

GROVE ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL

DRAFT MINUTES OF PARENT COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT GROVE ACADEMY

ON TUESDAY 12th NOVEMBER 2013 at 7 pm

Members in Attendance

Andrew Llanwarne (AL)	Cllr. Kevin Cordell (KC)	Cllr. Derek Scott (DS)
Cllr. Laurie Bidwell (LB)	Lesley Elder (LE)	Kerstin Jorna (KA)
Valerie Clark (VC)	Sally Hart (SH)	Penny Lewis (PA)
Rhona Gray (RG)	Fiona Anderson (FA)	Laura Kobine (LK)
Graham Hutton (GH)	Richard Smith (RS)	Alice Turpie (AT)

Welcome

AL opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

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AL noted the need for a secretary (a post which includes remuneration)

Apologies for Absence

2	Carole Jenkins	Mary Holligan	Kevin Alexander
	Dawn Archibald		

Minutes of Previous Parent Council Meeting

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The draft minutes of the previous meeting, held on 10th September 2013, required a few corrections.

- Section 1: 'AT' should read 'AL'
- Section 5: second last sentence should read: 'Aim to achieve the best you can, even when challenging'

The minutes were then accepted as accurate. Proposed by GH and seconded by LE.

Matters Arising From Minutes of Last Meeting

Road Safety:

GH confirmed that the proposal for fitting barriers at the car park was still being investigated and quotes were being obtained.

Communications:

The proposed sub-group meeting on using social media for communication of school news to parents has not yet happened.

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Curriculum

English: AL and PL had met the Head Teacher and Principal Teacher of English to discuss the new curriculum for English. PL felt that in the new Curriculum for Excellence, literacy was being valued over literature. She also felt there were too many Scottish texts therefore other important works were perhaps not being covered. GH said that this balance would be looked at and he noted that the school has recently had its best results for many years in this subject. Other opinions tabled were that a child needs to be literate before accessing literature properly.

Highers: LB asked whether there was any news regarding the new Highers in 2015. GH confirmed that there were some SQA information days starting shortly but in some subjects

only. AT commented that early meetings on Curriculum for Excellence had given the impression the Highers would not be changing.

Testing at national 5 level: AT questioned whether it was indeed right, that a pupil capable of getting test results above 90% could fail the whole test if one learning outcome was failed, and that a second fail will lead to that pupil not being allowed to sit the national 5 exam. GH confirmed that the school was very upset about this situation dictated by the SQA and had already expressed its concerns. He felt that this was the sort of hitch that should get ironed out for future years and gave strong assurances that the school would ensure the first cohort would not be disadvantaged in this respect.

Prelim Exams: GH confirmed that the prelims would start at the end of the first week back in January. There would be no study leave and exams would, in the main, be in class time. They will be a bit more like class tests rather than 'mock exams'. This is partly because there isn't an appeal process any more.

Main exams: It was confirmed that there will not be an extended period of exam study leave partly because the exams are timetabled over 6 weeks which is too long to be 'off' school. There was concern that some pupils would take advantage of this. A single day would be allowed for study leave in advance of each exam. Some points raised were:

- Not all children would waste that time.
- The single day off beforehand would have an unrelated collection of subjects and although the curriculum should be finished, important information might be still be missed.
- GH confirmed that a parent could write in, making a case regarding some additional time off for a particular exam.
- What will the pupils do in classes of subjects which have already been examined - possibly study for future exams?
- the suggestion of using SE/RE and PE time for revision was made, but equally it was acknowledged that, particularly, PE could provide good relief from exam stress
- Teachers have perhaps in the past valued that period as an opportunity to develop course work and this year in particular a lot of development time is needed.

National 4: There is no end exam for national 4. A pupil failing national 5 would need to sit extra components in order to achieve the national 4 instead.

Staff: GH confirmed the additions of a new temporary modern language teacher and a new permanent English teacher to the staff.

Values: GH tabled the new poster 'Handful of values' created by the Columbia group.

Stairways: GH said that the proposal for naming the school stairways would be going ahead.

Subject choice: There was confirmation that the 5th year timetable would be a totally free choice and that, for example English would not be compulsory. It was also confirmed that only 5 Highers could be timetabled but that this did not rule out a pupil doing a subject like Art and Design or Music on their own.

Integrated approach, support for learners: The aim was to have targeted support and that each pupil should have 1 teacher for tutor group through all the school years. LE confirmed that teachers were being given additional training for this purpose during in-service days including CPD from the Support for Learning staff. RG commented that the 1 teacher system doesn't work where Tutor groups have an NQT. It was confirmed that the school was trying to minimise this issue and that in future head teachers might also become involved in Tutor Time.

Cooperative learning: GH confirmed that the cooperative learning groups were working very well so far. The next cooperative learning academy will be at Grove.

PL commented that as part of this she, as a parent, was being asked to comment on homework but that it wasn't clear what was expected. The comment sheet seemed to be asking about the questions themselves rather than content. LE to look into this.

Remembrance ceremonies: These had all gone well. Thanks go to Kevin Laurie.

3rd year French: This group have been visiting the Michelin factory. They will be aiming to market a product in groups, learning marketing vocabulary in the process. The groups will compete and the end results will be judged by Michelin

School visit: A visit from Aileen Campbell, Minister for Children and Young People is planned on February the 18th

Successes of note

- Abbey Bullock – poetry winner
- Douglas Clark – Landsdowne prize
- Alexandra Clark – did well and is in a strong position for debating next year

Trips and exchanges: organisation progressing for America, Kenya and Japan trips

Other up and coming events:

- ‘It’s your neighbourhood awards’
- The Cyclathon
- Panto
- Senior Citizens Bash 17th December
- Christmas Concert, 18th December

Parent & pupil issues

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Duke of Edinburgh: FA commented that the programme for some of the groups had gone poorly, hampered by lots of cancellations and clashes. She had sent a letter but has not yet had a response. GH agreed this should be looked into. Otherwise it was agreed that D of E had been very successful. There was a query regarding whether parent helpers would be of benefit but it was noted that they would have to be qualified.

Film Club: there was also a query regarding the Film Club which started well but seems to have ‘fizzled out’. Again this would be looked into.

External groups and meetings

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Parental Involvement Event: this was organised by Dundee City Council, where Head Teachers and Parent Council Chairs from each of the city's secondary schools set targets for parental involvement in the year ahead. For Grove, these are to:

- Involve parents in increasing the independent learning of pupils
- Involve parents in the wider use of handheld technology in class and at home [where this can provide educational benefits]
- Involve older siblings/young parents in raising awareness of career options.

It was thought that the third point, increasing the involvement of family members in careers awareness, should be the priority and that this could be widened to include parents. This could take the form of workshops where a parent might discuss and answer questions on their education, job or profession. It was agreed that third year might be the most useful stage for this type of input.

Treasurer's Report

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None

Dates of Future Meetings

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January 14th, March 11th and May 20th

AOCB

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The warning about the need for further cuts to council budgets, made at a recent meeting of Parent Council Chairs with the Director and Convenor of Education, was noted.