

<b>Title of Meeting: Comely Park Parent Council Meeting</b>
<b>Venue of meeting: Staff Room, Comely Park School</b>
<b>Date of meeting: 24 October 2007</b>
<b>Attendees:</b> Mrs Collins, Mel Brookes, Douglas Kennedy, Barry Smart, Sheila Ferguson, Brian Cassidy, Rochelle Black, Stuart Duncan, Mrs Simpson, David Henderson
<b>Apologies:</b> Colin Gordon, Lorraine Kennedy (Minutes Clerk)

<b>No</b>	<b>Action/Discussion Point</b>
1	<p><b>Welcome and introductions</b></p> <p>Dougie welcomed everyone to the meeting. He asked if everyone was happy with the minutes of the last meeting – there were no objections to these.</p> <p>Mrs Collins introduced Mrs Simpson, who has joined the Parent Council as the teacher representative.</p>
2	<p><b>Playground supervision</b></p> <p>Barry gave a brief summary of this issue, from his perspective. Is there enough supervision at playtime? Is there enough security to avoid children running onto the road?</p> <p>Mrs Collins said that Falkirk Council determines the level of playground supervision via support staff. The school currently has 10 adults in the playground at playtime and 5 adults at any one time at lunchtime, but these numbers may be reviewed, due to the current Single Status negotiations within the Council.</p> <p>Mrs Collins thinks there is enough supervision in the playground, as there are also 12 P6 “buddies” in the P1-3 area to help out at playtime.</p> <p>Should we diary forward to speak to the Council next year to confirm the numbers of support staff who will be available to help out at playtimes/lunchtimes?</p> <p>Barry also raised the issue of the gates in and out of the school and asked if they could they be locked/latched to improve security. Mrs Collins replied that, as Nursery parents need access to the school at lunchtime to drop off Nursery children, we could not lock the gates. Also, as there is a public right of way across one side of the playground, we would need to ensure gates are not locked.</p> <p>Could we add latches/hooks to all the school gates so they can be fastened shut? We would also need to add clear, durable signage, reminding parents &amp; children to close the gates behind them.</p> <p>After discussion we agreed to: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Put together a strategy for each gate – Brian and Barry will assess each gate</li> <li>- Communicate how playground supervision is carried out to parents</li> <li>- Highlight the security issues around the gates i.e. re-educate parents and children</li> </ul>

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**Playground facilities**

Barry summarised his concerns about the current lack of playground facilities i.e. furniture, trees, plants etc.

Mrs Collins told the meeting about the planned bid for funding from Awards for All for £10,000 to create a raised allotment area in one corner of the playground, so the children will be able to experience growing and tending naturally-grown, seasonal fruits and vegetables as part of extra-curricular activities.

If the Parent Council is successful in receiving this funding, part of the money could also be used to purchase tress, plants etc. to be placed around the playground perimeter.

Sheila raised the issue of lack of shelter in the playground, especially from sun in the summer months. However, Mrs Collins said there are high cost implications to build outdoor shelters (c. £17,000 for a shelter large enough for 20 children).

Barry asked if we could plant some tress – would MCA Homes be interested in providing funding for this, to go along the fence line opposite their new flats?

We would need these initiatives to be sustainable i.e. parents/helpers would need to maintain the allotment beds, tress etc. on a regular basis. (Mrs White already co-ordinates the Gardening Club on Friday lunchtimes.)

Stuart works for Ineos, which has a scheme to provide up to £500 for local initiatives. To be considered for funding, requests need to be local and one-off and should also be Ineos employee-led.

Is there the possibility of Ineos employees to help out with any playground improvement initiative? Stuart says that a colleague at Ineos may be able to help us out with this.

Stuart mentioned there is also the potential for visits to Ineos by Comely Park pupils as appropriate e.g. visit to Ineos fire station, catering team etc.

Additional points: -

- Much will depend on the outcome of the Awards for All funding bid
- Can we access tress and/or planting assistance from the Forestry Commission (who are now responsible for Callendar Park)?
- Mrs Collins mentioned that Bantaskin Estates have also offered support to the school in the past
- Can we get leverage from MCA Homes/Formula 1 Garage to provide funding for trees, planting etc? Brian will contact them to see what is available
- Can we get some outdoor weatherproof noticeboards put up in the playground to encourage communication between the school and parents/pupils? Mrs Collins will speak to the Clerk of Works to see what can be obtained

4	<p><b>Gartcows Road lollipop man</b></p> <p>Colin had raised the issue of the withdrawal of a lollipop man at the busy Gartcows Road junction.</p> <p>Mrs Collins said there is currently a shortage of lollipop men/women across the Falkirk area, but we (as the Parent Council) could write to the Council to express our concerns about the lack of safety at crossings.</p> <p>Dougie said he will write to the Council on this issue.</p> <p>Sheila mentioned that several parents had requested a lollipop man at Slamannan Road, as many parents would like their children to walk to school, but are concerned about their children's safety when crossing Slamannan Road.</p>
5	<p><b>Business links</b></p> <p>Mrs Collins agreed the school could improve on its links with local businesses. For example, the Howgate Centre is just a short distance away from the school, but we have no business links with any of the businesses within it.</p> <p>Stuart said he thought that access to local businesses would come from parents themselves, so should we communicate directly with parents about this?</p> <p>Brian asked what we are trying to achieve by improving business links. Mrs Collins said it's all about children being aware of employment opportunities at primary stage. She added that the Council wants to retain local labour, even after pupils have completed further education qualifications, but currently only 12% of pupils stay on in Falkirk to work.</p> <p>Stuart agreed to draft a mission statement/position of comment about what we want to achieve from our links with local businesses.</p> <p>Could we write a personal letter to each parent, in a sealed, addressed envelope, to all parents to ask for their help in improving business links?</p>
6	<p><b>Class sizes</b></p> <p>Stuart raised this important issue and highlighted that, although Comely Park School was originally built as a double stream school, we currently have 16 teachers for 14 classes (due to class size reductions).</p> <p>Sheila does not think it's appropriate for children to be taught in the "areas," although Mrs Collins says no children are permanently based there.</p> <p>Due to the SNP's class size reduction proposals, there are due to be 18 pupils per class in P1 from next year onwards – how will the Nursery intake be managed to accommodate a maximum of 36 children?</p> <p>If class sizes are going to be reduced further, we do not have time to wait too long to address these issues. Brian thinks we should ask for someone from the Council to come in to discuss this at our next meeting, as well as our local Councillor(s).</p> <p>Richard Teid (?) is the Forward Planning Officer at the Council, so Dougie will invite him to attend our next meeting. He will also invite the local SNP, Labour and Conservative Councillors to attend.</p>

**AOB**

**Extended Board Members:** should we invite others to attend future meetings, such as our local police officer? Who is our local officer? Or should we invite others, only if the topic is directly relevant to them? There was agreement to restrict invitations to others for relevant topics only. Barry will find out who our local police officer is.

**SPTC/SPCA:** Should we join either/both these organisations? There is a nominal fee to join (£94 to join SPCA).

Dianne Cherry (Falkirk Council) thinks there is little point joining either of these organisations unless you are doing specific fundraising, which the Parent Council will not be (as the PTA fulfils this aspect).

There was general agreement not to join these organisations at present.

**Parent Council monies:** we are still waiting for confirmation from Falkirk Council as to what monies the Parent Councils will receive.

**Parent Council training on 27 October:** Sheila cannot attend this training, so it was asked if anyone else wished to take her place. No-one else wanted the place, so Mel will let Diane Cherry know Sheila cannot attend.

**School curriculum:** Stuart mentioned we might want to talk about the school curriculum in 2008, to see what subjects the school has chosen and how we might be able to add value to this.

**e-mail addresses:** should we try to capture other parents' e-mail addresses, so we can inform them about future meeting dates etc? Dougie mentioned that this would need to comply with data protection laws.

**Next meeting date:** our next meeting will be on 28 November. Brian sent his apologies in advance for the next meeting, as he will be unable to attend.

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