

Minute of a meeting of the Dounby Community School Parent Group held on 24 May 2012.

Present:

Georgie Clark	Lorraine Cormack
Geraldine Ferguson (Clerk)	Dawn Flett (Treasurer)
Alastair Forsyth (Head Teacher)	Michelle Hill (Chair)
Tracey Miller	Nicola Moar
Corina Taylor	

1. Chair's Welcome and Apologies

Apologies had been received from Katrina Gray

2. Approval of Minute of last meeting (23 February 2012)

The minute of the meeting held on 23 February 2012 was approved as an accurate record.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Correspondence received by Chair

The Chair passed around a copy of the latest *Parent & Teacher* magazine, as well as copies of some publicity materials for the new Curriculum for Excellence and a letter from the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) containing an ADES position statement on Curriculum for Excellence, which had been issued on 21 March to coincide with a Scottish Government announcement on additional resources for CfE. The statement was the outcome of a Directors' summit on CfE and was informed by all Scottish authorities.

There was also an email from OIC concerning a survey on Parent Forum engagement. This led to a brief discussion on the differences between the Parent Council and the Parent Forum, and what if anything could possibly be done to involve more people in the Council.

5. Matters arising from Head Teacher's Report

School maintenance

The Head Teacher's Report contained a table showing items that required repair or replacement and the date on which the school had informed Orkney Islands Council about these problems. Members expressed concern at the lack of progress and the length of time it was taking for problems to be addressed by the Council. Alastair confirmed that the new fence had been ordered and the contractor was reportedly ready to erect it once it arrived. There were ongoing problems with uneven floor surfaces in a couple of areas of the school, which Alastair was planning to take up yet again with Orkney Islands Council. As far as plans to upgrade the fabric and facilities of the school were concerned there were plans to replace the flat roof with a pitched roof and to upgrade the heating at some point, but all of this work was dependent on the Council securing funding from the Scottish Government.

School numbers and implications for school organisation

Alastair referred to a table that he had included in his report and explained that, in the next school year (August 2012–June 2013), P6 and P7 would be a composite class due to the low numbers of (current) P5 and P6 pupils. The following year (August 2013) it also looked likely that there would have to be a new composite P1/P2 class as well as a P1 class, as there was a maximum limit of 25 children for P1 classes. If this were the case, the school would most likely require another teacher. The structure for 2013-14 would therefore most likely be: P1; P1/2 composite; P3; P4; P5; P6; P7. It would depend on how many children were expected in the Primary 1 class in August 2013.

Physical education

Alastair referred to the school's obligation to provide each pupil with two hours of PE time per week and explained that he had been observing teachers delivering PE sessions and that peer observation was also taking place in order that levels and standards could be monitored. He further explained that each class has 50 minutes per week with a peripatetic, specialist PE teacher, and that the class teachers were expected to deliver the remaining 70 minutes.

Staffing

Alastair confirmed that EmmaJane Rendall had been appointed to the post of principal teacher to take over from Greer Norquoy; this meant that there would be a teaching vacancy for which teachers with a certain level of experience within the county ('Para 8.5 teachers') would be eligible to apply.

The Council had confirmed that the three-day-a-week post of Support for Learning Teacher could now be advertised. The current (temporary) post holder, Hazel McKinlay, would be entitled to apply.

As regards the fact that a new probationer would be placed in the school next year to replace the current probationer, Alastair explained that this was because probationer contracts, in accordance with national rules governing probationer contracts, were for a fixed period of one year only.

Finally, as Anne Philips would be retiring at the end of term, there would be a Support for Learning Assistant vacancy but it was still unclear whether this would be advertised as a permanent or temporary post.

6. Academic achievement of pupils: latest information

Alastair explained that, at the end of the Primary 7 year, pupils are expected to have achieved what is described in the Curriculum for Excellence broad levels as 'Second Level Secure'. He said that he would like to see around 80% of the children achieving this level across the three curricular areas of writing, reading, and mathematics and numeracy. Further, this was the first year that the new assessment system of Curriculum for Excellence had been used to indicate the standards that children have achieved. The assessment levels were a matter of moderated, professional judgement by teachers.

Results this year for the Primary 7 class showed that:

- in writing, 52.6% had achieved at least Second Level Secure while 79% had achieved at least Second Level Consolidating;
- in reading, 68.4% had achieved at least Second Level Secure while 84.2% had achieved at least Second Level Consolidating;
- in mathematics, 63.2% had achieved at least Second Level Secure while 94.7% had achieved at least Second Level Consolidating.

Alastair pointed out that the PIPS data for P5 and P7 for the last two years showed that the school was weaker at teaching reading than maths for the older pupils, but that the converse was true for the younger pupils. Steps were being taken to address this, with extra input during the year into the teaching of reading skills. (See 7. below.)

7. Developing the teaching of reading: progress so far

In an effort to improve the PIPS data for reading, the school had been focussing during the year on the methodology for the teaching of reading skills:

- In order to improve teacher reading skills, Alastair had regularly been conducting a teaching session with a class teacher observing him and then the two of them discussing the session together afterwards to identify good and bad practice.
- There had been an increased investment in resources for reading, including FODS money being spent on new books.
- Teachers were now managing the reading scheme and parents were being asked to supplement this through reading non-reading scheme books at home with children.

There was a discussion around the difficulties of maintaining parent involvement with children's reading as they grew older. It was agreed that in each case it depended on the child but that parents should encourage reading by showing an interest in what their children were reading and by setting good example by reading in front of their children.

8. Homework policy: outcomes of the questionnaires and draft policy

Alastair confirmed that the completed questionnaires had been useful in gauging parent and pupil opinion, and that comments received had informed the new draft Homework Policy, which would be put on the school website for parents to refer to. He reminded members that the idea behind the policy was to ensure that homework was relevant and enjoyable, and to allow teachers to be less prescriptive in setting homework tasks while at the same time encouraging activities-based homework, with parents being involved in devising tasks as well as teachers. It was agreed that the draft policy could be revisited at the next meeting when parents had had a chance to read and digest it.

9. Agenda items for next meeting

Suggestions included:

- Election of new office bearers
- Annual Report
- Head Teacher's Report
- The Positive Parenting Programme – how to encourage more people to enrol
- Discussion on 'healthy weight' issues for schoolchildren
- FODS reporting

10. Any other Competent Business

11. 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, which would be the AGM, would be held on 13 September 2012 at 7pm.