



## DUNBAR PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL

### Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2009 at 7.30pm

**Present:** Sonya Lugton, Helen McLachlan, Sarah Watt, Cllr. Norman Hampshire, David Carter, Jenny McGlinchey, Deborah Piner, Cath McPhillips, Graham Stuart, Anna Wyatt, Janet McDougall Welch, Liz Todd, Susan Love, Sarah Duguid, Lorna Allan, Ann-Marie Napier, Kirsten Pearson, Bernadette Daff, Dee Davison, Cllr. Paul McLennan, Kirsty Parkin, Rob Barley, Emma Hexley, Delphine Roques, Annie Beatty, Lesley McPheat, Helen Gillanders (Head Teacher), Gordon McKenzie (Deputy Head Teacher), Isla Paterson, Pam Clark (Deputy Head Teacher)

1. Morag opened the meeting at 7.45pm thanking everyone for coming. It was nice to see some new faces as well as the regular supporters.
2. She started her report stating that the Parent Council had found its feet in its second year, and has good representation of class representatives, many classes have 2 representatives which is fantastic. Our recruitment drive had worked well at the Parents Evening, and word of mouth is proving very effective as we have even better class representation that we did this time last year. She went on to say that being involved wasn't all about attending meetings, but also supporting the school in the many events they put on e.g. healthy snack, library and it was encouraging to see so many new faces which she seen as a positive sign. Fund raising has gone extremely well last year raising over £8,000. A lot of people had done a lot of hard work, there were too many to mention individually as she didn't want to run the risk of forgetting anyone, but the help is very much appreciated. After a successful first read-a-thon we have transformed the school library, but also we were overwhelmed by the pupil participation as over half our pupils participated compared to 20-25% participation in schools running similar events in Canada. A big thanks again to parents, volunteers and also teachers who supported the event well. We have been busy throughout the year meeting with East Lothian Council regularly not only to voice the Parent Forum opinion but also to ensure the Council are accountable, demanding explanations for their decisions and to keep pushing them to make us understand how they reach them. After East Lothian Council published their budget proposals, Dunbar Parent forum had the largest single voice in the county and ultimately the cuts were less severe than initially anticipated. This was an excellent

result, but we should not be complacent as budget cuts are inevitable again this year, but we will be ready to fight again. This past year the region have also set up channels to established contact with other Parents Councils within the County which can only help with this fight. The job is never-ending so we must keep encouraging new people into the Parent Council which has to be dynamic to succeed. She reiterated that this year we have excellent representation over the whole school which ensures all opinions and childrens' needs are thought about. The first Parent Council meeting of the year will take place on 7<sup>th</sup> October and will take the form of a workshop. We need to establish what we achieve, what our priorities are and create action plans to fulfil them. We did this about 18 months ago and she feels it is time to do it again as we need to meet the expectations of the Parent Forum so constantly need to review our actions. The formation of sub-committees has proved fruitful in most areas, although some are still waiting to get off the ground. Quality sub-committee had proved difficult last year as we had no clear indicators but this should be different this year. Communication's committee was established to inform the Parent Forum of what is going on.. The most common question we are being asked just now is are we having a Ladies Night? Right now we don't know, without volunteers, these events do not happen. We are constantly looking for fresh fund-raising ideas, and lots of pairs to hands to help. It is a fact that more planning and early preparation leads to successful events, both in fund-raising and in attendance. We have also learned in the past year that we need to develop wider external links for us to benefit from, prioritise the many meetings that we have always attended in the past, and perhaps not attend some in the future, but use the external links to share information from meetings with other Parent Councils. We have faced challenges over the last year and know we cannot get everything right within the year, but we are off on the right footing.

3. **Treasurer's Report** - Isla directed everyone to the paper report attached to the agenda. The Parent Council have a healthy balance of £11,428.90. The largest fund-raiser of the year being the read-a-thon which raised just over £8,500. £4,400 of that has already been spent on new books, Junior Librarian System, scanners and a new rug for the library. There is still £4,129 available to spend on the new library. As we have such a healthy balance we are going to propose at the next Parent Council meeting another gift of £2,000 to the school, so they should get their wish list started now.

4. **Adoption of new constitution** – the constitution has been slightly amended over the summer and a copy of the new version has been sent out to the Parent Forum over the last few weeks, which is a requirement by law. As no comments were received on the amendments the new constitution was passed.

5. **Appointment of class representatives 2009/10** – nominations have been received over the last few weeks for class representatives and everybody who showed an interested has a position, some of last year's have had to be juggled into classes of another child.

6. **Appointment of office bearers** – only one nomination had been received for each of the positions so it was not necessary to have elections. Morag Readman will remain as Chairperson, Sarah Watt will remain as Vice-Chairperson and Isla Paterson will remain as Treasurer.

7. **Formation of Sub-Committees** – Morag encouraged people to think about what they could offer any of the sub-committees, every little helps. It would be great if we could get more men involved. The library team has now been formed and is up and running.

8. **Parent Council Meeting Dates 2009/10** – Morag drew everyone's attention to the meeting dates for the year which were listed on the agenda. She looked forward to seeing many people at the next meeting, and asked if anybody knew of anyone who might be able to help us in anyway to bring them along to the next meeting. There might even be wine & cakes on offer!

9. **No further business the formal meeting closed at 8.15pm.**

Helen Gillanders took the floor for the second part of the meeting and began by thanking everyone. As last year was her first year in post she had felt a real pressure, but had been very well supported. She has scheduled a coffee morning for the many volunteers that had come into help over the last year, but wanted to say special thanks to Janet McDougall Welch for the read-a-thon and to Rhonda Elliott who had been in the school regularly over the summer setting up the library system. Helen thanked the Parent Council for the funds the school has received and confirmed they had been spent on Promethean Board, a new ICT suite, 10 digital cameras, 7 easy speaks and 5 videos. She has also been able to buy resources for teachers to make tasks more interesting for pupils, net ball stands, put extra in the hard-ship funds, which is very important especially in this economic climate. She has also been able to subsidise the P5 York trip, buy new skipping ropes as they wear out very quickly and new stilts. She is very privileged to be able to allow teachers luxuries they would otherwise be refused, all this information will go out in the next newsletter.

She then came to the HMle Inspection Report which had been distributed to every parent/carer, and looked forward to this opportunity to open the floor to questions from this intimate group before her presentation at the Meet the Teacher nights later in the week. Parents have come out well in the report and it was noted that the school is moving forward in partnership with the Parent Forum. Parental support can lead to an extra level in attainment. Out of 300 surveys sent home 160-170 were received back anonymously. Some stats of the survey were:

97% strongly agree their child enjoys learning at school.

90% agree school is well lead by senior management team, Principal Teachers and Teachers

94% agree that children feel safe

74% agree that school asks for their views

57% agree that the school takes views into account

Primary 6/7 have also done an anonymous survey, which the children had been very positive in their participation.

94% \*\*\*\* own work in class

69% staff good at dealing with bullying.

Bullying can be hard to address but the inspectors had given positive comments. She reminded us that the Anti-Bullying Policy is fully accessible, and that the school is having a Friendship Week in November.

The Inspector that came to our school doesn't usually do school inspections as he is an area inspector so is used to inspecting regions. Our school took his breath away and we were commended for our actions as a school. The points which have been highlighted as important things that we can improve on are:

1. Improve children's attainment in writing. This was good, but not good enough, we want it to be very good or even excellent.
2. Further develop consistency in teaching and learning.
3. Continue to take steps to help children develop their learning. Spelling for example is very different from the way we were taught, and we now try to encourage children to know their next step.
4. Improve children's expectation and skills in ICT. We have already over the summer set up our new ICT suite with 19 new PC's and revolving chairs.

Helen then invited any questions from the meeting.

- Q. Although we do have the upmost faith in the school, can you explain the satisfactory/good/satisfactory grading.
- A. This is reached by 3 years of attainment data and last year attainment levels had risen having fallen the previous 2 years. In the last 10 years the levels have risen from 60% 10 years ago to 80% 5 years ago. HMle believe we have positive practice and procedures, have good pace and identified that we know we have a challenge ahead in raising these levels further.
- Q. Do you feel you are well supported by the Local Authority?
- A. Yes. She feels she is supported and hopes she will be revisited in 3 years time. This gives them time to show a big change. She is confident the school can achieve at least very good if not excellent, but this is being addressed across the whole authority. She did remind us that they don't only encourage attainment but also achievement.
- Q. Why is there such a difference between Nursery/Primary School?
- A. This is because they are not marked on attainment and each room is like a contained unit.
- Q. Should children not expect 2 hours of Physical Education a week?
- A. Yes, and the school will meet that target this year. They have revised the timetable of the 2 halls and they are also now making good use of the outdoor space. As well as gym kit children are also encouraged to bring outdoor kit, i.e. tracksuit bottoms and sweatshirt. Barring bad weather the children will make full use of the great outdoor space available at our school.
- Q. Do teachers use homework activities to support work in class?
- A. Homework is not a priority at the moment, we are working on other areas like behaviour improvement. We have to be careful that homework does not become the be all and end all. I don't believe that P7 children should be getting 3 hours homework per night, I believe there is more to be gained from experiences. Reading with your child is beneficial for both parent and child.

Learning support was brought up in the report, 38% of parents were concerned about the learning support available in the school. Our learning support teacher left 2 years ago but there are plenty of resources to cover her role, without having to replace her. There were teething problems with the change of system, but these have now been ironed out.

Homework was then brought up again, stating that Elaine Albano use to go over to afterschool club and do homework sessions with kids over there. This worked well, and

seemed useful to the families whose parents are working full time, especially if there is also after-school activities like swimming club to be attended after afterschool club. Helen stated that these were good suggestions, and her door was always open if this wanted to be talked about further.

Then the subject of the new school was brought up, and the conversation became rather heated between some parents and Councillor Paul McLennan. Paul had put some information together and handed this round the room. Councillor Norman Hampshire then gave some further information about the situation. It transpires it may be possible to hold a meeting between the Developer and the Parent Council. This will be looked into, but it was stated this was not really the time or place to continue this debate. Morag stated that she would bring the concerns expressed at the meeting to the attention of East Lothian Council and request that a further public meeting be held to enable these important matters to be discussed more fully.

No further business the meeting closed at 9.15 pm.