

Dounby Parent Group - Annual Report on Activities 2011-2012

The year began with the AGM on 22 September 2011, with Michelle Hill and Isla Dougall continuing for their second year as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively, and with Dawn Flett, who was also the treasurer of FODS, taking over as Parent Group treasurer for the remaining year of her term of office as treasurer of FODS.

The Group held three further meetings during the year – one in November, one in February and one at the end of May.

In November, health visitor Shenagh Leiper was elected as a co-opted member, and EmmaJane Rendall and Nicola Moar agreed to share the role of co-opted teacher representative.

Friends of Dounby School (FODS), a sub-group of Parent Group, raised extra funds for the school during the year, some of which was spent on books, new cameras, a new laptop, a video camera and other resources for the classrooms.

Through the attendance of the head teacher at all of the Parent Group meetings during the year, parents were kept informed about relevant staffing issues facing the school. Some group members, having undergone the requisite training, were able to sit on recruitment interview panels when these had to be convened during the year.

The Parent Group worked with the head teacher to improve the procedures whereby the head teacher kept the parent body as a whole informed and whereby Parent Group was empowered to address the range of issues that might interest the whole membership of the Parent Forum. This involved the Chair inviting Parent Forum members to contact her with any items they wished to have discussed at the meeting so that these could be put on the agenda, and also the head teacher being asked if there were any items he wished to raise with parents in addition to those items (e.g. the new Curriculum for Excellence; the school's plans for improving reading, writing and mathematics teaching within the school; school staffing; progress in relation to the school improvement plan; assessment of standards; ICT matters; school building and grounds; pupil numbers and any implications arising from those numbers in respect of school organisation) covered in his written report. Parents attending Parent Group meetings could then have the chance to ask the head teacher questions around matters arising from his report.

The Group was also able to clarify for Parent Forum members the procedures to be followed if a parent or carer had a complaint or concern – the correct procedure to be followed would depend on whether the issue was a personal/individual issue or a Group issue.

Members were able to share with the head teacher their views on such things as changes to the way the Orkney Schools Instrumental Service was to be delivered and charged for in schools, and changes to the way reading was taught in Primary 1 and Primary 2. This was linked to the Group being consulted on the wording of a questionnaire that the school wanted to send out to all parents to find out their views on homework in order to inform a new Homework Policy.

In November, the Chair provided on behalf of the Group a response to a Call for Evidence from the Commission on Rural Education. Then in March, the Group lobbied the West Mainland councillors in the hope of speeding-up the process of replacing the school's blue picket fence, which was in a dangerous state of disrepair. While the letters written to the councillors did elicit a response from the councillors, and the Council, in the form of assurances and the removal of the rotting remains of the old fence, members were disappointed to discover, on bringing children back to school in late August, that the fence had still not been replaced.