

Corstorphine Primary School Parent Council  
*Corstorphine Primary School, High Street, Corstorphine  
Edinburgh, EH12 7SY*

**Minutes of Parent Council Meeting**

Thursday, 19 June 2014

Present: Jennifer Ross (Head Teacher)  
Carol Christie (Parent Member)  
Moira McDonald (Community Rep.)  
Gillian Farrell (Parent Member)  
Karine Masting (Parent Member)  
Lesley Mason (Parent Member)  
Billy Samuel (Parent Member/Vice Chair)  
Shona Richardson (DHT)  
Jennifer Farrar (Parent Member).  
Diane Shanks (Staff Rep.)  
Sarah Cavanagh (Staff Rep.)  
Bill Halliday (Parent Member)  
Aleks Tomczyk (Parent Member)

In attendance: Karen Lodomery (Clerk)

1. **Apologies:** Audrey McColl (Chair), Fiona Meldrum, Andy Goodman and Cllr. Edie
  
2. **Parent Council Meeting (20 March 2013)**

(a) Approval of Minutes

The minutes were approved as read.

(b) Matters Arising

ParentMail. A ParentMail was sent out in advance of this meeting. This will continue for subsequent meetings.

Frequently asked Questions. This is being taken forward in conjunction with the Parent Council sub-group work on the Ethos questionnaire. To be covered under item 4 on the agenda.

Funding Request for replacement Dining Room Tables. Audrey will speak to Claire Thompson, the school Business Manager. The Parent Council feels strongly that the School should not have to incur the significant cost of sourcing replacement Dining Room Tables (c. £5,000), given the storage cupboard in the new extension has not been constructed to the required dimensions. This matter will be on the agenda of the next meeting.

**Action: Audrey to provide update at next Parent Council meeting.**

Review of Constitution. Initial proposals for amendments to the Constitution will be discussed under item 5(b) on the agenda.

Parent Council sub-groups. To be discussed under item 5(c) of the agenda.

Staffing. Mrs Ross provided parents with an overview of current challenges in the wider recruitment environment in the April Newsletter (issued 27<sup>th</sup> March 2014).

Nestle Books for Schools. Audrey contacted the concerned parent on behalf of the Parent Council.

Ethos Questionnaire. To be covered under item 4 on the agenda.

Low attendance at Parent Talks. To be covered under item 4 on the agenda.

Arrangements for P7 classes. To be covered under item 6 on the agenda.

Dates for Parent Council meetings 2014-15. To be covered under item 7 on the agenda.

### **3. Treasurer's Report and Approval of Accounts**

Prior to the Parent Council meeting, Andy Goodman had circulated copies of the Parent Council Accounts for the Year to 31 March 2014.

Andy Goodman had provided his apologies for this meeting; therefore Billy presented the Accounts for agreement.

Mrs Ross thanked the Parent Council for the Walkie Talkies which are now operational in the School; this has been money very well spent.

A question was raised in relation to the differing amounts of funding from City of Edinburgh Council for clerking fees (2013 - £160; 2014 - £240) and that there were no clerking costs incurred in 2013 but £400 was incurred in 2014. Billy commented that he had sought clarification on this point, and provided Andy's written response – "The payment from City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) for clerking fees is based on 6 meetings at £40 and this payment is made regardless of whether we actually hold all 6 meetings or pay the £40, which is the recommended amount. Note that the payment in the year to 31 March 2013 was only £160 as this new basis was implemented part way through the year. Previously, the clerk claimed for each meeting directly from CEC. The payment to the clerk in the year to 31 March 2014 of £400 was £200 from the previous year (delayed because of problems resolving our banking arrangements) plus £200 for the 5 meetings this year. The £200 for the previous year differed from the £160 funding amount due to the timing of our meetings."

There were no other questions on the Accounts. The accounts were proposed by Bill and seconded by Carol. The Accounts were agreed by the Parent Council and will now be circulated for approval in advance of the AGM of the Parent Council where they need to be formally approved by the Parent Forum.

**Action: Andy to present Parent Council Accounts to Parent Forum, for approval.**

The Parent Council currently has approx. £2,000 available to spend. Ideas for future spending include: a new Trophy cabinet and donations towards the development of the School grounds. The School will be creating a fund for the development of the grounds and will be applying for grants. Funding ideas will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

**Action: Audrey and Jennifer (Ross). Potential options to be discussed at the next Parent Council.**

Andy will be stepping down as Treasurer at the AGM. The current Auditor (Elinor Waterston) has agreed to audit the accounts again.

#### 4. Updates from Parent Council sub-groups

Gillian provided an update on recent work by the sub-group created to consider responses to the June 2013 Ethos Questionnaire.

**Ethos Questionnaire** - This Focus Group has now met four times. The first subject they discussed was the Ethos Questionnaire. In general, the group was very happy with the results, with the majority of scores over 90%. However, it was concluded that overall communication with parents could still be improved upon, and that this was a factor in some of the lower scores. An idea raised was to respond to the survey in a “You said. We did” format.

Subsequent meetings had then considered:

**Frequently asked Questions** – The sub-group has been developing a list of “Frequently Asked Questions”. This had included discussion with parents in the playground and looking at examples of websites of other Parent Councils. This will be added to the list already provided by Audrey. Examples of subjects raised were: procedures for late arrival and absence from school, parental involvement, how to find information on the school website and registration for ParentMail. All the topics will be collated and the sub-group will work with the school to understand whether Parents should be referred to the Parent Handbook or whether specific answers were required.

**Learning Journals and Targets** – the group was very supportive of the journals. However an observation was raised in relation to the way the creative writing was divided up. It was agreed that targets should be sent out as early as possible to parents.

**Life Skills** – Consideration of topics that could be developed as part of the school curriculum, for future work skills or general development. Potential topics include basic cooking, touch typing and map reading.

Mrs. Ross expressed her gratitude to the Focus Group and suggested it be held regularly as it was very useful to be kept informed of issues of concern to parents, and to have a practical, less formal, forum in which to explore potential solutions. The Parent Council agreed. The sub-group will be referred to as the Parents Focus Group and will report to every meeting of the Parent Council. It was also stressed that although the Parent Focus Group must be led by the Parent Council members, membership of this Group could be extended to any member of the wider Parent Forum.

**Action: Gillian, Carol, Karine to provide a further update at next Parent Council.**

#### 5. Items for Discussion

##### (a) Creation of additional sub-groups

This item was considered under item 5(c) of the agenda.

(b) Draft Amendments to Parent Council Constitution

Following the discussion at the last Parent Council meeting, Billy presented draft proposals for amendments to the Parent Council constitution. These will ultimately be presented to the Parent Forum for approval. There was broad consensus on the draft proposals. The following items were subject to specific discussion:

Increase the number of Parent Council Members. There are currently 12 members on the Parent Council from across all years in the School. The Parent Council would like to ensure that each year group is represented and that we have as wide an area of skills as possible, for example website knowledge, understanding of education policy and/or child wellbeing, community knowledge and experience of recruitment. It is proposed to increase membership to 16, which would equate to 2 members for each year group (including Nursery). This will also ensure good representation of parents at every Parent Council meeting and support further sub-group activity. Requests will be made via ParentMail for volunteers with skills to come forward. It was noted that some roles, such as supporting the Parent Council section of the school website, would not necessarily require the individual to become a member of the Parent Council.

A discussion ensued about the School website, which needs updating. The Parent Council recognised that someone with knowledge of web-design and content management is required. Options include approaching parents for help, considering free content management sites available on the internet, or employing a specialist to create our website and teach members how to manage it (similar to what Craigmount High School has done).

Length of Term. The current constitution has a restriction of members serving for 4 years (2 terms of 2 years) maximum. The constitution is “silent” as to whether this is an absolute restriction or whether a parent can re-join after a break. The initial proposal was to remove this time bar; however after discussion it was felt that it was healthy to maintain the restriction as it encourages new thoughts and ideas to be brought to the Parent Council. However, it was recognised that to be an effective Parent Council Chair that time was required to:

- Build an understanding of the day-to-day operations of the school
- Develop working relationships with the School Management team
- Understand current (Government) education initiatives and the wider education agenda
- Undertake required training (e.g. to support staff recruitment activity)

The Parent Council considered that there would therefore be merit in allowing the time bar to be extended where a member holds either the Vice Chair or Chair role. As a maximum, this could result in a parent being a member of the Parent Council for up to 8 years – being 4 years as Parent Member (current restriction maintained), followed by 2 years as Vice Chair and a further 2 years as Chair. To offset this extended time period, the position of Vice Chair and Chair will require to be approved annually by the Parent Forum. Consideration should also be given to this timeframe also extending to the Treasurer role. The ability to come back onto the Parent Council, after a break, should also be clarified.

Billy thanked the members for their input and agreed to prepare the final proposals on this basis, which will be submitted to the Parent Forum for approval. The proposals will be issued in advance to the Parent Forum via ParentMail.

**Action: Billy to produce final proposals for constitution amendments, ready for presentation to Parent Forum for approval.**

(c) Future Agenda Topics for Parent Council Meetings

Mrs. Ross suggested that at each meeting of the Parent Council a matter of School policy could be discussed. Information on the policy to be discussed would be sent out to members of the Parent Council in advance of each meeting. Mrs Ross commented that the main 3 policies are English/Literacy, Maths/Numeracy and Pedagogy (Teaching & Learning). A number of new staff are joining the School this year and this is an excellent time to revisit the School's policies in these areas. The School values are now nine years old and this may also be a good time to look at whether any changes are needed.

It was suggested that the first subject should be the Literacy Policy. It was also suggested that a School Policy sub-group be created. The Parent Council fully supported this new initiative; Jennifer (Farrar) and Aleks will lead the sub-group, and liaise with Mrs Ross. The sub-group will consider approaches for engaging the wider Parent Forum in this initiative.

**Action: Jennifer (Farrar) and Aleks to provide an update to the next Parent Council meeting.**

**6. Head Teacher's Report (Mrs. Ross)**

Recruitment. A letter is going out to parents next week detailing the new staff changes within the School. A number of very strong new teachers have been recruited and there are now no more temporary staff in the School. The year ahead should be a more settled one for staffing.

Composite Classes. The current composite classes in the upper School have been "decomposed" very smoothly. In the coming year, there will be a new P1/P2 composite class. There are always a number of parents who are concerned about composite classes. Mrs. Ross and the Parent Council are fully supportive of composite classes and would like to ensure that parents have as much information as possible to reassure them. Mrs. Ross would like this matter to be included in the matters discussed by the Parents Focus Group.

**Action: Gillian to include within Parent Focus Group considerations.**

Grounds Development. This will feature strongly in next year's Improvement Plan. Miss Nelson will lead this programme and a group will be created with interested parents. Many ideas have already been drawn up and some involve play ideas involving a degree of risk – parents will be consulted about this idea. Moira mentioned that a local resident, whose garden borders the playground, is considering selling her garden; the School will look into this matter.

**Action: Jennifer (Ross)**

Life Skills Agenda. This is a new programme being introduced as part of the Curriculum for Excellence development. The School will be consulting with parents (and the Pupil Council) over which skills should be introduced. The plan is to set up a working group, and the programme would involve staff, parents and members of the local community.

Allotment. The school is keen to extend the use of the allotment at Craigie's farm as a rich context for learning. However children have to pay for the transport to the allotment and it has become increasingly difficult to arrange cheap transport options such as minibus. Mrs Ross wondered how the Parent Council thought the parent body generally would react to the school proposing that parents would transport their children to and from the allotment with plenty of notice about dates and parents sharing transport for their children. Mrs. Ross will look into insurance implications. The Parent Council thought that this idea was worth exploring.

**Action: Jennifer (Ross)**

370<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. This will be held in 2016 and will coincide with the next Corstorphine Fair. The School will work towards a major demonstration of learning and skills.

## 7. Items for Noting

Audrey will distribute the set dates for 2014-15 Parent Council/Parent Forum meetings to members of the Parent Council.

**Action: Audrey to distribute proposed meeting dates.**

## 8. AOCB

Parent Council Membership 2014-15. 2 members had indicated their intention to step down at the next Parent Forum. This includes the post of Treasurer, as Andy will no longer be the parent of a child at the School. If the constitution proposals were approved, there would be a further 4 vacancies. Diane will continue as the Support Staff member.

Responses to pre-submitted Questions:

- All-School Photo. No photo is planned for this year. The School usually arranges an all-year photo every 7 years. The next one will be due in 2 years which will tie in well with the 370<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations.
- Sport's Day Results. There was a problem this year with the scoring. In future, the points will not be announced, just the placings.

Parent Forum (AGM). It was proposed that cheese and wine be offered to parents this year. Mrs. Ross, the Chair and the Deputy Chair will organise a short presentation to the Parent Forum on the Life Skills project and the plans for the development of the School grounds.

**Action: Audrey, Billy and Jennifer (Ross) to develop ideas for the Parent Forum evening.**

## 9. Future Agenda Items:

- Funding Request for replacement Dining Room tables
- Final proposals for amendment to Parent Council constitution
- Update from Parent Focus Group
- Update from Policy Review Group
- Life Skills agenda
- Development of the School grounds

## 10. Date of next meeting:

The next meeting of the Parent Council will be on **Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2014** at 7.15pm.

The AGM of the Parent Forum will be held on **Thursday, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2014** at 7.15pm.