

**DRAFT Minute of a General Meeting of the Dounby Community School Parent Group held on 21 February 2013**

<b>Present:</b>	Alex Clark (Chair)	Lorraine Cormack
	Anna Davidson	Isla Dougall
	Steve Durkin	Geraldine Ferguson (Clerk)
	Alastair Forsyth (Head Teacher)	Katrina Gray
	Michelle Hill	Shenagh Leiper
	Tracey Miller	Nicola Moar
	Margaret Sinclair	Corina Taylor

**1. Chair's welcome and apologies**

Apologies had been received from Suzanne Lyon, Amanda Kirkness and EmmaJane Rendall.

The chair welcomed John Johnston who had come to formally present to the Parent Group a donation of £2606.45, being the final proceeds of the JR Smith Bequest Fund following its recent de-registration as a charity.

Mr Johnston explained that James Robert Smith (1181–1990) had been born on the Lyde Road in Harray but had moved to Canada in 1910, working as an engineer until 1914 when he returned briefly to Britain. In January 1915 he had gone to Ottawa and volunteered for military service. He is believed to have served in the Canadian Royal Engineers and the Royal Flying Corps and to have taken part in the French SAPS Expeditionary Force. Although he returned to Canada after the war he eventually returned to Orkney and lived out the end of his life in Harray. With the money he earned and saved during the course of his successful career JR Smith was moved to invest £2,000 (equivalent to £125,000 in today's money) for the benefit of the children of Harray. After the closure of the Harray School in 1975, the income from this fund was used for things such as paying for Harray children to attend the pantomime in Kirkwall each year. Because of the low rate of interest being earned over recent years the fund had begun to dwindle and the income was insufficient to fund any meaningful activities or purchases for the benefit of the children of Harray. The decision had therefore been taken to de-register the charity, and a survey of parents was carried out to see if there was any objection to the money being given to the Parent Group – on the basis that most Harry children attend school in Dounby. The majority of parents who had replied had been in favour of this and Mr Johnston confirmed that the money should already have been transferred into the Parent Group's bank account.

The chair thanked Mr Johnston and his fellow trustees for this generous gift and assured him that it would be put to good use and would be used to purchase something that would endure for the benefit of as many children as possible.

The meeting proper continued after Mr Johnston's departure.

**2. Approval of minute of last meeting (22 November 2012)**

The minute of the meeting held on 22 November 2012 was approved as an accurate record, proposed by Katrina Gray and seconded by Margaret Sinclair.

**3. Matters arising**

It was confirmed that Primary One open sessions had been happening as a means of providing a useful line of communication for parents and carers of children experiencing the transition from pre-school to Primary One.

In response to a request for an update from the chair, Alastair confirmed that Emma Morrison was continuing work on the new web-based school website, which she was building with the

help of David Griffith. Emma was also responsible for updating the existing website until the new one was up and running.

Alastair also confirmed that he had not spoken to the school bus drivers about the issue of whether or not it was safe to allow children to take large toys such as scooters onto the school buses; ultimately it was the drivers who made such safety decisions in line with guidance and regulations issued by the Council's School Transport Office.

**4. Correspondence received by chair**

Alex had received an invitation to all parents to an informal evening promoting the Active Schools programme.

**5. John Johnston to speak about The JR Smith Bequest Fund**

See under 1 above.

**6. Friends of Dounby School update**

£1,650 had been raised at the Christmas Fayre and a further £114.24 through the sale of refreshments at the school nativity play. This had allowed FODs to donate £300 to the Class 7 trip to Lagganlea.

**7. Matters arising from Head Teacher's Report for February 2013**

**Pupil numbers**

Alastair explained that due to the high number of Pre-school children who would be moving into Primary One in August there would be too many children for one Primary One class, and that the preferred solution would be to have two parallel, composite Primary 1/2 classes with Primary Three to Primary Seven being organised in single cohort classes. Therefore an additional teacher would be needed. Alastair was hopeful that officials in the OIC Education Department would agree to this in order to prevent the whole school having to be composited, If not, each of the six composite classes that would emerge would be completely full, with the result that the school would be effectively closed to any new families moving into the area.

If, as was hoped, there were to be seven classes from August 2013, it was planned that the Support for Learning base would move to the old utility room, freeing up a room for use as a classroom.

Alastair reassured parents that the decision on which children should go in which of the two new P1/P2 composite classes would not be based upon ability or age, but rather on social factors such as existing friendships and the aim of achieving a balance in each class. To the question of whether the new composite classes would stay composited all the way up through the school Alastair responded that he felt he would be better able to answer that question by the time of the next meeting.

Other items highlighted in the report were the section on the high standard achieved in the nursery inspection and the credit that was due to all of the staff involved in the development of this part of the school; and also the section on building and grounds and the good news that the redesign and refurbishment of the office accommodation and reception area was almost complete and work to the main school doors underway.

However, it was noted that there was still a problem regarding disabled access to the nursery end of the school. One member also reported that she had been approached by a parent seeking reassurance that the nursery gate was more difficult to open by children than the main school gates. It was confirmed that the nursery gate had an additional child security mechanism which made it very difficult for a child to open it from inside.

## 8. New Anti-bullying Policy for discussion and consideration

Questions raised by group members included:

- **Whether school bus drivers and playground staff would be aware of the new policy.** (Playground staff would definitely be covered by the new policy. One parent complained that she had not been satisfied with the way a member of the playground staff had dealt with a concern that she had had to raise on at least two occasions. Alastair responded that training would take place at the next in-service day when all staff would be together and that the policy would form part of each staff member's Continuing Professional Development.)
- **To whom should children report any bullying concerns?** (Any member of staff, or a parent, carer or friend.)
- **To whom should parents report any bullying concerns?** (The class teacher in the first instance. Class teachers have a duty of pastoral care and would be duty bound to go to a colleague to have a discussion on the way forward.)
- **Whether more strategies needed to be put in place in the playground e.g. the buddying scheme for P1s being extended to older children.** (Perhaps, but the older children do have a role in organising play as part of the Young Leaders programme and, although it was not good to be complacent, there was a culture within the playground of older children looking after younger ones.)
- **What had been the level of response to the survey of parents and carers?** (23 responses had been returned out of 93; 10 families had reported bullying)

## 9. Play Dounby – update on work of working group

The sub-group confirmed that it had had three meetings and that some background information and the minutes of each meeting were available on the website

<http://playdounby.blogspot.co.uk/>

The next step was to have a meeting with Garry Burton, Service Manager (Sport & Leisure), of OIC's Education and Leisure Services to get the Council's steer on purchase and installation of equipment; ongoing maintenance; safety surfaces and other health and safety issues; and guidance on any other OIC procedures which would have to be followed. Only when a clearer idea had emerged of costs and timescales could any applications for funding be made, although work was being done to identify possible sources of grant funding. At this point the chair mentioned that that he was aware that Papdale School Parent Group had successfully applied to the NHS Orkney Endowment Fund for a grant towards the cost of their playpark project. The Sub-group agreed to look into this.

## 10. Healthy-weight issues – Shenagh Leiper

Co-opted member and health visitor Shenagh Leiper had asked say a few words about the issue of child healthy weight. Shenagh began by pointing out that levels of child unhealthy weight are rising across the world, with Scotland third to the USA and Mexico; in 2010, 32.5% of Scottish children aged 2–15 years were overweight or obese.

In Orkney, school nurses have been measuring children's heights and weights for years. Since 2003 they have been recording Body Mass Index (BMI) in Primary 1, and in 2009 they also started measuring Primary 7 children. Results show that levels had been decreasing but that in 2008 they began to rise again. In 2010–11 the numbers of Primary 1 children who were overweight and obese was 26% whereas it was 18% in 2003–04. For Primary 7 children in 2010–11 the level was 33% – very close to the national average for all children.

Shenagh pointed out that there were physical and mental health consequences for children who had an unhealthy weight, most notably Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, joint problems, increased risk of cancers (not just in the future but now), depression, and low self-esteem.

NHS Orkney has been using 3 approaches to try to improve the situation for both primary- and secondary-schoolchildren: one-to-one programmes (child and dietician); family programmes; and school-based programmes. Uptake of one-to-one and family programmes was typically low because it was a complex and emotive issue, with parents often not seeing their child as overweight, not wanting to upset their child (worried about anorexia), or not understanding the real health risks (the myth of puppy fat and myth that child 'will grow out of it'). Pre-school was thought to be a good area of focus because it was good to start younger before habits are set and also because children in pre-school are less likely to be aware that they are being involved in a healthy-weight programme.

Some parents took the opportunity at this point to relay to Shenagh their concerns at the way they had been informed by NHS Orkney about the results of their child's BMI calculation. These parents felt that the results could have been communicated in a gentler, more supportive manner with a better explanation and more information on whether it was necessary to speak to a health professional about their child's weight.

The discussion turned to ways in which the school, working with parents, could reinforce the healthy weight message. School meals, packed lunches, snacks, play-pieces, portion sizes, and levels of physical activity (both in teaching time and during playtime) were all discussed. Some parents were curious about the way the school menu was designed as they were aware that menus varied widely across different schools and they wondered why this was the case, given that Orkney Islands Council had a major influence on the process. Parents were also aware that different schools approached the healthy eating /healthy choices message in different ways and they thought guidance was needed to ensure that the best possible approach was used in Dounby. It was therefore agreed that Anne Harrison of Orkney Islands Council's school meals section should be invited to attend the next meeting to explain the process and answer questions.

**11. Agenda items for next meeting**

School meals – Anne Harrison to be invited to next meeting.

**12. Any other competent business**

A parent raised the issue of children being given flyers, leaflets, etc. advertising events or activities bearing a charge, e.g. a recent flyer advertising kick-boxing classes. She felt that this was effectively the school giving private businesses free advertising and she was worried that parents might feel pressurised by the pester power of their children into agreeing to fund the activity or event. Alastair explained that the school was generally happy to pass on in this way any information that pertained to sports, physical activity and the health and well-being of both children and parents, but he accepted that sending the flyers home in a sealed envelope addressed to the parent, or emailing the materials to the parents, might avoid the problem of pester power.

**13. Date of next meeting**

There being no other competent business the meeting concluded at 8.45 pm after it had been agreed that the next meeting would be held on 23 May 2013 at 7pm.