city.sch.uk/Parent>), and the use of the grove parent council email address (Grove@dundeearentcouncil.org).

In the discussion, it was noted that not all people use Facebook, and it is a complementary avenue for the dissemination of information, which simultaneously will also be available using the existing methods.

8. Higher maths

An additional agenda item was added to the parent council meeting concerning pupil readiness to sit for higher maths this academic year. Some pupils were notified in writing that Grove recommends that their children defer sitting their highers in Maths until next year. Mr Hutton explained that there was a group of S5 and S6 pupils that were advised against sitting

their higher maths this year. This was based on their inadequate performance in their prelim results. The reason for this was outlined in a letter sent to parents. The school felt that some pupils were not sufficiently ready to write the exam, and it was unlikely that they would pass the exam if they sat it this session. For some pupils it is recommended that the Higher Maths course be done over two years to allow them time to complete the requirements of the course. The school promotes autonomous independent learning at the higher level. Pupils need to take responsibility for their own learning. The school feel that they do sufficient tracking throughout the year on progress. For instance, following prelims in February, staff identify who is underachieving and meet with these pupils to encourage them to work harder. At parents' night the school provide advice on subject choice and how children are performing, as well as areas in which children can work harder. Grove feels that the maths department performs well above the national standard. However Higher Maths is a difficult subject, with a large jump from one level to the next, and probably doing it over two years is advisable for a significant number of pupils that take the course.

How to get pupils to work harder at school? In the question session that followed, parents queried what they could do to aide their children in their learning at school. The school reiterated that parents' evenings are important for parents to understand how the new curriculum works. Pupils need to be thinking ahead about their career options, and to choose their courses accordingly. This is the best opportunity for success. The school remains committed to develop clear career pathways for pupils.

9. AOCB

7.1 School improvement Plan. In the next meeting, the issue of the School Improvement Plan will be discussed.

8. Next Meeting

The next meeting is due to take place on Wednesday 20 May 2015.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Letter sent to the Education department

Appendix 2 Reply received from the Education department

Appendix 3 Mr Hutton's Report on school activities

Appendix 4.1 & 4.2 Mary Holligan's Report on the Eco Club