

Note of a meeting of the Dounby Community School Parent Group held on Thursday 26th November at 7pm

Present: Kay Morgan
Georgie Clark
Katrina Gray
Michelle Hill
Corina Taylor

Lorraine Cormack
Isla Dougall
Emma Grieve
Barbara Jennings
Alastair Forsyth

1. Welcome and Apologies

Kay welcomed all to the meeting, especially Emma Grieve, a recent Co-opted member. Emma is currently an English teacher at Stromness Academy.

Apologies were received from Margaret Sinclair and Andrea Price

2. Approval of Minute of Last Meeting

The minute of the meeting held on 24th September 2009 was approved as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

- 3.1 *Texting Service:* Alastair was in receipt of information regarding setting up this service, however had not yet had a chance to look over. He will provide an update at a future meeting.
- 3.2 *Update on Parents Evening:* Alastair reported that the appointments system used at the last parents evening had received good feedback. This system will be used for the next parents evening and there could be a possibility for children to be included in the appointment. Other activities would be available to entertain other siblings during these appointments.
- 3.3 *Co-opted Members:* Georgie reported that she had contacted Gill Cooke who would be very happy to become a co-opted member; she did however inform that she will be retiring in the Summer of 2010. After discussion it was agreed that Gill would be welcome as a co-opted member until her retirement and after consulting the constitution it was agreed that Gill would not be replaced following her retirement.
- 3.4 *Book Clubs* Scholastic Book Fair was chosen as the book club this year. It was agreed that this was a good choice, with a wide variety and range of prices.
- 3.5 *Playground Supervision* At the previous meeting, playground supervision was raised. Kay asked for an update from Alastair. Alastair updated those present that the staff supervising the playgrounds carry radios, with more on order. He is also present sometime during the break time and has a radio in his office.

The suggested ratio of supervision adults to children is 1:50 from the Council, to which Dounby Community School meets.

A parent highlighted some issues concerning behaviour in the playground recently. Alastair reported that recently the school had worked with the children on bullying during National Bullying week. He also highlighted that he followed up any reported incidents with Parents. Children are also encouraged to inform class teachers of any playground incidents that have concerned them. A parent asked if there were extra staff present when pre-school children joined in with break times. Alastair would look into this.

Another parent suggested trying segregation of classes at play times as her child had repeated some inappropriate language heard in the playground.

Alastair highlighted that the behaviour is generally good and older children are very good at looking out for the younger ones. He would address the use of inappropriate language in the playground with the classes concerned.

The new school day was discussed briefly. There was concern over children arriving on the first bus and in relation to supervision in the playground until the start of the school day. Alastair assured that no child should be or will be dropped off before 0845am as supervision is in place from this time.

4. Correspondence Received From Chair

- 4.1 *Recruitment Training* This information arrived too late for the last meeting and the training was held the day before this meeting. Kay asked if any members present were happy to put their name forward for future training courses in Recruitment Training. Lorraine Cormack put her name forward.

Alastair mentioned that the school will be holding an interview before the end of term for a currently temporary filled part time post. It was decided that he would liaise with Kay to check who would be available to sit on this panel.

- 4.2 *Curriculum for Excellence:* Kay offered books on Curriculum for Excellence for loan to anyone who wanted to look over these. One was titled Building Learning Together and Open Up Learning. These may well be available in PDF format off the Curriculum for Excellence website.

- 4.3 *Recycling Mobile Phones* This information was given to Alastair for his consideration. This could well be useful to follow up after Christmas.

5. Update from Head Teacher

Alastair gave a progress report since the last meeting:

- Has been working on updating the aims and values with staff and will be in a position to bring this to the next meeting
- Updating the School Improvement Plan incorporating curriculum for excellence. Writing standards of children is high on this agenda. The figures

from writing assessments are not what they should be. Work is currently being undertaken on an assessment process which will give a starting point to see what stage the classes are at and will be assessed each term to get a clear idea of standards. The same approach will also apply to reading where something similar could be implemented.

- Self evaluation – this is used as way to check standards.
- GLOW – this is integral to Curriculum for Excellence. Vicky Fraser is intending to hold meetings for parents to explain GLOW and ICT in schools.
- Insurance Issues – Alastair has been pursuing information in relation to insurance and the use of the Community Bus. Due to the insurance the school cannot use the community bus for school trips or sports clubs. Alastair highlighted that unless the community body owning the minibus formed a private company and then apply to OIC to lease the bus would be the only solution. Unfortunately the school is not covered to hire from a charity. It is intended to use FODs funds to help with educational excursions as there are no other finances available to support these. Alastair highlighted that this insurance only covers events, including sporting events run by the School. The football, netball or sports clubs that operate out of school are not covered by this insurance. These clubs should be covered by their own association / club insurance. If the parent group were to run an event – Parent Group insurance is in place to cover. FODs events are not covered and these will be hosted in future by the school.
- Green Flag - This award comes up for renewal in the next year to eighteen months. Alastair is currently doing a bit of work on this and has reconvened the Eco committee. The children have expressed an interest in keeping the green flag award. To obtain the award, children will be involved in the assessment of the school and will be asked questions. There are thoughts to hold an Eco day, where children pay £1 per child. There is an account for the Eco committee and this money could be added. Alastair had thought about putting in raised beds and would be looking for help from the community. A suggestion was put forward about contacting the programme Beechgrove Garden who are looking for community projects at the moment.
- Health Promoting Schools – Alastair is currently looking at what standards are in place to meet the checklist. There are several levels in this category, Dounby Community School is currently working towards the Bronze level. This level also includes Healthy Working Lives for staff. Alastair spoke of the recent letter that was issued in relation to sweets as snacks in school. This is in part to the Health Promoting School award and also the issue of sweets, especially lollipops in the playground. There was also no problem with sweets being brought in for birthdays as these will be shared at the end of the day. The school will be employing a tooth-brushing supervisor. It was stressed that there will be no punishment for bringing sweets to school, this is purely about advising on a healthy diet and lifestyle. **He also wanted to point out that it was no business of school staff to know what was in children's packed lunch boxes.**
- Staff appointments & Staff Supervision – currently monitoring teaching and learning in classrooms. Staff are reviewing systems in place and continuing with their professional development.

- Building and Grounds – Alastair highlighted that he is currently reporting and highlighting problems with the local authority to rectify, occasionally the school has to pick up those costs not covered by the local authority. Overall the building is not in a bad condition.
- Bowling Green Update - there was no further information to report
- Small Wind Turbine – Alastair had been in discussion with Alastair Marion who is the Energy Officer at OIC in regards to a small wind turbine. There may be funds available to reduce electricity usage at the school.

6. Any Other Business

One parent reported that following a poetry competition about six months ago, notification was received directly suggesting that the child's poem had been selected to be published and the parent was offered to purchase the book for £15. Having spoken with other parents it was found that all children's poems were selected and they felt pressured to buy a copy. Alastair highlighted that this particular publisher had been sending mail, which has promptly been put in the recycling bin.

Nursery Parking – this has become horrendous and unsafe with cars parked at either side. Suggestions were discussed including parents using the main car park and walking through the school. There was also a suggestion to reserve parking places alongside the community bus or restricting parking to one side only – this could reduce the risk to children. Alastair would look into this, investigate and report back.

Tesco Vouchers – Parents asked for an update on what was acquired with the collection of these vouchers. Alastair will investigate this and put in the next newsletter.

School Library – Dounby Community School currently doesn't have a library. Alastair had recently met with staff at Glaitness School where they have a library. This will be looked at, there are issues regarding quality of books, this may take time to organise.

7. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that this will be held on 4th March at 7pm