

Minute of the Annual General Meeting of the Dounby Community School Parent Group held on 24 November 2011.

Present: Georgie Clark Lorraine Cormack
Isla Dougall Steve Durkin
Geraldine Ferguson (minutes) Dawn Flett (Treasurer)
Alastair Forsyth (Head teacher) Katrina Gray
Michelle Hill (Chair) Shenagh Leiper
Corina Taylor

1. Chair's Welcome and Apologies

Apologies had been received from Tracey Miller.

2. Approval of Minute of last meeting (22 September 2011)

The minute of the meeting held on 22 September 2011 was approved as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

Approval of Accounts and Appointment of Auditor (5)

The Treasurer confirmed that Steven Sinclair, the accountant, had now examined the books of account and had found everything to be in order. As at the end of June there was £444.10 in the Group's bank account and this included the Orkney Islands Council annual grant from which, it was confirmed, the insurance payment for 2011-2012 had already been deducted.

Invitation to Co-opted Members (6)

Members were introduced to Shenagh Leiper, Health Visitor at Dounby Surgery, who had accepted the Group's invitation to join the Group as a co-opted member. Shenagh explained that she was involved with delivering Positive Parenting classes for parents of children aged 0-12 and that she hoped that her experience of working with both parents and children would be of some use to the group.

Alastair Forsyth told the Group that the teachers had asked whether one of them could join the Group meetings as a co-opted member as they felt they could assist by providing information that would help inform discussions at meetings. Alastair had not yet asked Hilary Morrell to join the group as a co-opted member as he wanted to put the teachers' request to the Group first and ascertain whether there was still a place within the co-opted member category for Hilary. It was confirmed that there was no limit on the number of co-opted members, provided that the number of parent members was always greater than the number of co-opted members. After a brief discussion, members agreed that, with a teacher now joining the group as a co-opted member, it would no longer be necessary to invite Hilary Morrell to join the Group.

4. Correspondence Received by Chair

The chair passed around copies of a communication from Karris Rendall at Orkney Islands Council which asked for all head teachers and parent councils to be invited to respond to a call for evidence from the Commission on Rural Education. The decision was taken not to provide a Group response to this Call for Evidence as members felt that there was insufficient time for them to digest the relevant legislation and guidance in order to be able to formulate a response.

A copy extract from the News section of the Times Education Supplement Scotland, which dealt with parental involvement in schools and also in bodies such as the National Parent Forum of Scotland, the Curriculum for Excellence Management Board, and The Rural Schools Commission, was also distributed.

5. Update from Head Teacher

Self –evaluation

Alastair began by reporting on some self-evaluation work that he and nursery teacher Nicola Moar had been doing as part of the school's contribution to the inspection of the nursery by the Care Inspectorate (formerly the Care Commission). This work had been done with a small focus group of parents and it had proved a very valuable exercise which had helped staff review and revise some of their submissions to the Inspectorate. Even without the inspection process, Alastair felt that these self-evaluations were a good thing to do once or twice a year.

The exercise had led to a decision that the nursery cloakroom/waiting area was not a very welcoming place for parents and that the adjacent room should be turned into a parents' room with a coffee machine and comfortable chairs to enable nursery parents to meet and have a chat. Funding for this would probably come from the maintenance budget, depending on what was left in it at the end of the year. Alastair confirmed that the computers that had been housed in that area had been moved to different locations within the school where it was felt pupils could make better use of them. In another change, the Support for Learning Base had been moved to the former Primary 7 room adjacent to the staffroom.

Something else which came out of the focus group was the fact that the nursery class really wished they could have a garden; and so a space had been identified to make this a reality.

Overall, the self- evaluation showed that the nursery and its staff were highly regarded by the parents and that Hazel McKinlay had done an excellent job when Nicola Moar was on maternity leave.

Staffing

Hazel McKinlay, who had performed very well in what had been a very competitive interview process, had been appointed to the vacant Support for Learning Teacher's post. Clare Flett had been appointed to cover that part of the Support for Learning Assistant's post that had been left vacant when Anne Phillips reduced her hours. This was a temporary post only, ending in June 2012.

There were still two auxiliary posts to be filled – one 7-hour post and one 14-hour post. Two internal adverts had just been posted and the closing date was 12 December with interviews on 19 and 20 December. (In the meantime Joan Tait was providing supply cover for the auxiliary posts.) Alastair reminded members that the school was keen to give any parents who had been through the recruitment training courses an opportunity to sit on the interview panel for any of the upcoming interviews. Lorraine Cormack and Georgie Clark said that they would see whether the proposed interview times suited them and get back to Alastair.

Alastair was pleased to report that Linda Johnston would be returning to her 3 days Clerical Assistant/2 hours Auxiliary post on the following Monday, and that Emma Morrison was still temporarily filling the admin post vacated by Paula Spence. Five hours of a Clerical Assistant post (Community Centre work) had been lost due to the Council's cost-cutting measures.

School Improvement Plan and Standards and Quality Report

Alastair reported that the School Improvement Plan had now been published and would be made available on the school website or as hard copy from the office.

The 2010-2011 Standards and Quality Report had also been completed and would also be made available on the website. Alastair explained that the main purpose of this annual report was to inform parents, school staff and employees, Orkney Islands Council and the wider community

about the how the school had performed during the last academic year in terms of standards achieved, most notably in reading, writing and mathematics. Alastair explained what seemed to group members to be a very complicated system of assessment and testing which took place throughout each academic year (in particular for Primary 1s, 3s 5s and 7s). As part of this system, several different methods of assessment were used - sometimes giving rise to different conclusions about the same year groups.

For instance, **using an assessment method known as PIPS** the following conclusions had been made in the Report:

- **Mathematics:** standards in mathematics across the school had been equal to the Scottish mean in P3 and P7 but lower than that at the end of P1 and P5. For the second consecutive year, children in P1 had not made as good progress with mathematics as they had done with literacy skills. Therefore, whilst progress had been made within mathematics teaching during 2010 to 2011 there was still much to do.
- **Writing:** all but one of the targets for action to improve standards of writing in the school had been fully met. Children in P1 in particular had made good progress with writing.
- **Reading:** For the second year in a row, children in P1 had made very good progress through the year learning to read; progress was also very good between the end of P1 and the end of P3; and attainment at the end of P3 was very good. However, the data had not indicated as good a situation with the progress with reading skills for older children, and the data from the end of P5 and mid-way through P7 showed standards of attainment that were lower than the Scottish mean. Children's progress in learning to read over the years P4 and 5 and P6 to part way through P7 were less than satisfactory on the two years' data available. Based on these results, the school's target going forward was therefore to improve on the progress that children make with learning to read in the second part of their primary school careers.

However, Alastair went on to reiterate that PIPS was not the only assessment method used in the school and that other methods and professional judgement had been used to assess children's achievement. Using **that** data, children in P7 in academic year 2010 to 2011 achieved the following standards:

- Mathematics: 70.8% met the expected standard with 4.2% of children exceeding the expected standard.
- Reading: 80% of children met the expected standard with 25% of children exceeding that standard.
- Writing: 62.5% of children met the expected standard with 20.8% of children exceeding that standard.

The chair thanked Alastair for explaining how assessment of standards took place in the school as this was an area that most knew very little about.

6. Procedure for the raising or parent/carer issues via Parent Group – for discussion

The chair explained how, on one or two occasions, parent/carer issues, some of which might more properly be described as complaints, had been raised under the 'Any Other Competent Business' agenda item. As these were personal issues rather than 'Group' issues it was felt that the Parent Group meetings were not the appropriate place for them to be aired. Alastair explained that where a parent had a concern about his/her child or children then it was better to raise that concern immediately with the class teacher or Head teacher as appropriate. On the other hand, if a parent or group of parents felt that there was an issue that was relevant for the Group to raise with the school via the Parent Group then it would be better if the parent(s) informed the chair or the clerk well in advance of the meeting. This would allow the item for

discussion to be put on the agenda and the head teacher to be given some advance notice so that he could be better prepared to give a proper answer.

The clerk and the chair agreed to work on a procedure for writing up, checking and circulating of minutes and meeting notices that would have built into it sufficient time for this to happen.

7. Any other Competent Business

Alastair informed the Group that there would be a public service workers strike on 30th November and that he had just arranged for an email to be sent to all parents and carers advising that the Council had made the decision that the school would be closed on that day.

The clerk apologised for not yet having drafted an Expenses Claim Form for group members to claim back things like mileage costs incurred in attending training events. She promised to have this ready for the next meeting.

A member mentioned to the headteacher that she had heard that there had been at least one occasion when a P1 child had felt that they could not get access to the inside toilets from the playground in the morning before school started even though the access to the outside toilets might not yet have been opened up for them. Alastair assured the group that a child would never be refused access to the inside toilets in these circumstances, that the children only had to ask, but he agreed that this should be made clear to all the children especially the P1s who might feel shy about asking and who were still new to the school and its routines.

8. Date of Next Meeting

There being no other competent business the meeting concluded at 8.40 pm after it had been agreed that the next meeting would be held on 23 February 2012 at 7pm.