

Dounby Parent Group - Annual Report on Activities 2012-2013

The year began with the AGM on 13 September 2012, with Alex Clark being elected as Chair, Margaret Sinclair as Vice-Chair and Lorraine Cormack as Treasurer. At that time, Shenagh Leiper, Nicola Moar and EmmaJane Rendall were the co-opted members, having been co-opted for one year from November 2011. (In November 2012, Shenagh was invited to continue for a second year and Nicola and EmmaJane agreed to continue to share the role of co-opted teacher representative.)

The Group held three further meetings during the year – one in November 2012, one in February 2013 and one in May 2013.

Friends of Dounby School (FODS), a sub-group of Parent Group, raised extra funds for the school during the year, with some of these funds being spent on items like scooters and pogo sticks for the playground, and funds also being used for assistance with activities such as the annual Primary 7 trip to Lagganlia.

Thanks to the attendance of the headteacher at all of the Parent Group meetings during the year, parents were kept informed about relevant issues facing the school, e.g. the 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; and pupil numbers and any implications arising from those numbers in respect of school organisation. 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.

New homework and anti-bullying policies were signed off by Parent Group. In addition, members were able to share with the headteacher their views on such things as the school's policy on ICT, internet use and internet safety; the school handbook; the effectiveness of communication between parents and school; plans for a new improved school website; and playtime issues such as facilities, equipment, and fostering innovative and purposeful play. In an effort to better understand the rationale behind the way the school lunch menu was devised and the way that the benefits of school meals was promoted, the manager of Orkney Islands Councils' Catering department was invited to speak to the Group, and parent representatives had a useful meeting with the school meals staff. This led to a better awareness of the challenges involved in delivering nutritional school meals that can cater for all needs and tastes. Similarly, in an effort to understand the reasons behind the Body Mass Index measurement of children that takes place in Primary One and the way in which parents are notified of their child's result, Shenagh Leiper was invited to talk about child healthy weight and it was agreed that a further talk from school nurse Vicky Anderson would be arranged for the new school year.

In November, after discussions within the Group on the pressing need to renew or replace some of the equipment in the playpark, and on the need for Parent Group's help in addressing this need, a small Playpark Working-Group was set up to consider play in school, and to come up with a plan for the way forward for managing and improving the community playpark and for developing other community facilities to encourage and enable children's and young peoples' play and recreation in and around Dounby village. The working group agreed to consult Council officials with expertise in playpark design and other Parent groups involved in playpark projects. The Group was also tasked with exploring sources of funding, e.g. Awards For All and sportscotland. By the end of the 2013 summer term, the Working Group had held about five meetings and had set up a dedicated website to keep Parent Group and the community informed of its work. Good progress had been made in identifying suitable funding, a plan of the proposed revamped playpark showing new and existing equipment and features had been drawn up, and the proposal was just awaiting the go-ahead from the Council before being put out for consultation to the community.