

WILLIAMWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

PARENT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

7.00pm on Monday 16th April 2012.

Present: Cressida Maher John Overdijking
Jatinder Sumal Stuart Taylor
Allan Boyd David mowat
Lesley Yeates Brian Stokes
Cllr Alan Lafferty
Corinne Durand-Watson (Vice-Chair)
Bobby Caldwell (Chair)

In Attendance: John Fitzpatrick (Headteacher)
Helen Fulton (Staff Member)

1 Introduction - tea & coffee

2 Apologies Stewart Miller Cllr Ralph Robertson
Cllr Mary Montague Ronnie Gourlay
Ole Pahl Moira Young
Susan Watson

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes from last PC meeting were agreed, although with clarification on one point from JF. 2nd to last page, JF pointed out error re uniform. The uptake of blazers sits at more than 90% across all school years. It was just on the day the figures were recorded there was a particularly low figure amongst the S1 & S2 boys.

Minutes were accepted.

4 Points Arising from Previous Meeting

JF informed the PC that the Council as a whole is working on a procurement deal for the supply of uniforms for parents. He understands this is at an advanced stage and expects that shortly, something will come out, directly from the authority to all parents re suppliers and pricing.

Easter School: JF reported that it went well. He considered that the numbers were down slightly on last year, although didn't really consider that to be a bad thing. Art deliberately chose not to run any classes in order to enforce coursework deadlines with their pupils. This may have had a direct impact on numbers.

CM asked about a daily rate for Easter School, but JF pointed out the model is probably the best just now, and flexibility is always given to special requests from parents for specific days or subjects.

Strike Action: JF reported that the original date that had been balloted for had come and gone. Although the overwhelming majority had voted in favour, there was a very low uptake of voting. The main union the SSTA is about to ballot for 'Action short of industrial action' (work to rule) with regard to pensions. More unions may also ballot. We will wait to see what happens.

5 Head Teacher's report. – Q&A on National 4 & 5 & CfE

An overview of Curriculum for Excellence & National 4 & 5 exams.

The origins of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) date back to 2002 when a national debate on Scottish education highlighted a number of issues.

The result - CfE - was designed to encompass learning from ages 3-18. It outlined a broad curriculum for young people between 3-15 and specialisation from 15 onwards.

It also aimed to address issues of under performance / lack of attainment - particularly between P5 & S2 and provide a smoother gradient of learning throughout secondary school.

CfE is based on 7 design principles; breadth, depth, relevance, challenge & enjoyment, progression, coherence, personalisation & choice.

The underpinning principle is that teachers have more freedom within the curriculum and that there are better links between subjects – interdisciplinary

learning. There is also a renewed focus on literacy, numeracy, health and well-being across all subjects.

A natural consequence of the implementation of CfE has been the opportunity to update the existing qualifications system, so as to better reflect new approaches to teaching & learning. It will also simplify the range of qualifications for stakeholders.

In particular, Standard Grades & Intermediate 1 & 2 will be replaced by National 4 & 5 qualifications. National 4 is assessed using school based evidence only (no external exam), while National 5 will include an external exam.

A number of questions were raised by PC members :-

Q - What is being done to prepare children for the new qualifications?

A - Although the qualifications will change, the same high standards of teaching & learning that we expect of our staff and our pupils will not and therefore we do not anticipate any major difficulties in preparing for the new qualifications

Q - Who will set the assessments and will attainment still be measured through NABs?

A - i) External exams will still be set by SQA (Nat 5, Higher, Advanced Higher).
ii) Schools will set Unit Assessments based on SQA guidance (not NABs)

Q - With regard to the progression from primary to secondary - how will teachers ensure that pupils will be brought up to the required levels?

A - Cluster working in ER schools is particularly strong and has been identified by HMiE as best practice in recent school inspections. Williamwood staff will work with primary colleagues to ensure an appropriate gradient of learning for their pupils. Transition management includes the close scrutiny of attainment levels.

Q - How will National 4&5 help to smooth out the transition from primary to secondary?

A - The answer lies in providing excellent teaching. Teachers are now teaching to higher standards. There will be a particular focus for P4 to S2 on maths during May, looking at how to improve the level across the authority.

Q - What about project work / interdisciplinary learning in Secondary?

A - It is easier to do this at primary level. Timetabling difficulties make interdisciplinary learning more of a challenge in Secondary schools. Nevertheless Williamwood has been successful in extending the range of interdisciplinary learning across certain subjects in S1 & S2.

Q - How do you resolve the conflict inherent in choosing subjects at the end of S2, but keep to a broad general education until the end of S3?

A - Given current levels of attainment, most pupils in Williamwood will have completed the experiences and outcomes up to the 4th curriculum level within the broad general education by the end of S2. Therefore, in order to maintain momentum, Williamwood pupils will continue to choose subjects at end of S2 leading onto National 4 & 5 exams in S4 with Highers following in S5/6. The Headteacher and staff will keep this under constant review.

Q - Is there an option to present some pupils in S3 for exams?

A - Other than in exceptional circumstances, the short answer is no. At present Universities generally insist on qualifications being obtained at one sitting. This effectively prevents some pupils (who could achieve qualifications earlier) from doing so, thus allowing them more time to focus on other subjects in S4 to S6.

6 Staff Report (HF)

Helen Fulton provided information on recent events.

Charities Week culminating in a Dress As You Please Day on 16th March, was a huge success. The dress as you please day took in £1400 alone. JF said that the charities committee have reported to have raised £7000 this year.

Events very well attended - Young Musician of The Year
- Spring Concert
- Williamwood's Got Talent

Easter School was very popular.

Upcoming events: S2/3 football trip
S3 exams begin next week.

7 Parent Council Communications:

Website update: Key questions, what information is required?

If we want to use school website, it has to go through the school – at present the PC can't access this for email, posting documents, information etc. (It would be easy to do though via school office.)

Collecting parents information (name, email etc.) cannot be done via the school website - in addition Issues of data protection arise. For example the PC would need to be a separate registered body in its own right as far as the DP Act is concerned.

Other schools have some interesting pilots on the go - such as Woodfarm parents having access to the GLOW system. This will be reviewed in September, so it will be interesting to see the results.

Carolside & Kirkhill provided their PC's with contact lists of all parents.

Since the school website currently has 3000 hits/week it was thought best to use this source and work with it to benefit parents.

Suggestion is to have a Contact Us page on the website with button links to info and a separate e-mail address. ST offered to set up e-mail account.

Need to consider other points and contacts for future. JF told BC to speak to Anne Maclean (QIO) re dDP issues. Everyone agreed to have a think about what PC contact details should be made available online for next meeting.

JO said it's about having a presence in school.

ST & AB said they would be available to speak to parents on S1 parents evening (8th May)

Other Upcoming events that could be supported:-

S3 Parent night – 14th June

P7 Info. Evenings: 18/19th June.

8 Parent Council grant 2012/2013

Money from April 1st should be approx. £900.

Last year there was £600 left over, so passed onto school split 1/3 charities week donation and 2/3 Uniform fund.

JO says we should consider initiatives to spend money. JF pointed out though that money should be kept to cover Clerk fees if we appoint one.

HF suggested we consider a credit card size contacts card to hand out at events. JF said he would enquire as to whether ER printers would do it for us.

It was also suggested we look into help offered by SPTC re how best to promote ourselves.

9 AOCB

JF suggested we look into seeing what help parents could give pupils with regard to careers. It is thought we should try to tap into free resources. We might need to spend some of budget on hospitality for such events.

JF asked for help in finding a good speaker for the forthcoming graduation. Any help would be gratefully received. Any suggestions contact JF as a matter of urgency.

BC & JS attending Training Session on Recruitment & Selection on 23rd april
- CDW confirmed she had attended session on 19th March.

10 Dates of Next Meeting

11th June 2012, Conference Room 7pm