

Hutchesons' Grammar School Association

Minute of meeting of the School Association – Founders Room,
Monday 9 November 2015.

Present

Kenneth Ritchie (KR) (Chairman)
P3 Martyn Campbell (MC)
P4 Alan Hair (AH)
P6 Arlene Rennet
P7 Wendy Schenini (WS)
S1 Elaine Lonergan (EL)
S3 Sue Redpath
S5 Shazma Shafi

Apologies

P2 Kenneth Kirkwood (KK)
Dr Saman Khan (S2)

In attendance

Ken Greig (KG)
Brian MacBride (BM)
Fiona Macphail (FM)
Katy Chisholm (KC)
Iain Keter (IK)
David Hadden (DH) (Minutes)
Faiza Khan
Shahid Hanif (S4)
Lynn Rankin (S6)
Audrey Mathers (P5)
Lizette Craig (P1)

1. Adoption of Minutes

The minute of the 14 September 2015 was adopted as an accurate record.
Proposed by Elaine Lonergan and seconded by Alan Hair.

2. Matters raised by Elected Members.

2(i) Carol Service – a new request was received regarding a Carol service, even though this matter has been discussed previously. The Chairman noted that the previous discussion had been in respect of previous years and that the matter question might remain perennial. Despite Elected Member support, KG indicated that given that the Carol Service had been stopped several years ago due to a perceived decline in interest from parents. He noted that the Music Department staff would as ever wish to provide a 'professionally delivered event' and this could precipitate an impact on existing events to which the school was already committed, he was unwilling to force an additional event into this year's calendar. The discussion concluded with the suggestion that 'events' might be an area to be investigated when a wider group of parents were invited to provide feedback.

2(ii) Uniform/Jewellery etc.- KG indicated that the school position had not changed and that managing the exceptions and issues was best left to staff

2(iii) School Holiday 'Extensions' – KG indicated that the rules in respect of the removal of children by their parents outside were clear but that there were occasional exceptions - he confirmed that he reviewed each case personally and exercised the appropriate discretion.

3. Rectors Report

3(i) SQA Results – having reported on the results at both the September meeting and the October AGM, KG referred to a few but excellent headline figures. As far as S5 was concerned, 96% of H exams were passed with 67% of passes at A grade and 3.37 passes per candidate. Within the year group, 2 pupils had achieved 7As, a further 27 had gained 6As and 38 more had achieved 5A's – these 65 pupils represented 35% of the year group. With respect to the S6 results, 84 A passes had been achieved at AH level while with the full roll out of the Nat 5 curriculum level, the school would be able in future years to track 'S4' performance; 80% had achieved As – the 80% figure does not include maths students 'bypassing', all of whom could reasonably be expected to achieve an A.

3(ii) Open Mornings – KG reported both had been successful with the numbers of potential pupils attending up by 15% over the previous year, while the number of adults accompanying children to the Kingarth Street Open Day was up by 68%. The experiment of holding the open day at Kingarth Street on a Saturday had clearly worked and would be repeated next year.

3(iii) ECO 'Green Flag' – KG reported that the school had been awarded its 'Green Flag' based on its ECO commitment and arrangements. This award reflects more recent improvements at Beaton Road and the award covers a 2 year period when progress will be reassessed. It was noted that the performance at the Kingarth Street site has been considered to be at or beyond 'Green Flag' standard for several years.

3(iv) 'A Great Educational Tradition' Book Launch – 30 November – KG commended this matter to the attention of members and mentioned that approximately 9000 invitations to the launch of this new book by Brian Lockhart (former Governor) were being distributed to all parts of The School community including those attached to the current issue of The Hutchie Herald. It was noted not all members of The Committee had yet received a copy of the invitation.

4. Primary School Report – FM updated members on recent notable events at Kingarth Street (2 of which, the ECO 'Green Flag, and the successful Open Morning had been covered by KG).

4(i) New Appointments – FM drew attention to the appointment of two additional senior teacher posts, Caroline Ross in respect of 'Writing', an aspect of the work of the Primary School commended in the QUIPE report, and Murray Gallacher in respect of social subjects which cover the traditional areas of Geography and History and now include Financial matters.

4(ii) Playground – Kingarth Street – FM recorded her thanks to the school and Bursar in particular for supporting the most recent and final (for now) improvements, which were completed during the October break and include a 'bark' feature, which includes a replica of the Loch Ness Monster (in blue bark).

4(iii) School Charity – Next For Life – FM reported of the positive commitment, including involvement of P5, P6 and P7 reps on the school charities committee.

4(iv) Spectacular – in her final comment in this report, FM referred to a very successful fund raising event at Halloween which had generated funds of £600.

5. Governors Remarks – in the absence of BW, there was no update at this meeting.

6. 1957 Group Remarks – it was noted with delight and relief that since the last meeting, Kathryn Storrie, a former HGSA Elected member has assumed the Chairmanship of the Group, however, as Kathryn was not present, no update was given other than to confirm that sadly there would be no Winter Fair this year but that a Uniform Sale was scheduled for early December and was on the school calendar.

7. FP Remarks – BM gave a very brief report on the activities of the FPs who had not been very active over a period of some years but who were now better established and hoping to generate a range activities within their group. Subject to discussion with the FP President, BM indicated he would be happy to give a short update on relevant FP activities at future meetings.

8. Parental Surveys – this topic was tabled following ‘Communication’ being raised on a number of occasions, including at the last HGSA meeting and in the QUIPE report in Spring 2016.

8(i) Tutoring – the group discussed this matter again, and ultimately decided that a survey specifically addressing the use of external private tutors would not be requested for a variety of reasons, namely, that the School already provides considerable ‘additional support’ particularly around external certificate exam preparation, that the information gathered, even if honest and accurate, would not direct, clearly, a particular course of action to be followed by the school beyond the suggested advertisement of the additional support already available and that tutors would continue to be engaged by families for a multitude of reasons.

8(ii) QUIPE Inspection Feedback – the QUIPE feedback had supported the use of targeted surveys, which KG had referred to in his contribution to the AGM. After some discussion, the group agreed they would be content to leave School management to target specific areas they considered necessary and asked that the Committee be informed of the survey areas before any survey takes place (so that the Committee is able to support any survey).

8(iii) 2004 Parental Survey – the group was informed that the last comprehensive parental survey had been undertaken in 2004 In response to the suggestion that this was now historical and that a similar exercise might now be repeated IK suggested this had arisen because of specific concerns regarding the management of the school at that time.

9. Sub Committee Reports

9(i) Careers Convention – KC reported on the progress with the current S4 and reminded all present of the value of the event and the recognised benefit to pupils. The current interview process is nearing completion and the next stages will be a briefing of the Year Group next week and correspondence to parents before the end of this month. Elected Members were reminded of the effort required in securing consultants. In view of the 2nd March date for the convention, Elected Members agreed to meet with KC on 11th January at 7p.m. to co-ordinate progress in securing the necessary consultants. **(Action – All Elected Members)**

(exeunt KG, FM, IK & KC)

9(ii) Social Matters – EL reported on a P5 parent event which was scheduled for 26 November. There was a general discussion regarding the perceived lack of ‘social’ events for HGS parents (when compared with state and other private sector schools) – BM and WS respectively made reference to significant events at a couple of Edinburgh schools and Glasgow Academy. There was general consensus that HGS ‘could do better’ and a feeling that more could be done by the school. In concluding this part of the discussion the Chairman indicated he thought the School might be more inclined to support ‘Social’ events, after demonstrable parental commitment to some successful event(s). Finally, recognising that the current S6 have just under 8 months remaining in school, a small group of the Elected Members, all of whom have children in S6 agreed to consider fairly quickly whether a suitable social event could be run before the end of the session and to report back to the Chairman. **(Action DH)**

9(iii) Constitution – BM reported back on the principal reason behind a review (he confirmed the Current Constitution had been reviewed and it was considered that revision was necessary to ensure it was ‘fit for purpose’). BM updated those present on the progress and next steps – the review was almost complete, with another (hopefully final) sub-group meeting scheduled for 16 November, with the intention that a final draft could be ready in late November 2015. The final draft then required to be shared with Elected Members, and with School Management, and then considered for adoption at a meeting of parents. **(Action BM/KR)**

10. AGM – KR reported on the proceedings of 20 October and acknowledged the contribution by KG to the disappointingly small turn-out. While all were keen to move matters on positively and reasonably quickly, the group considered it was appropriate to take the correct steps rather than rush matters. The Chairman was asked to find a suitable date in consultation with School Management. Accordingly, for the time being, the Elected Members decided unanimously to co-opt the parents who had put their names forward as Year Representatives. The parents concerned are Lizette Craig, Audrey Mathers, Shahid Hanif, Dr Saman Khan and Lynn Rankin. At this point, the Chairman confirmed that Kenneth Kirkwood, the P2 representative had tendered his resignation – this matter will be pursued by the Chairman who may need to ask the School to bring this matter to the attention of all P2 parents – **(Action KR)**

11. AOCB – none was tabled.

12. Date of Next Meeting – Monday 22 February, 2016 at 7.30.
(n.b. Careers' Convention meeting on Monday 11th January 2016 at 7 p.m.)