

ST MICHAEL'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 29th September 2010

Present: Mr. Richard de Figueiredo (Headmaster), Mrs. Rachel Atherton (Secretary), Mrs. Valerie Stone (Pre Prep A), Mrs. Nicky Horsfall (Pre Prep B), Mrs. Fiona Naef Fritschi (Form 2), Mrs. Yvette Jones (Form 3), Mrs. Suzy Vivian (Form 4), Mrs. Melanie Drummond (Form 5), Mrs. Sue Beaumont (Form 6), Mrs. Karen Clark.

Apologies: Apologies were received from Mr. Simon Vivian (Chairman), Mrs. Catherine Bale (Pre Prep C) and Mrs. Catherine Mawby (Form 1).

Acting Chairman

As Mr. Vivian was absent, Mrs. Atherton acted as Chairman for the course of the meeting.

Minutes of the Meeting held on 25th May 2010

Mrs. Atherton proposed approval of the above minutes, Mrs. Drummond seconded the proposal and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Matters Arising

It had not proved possible to start a minibus service at 6.20pm, as there were insufficient numbers to make the service cost effective. Only several parents had registered their interest with the school office but as the service would be run by an outside operator at least 22 children would be required to fill the seats.

Parents would be interested in having a yearbook at the end of Form 4 when a number of pupils leave and Form 6; they are not interested in having a book at the end of every year. The Headmaster will think about a book at the end of Form 4 when some children leave for local schools, or maybe a group photograph.

Matters for Discussion

i. Christmas Sale

The order of the agenda points was rearranged to allow Mrs. Clark to present her information and leave. Mrs. Clark introduced herself to the Association and explained that she had taken over the role of organizing the Christmas Sale with the help of Mr. McAviney. Mrs. Clark handed out a sheet explaining the help required for the sale from parents and also a rota asking parents to donate a little time on various mornings to give pupils stickers for bringing in their toys for the sale. She asked all reps to make sure that parents were aware of both handouts and to try and source helpers for the sticker rota. Mrs. Clark explained that the sale would be organized and run in the same manner as previous years.

ii. Committee Vacancies.

It was noted that Mrs. Sue Ward had resigned and Mrs. Nikki Horsfall had been proposed as rep for Pre Prep B. Mrs. Fiona Naef Fritschi will also be resigning and will be replaced as Form 2 rep by Caroline Ambler. The position of nursery rep is currently vacant. An interested party has been found for the role but it was agreed that all nursery parents, some of whom are new to St Michael's, should be informed of the vacancy and allowed to apply if interested. Rep positions will be approved at the forthcoming AGM and all interested parties should be encouraged to attend.

iii. Uniform sizing

Mrs. Stone had heard from parents that the sizing of parts of the sports uniform, especially the track suit bottoms, was not suitable for the children, the track suit bottoms are tight and the rugby shirt sleeves are long. The headmaster suggested that this be brought to the attention of Paula who handles the uniform shop, but she does already stock a wide range of possible sizes. It was also noted that for items that do not have the school logo it might be possible for parents to source them in a more suitable size elsewhere.

iv. Form 4 preparation for local school exams

Mrs. Bale, who could not attend the meeting, had raised this item agenda and Mrs. Atherton read an email that Mrs. Bale had supplied prior to the meeting. Parents feel that although it states in the St Michael's prospectus that pupils will be prepared for the local secondary school entrance exams, the general feeling among parents is that the school concentrates on Common Entrance preparation and parents have to pay for extra tuition for local school exams. They feel that the exam topics are covered in class but there is no exam practice specific to local exams. The Headmaster confirmed that the pupils do exam preparation while in class and from Form 3 onwards all sit end of year exams, he would not want to increase stress levels amongst the children by focusing more on exams. He also made the point that he is available for parents to consult about the suitability of their child for the school they have chosen and their likely performance in entrance exams.

v. Computer activity, change of content to touch-typing

Mrs. Vivian explained that computing, first aid and cooking are viewed as life skills by the school, and therefore are three activities that all the children undertake but the computing activity is largely game based. She felt it would be more useful to learn touch-typing during the computing session, as it is a skill that all children are likely to need in later life. The headmaster explained that the choice of games is limited and felt that the children may not be keen to learn to type but it may be possible to give them the option and he would discuss the matter with Mr. Cooke.

vi. Boys' locker repairs

Several lockers in the boys' changing room still do not shut properly despite this point being raised before. The Headmaster will ask the maintenance team to repair the broken ones.

vii. Summer Ball

The Headmaster explained that a firm connected with a parent from the school, is willing to sponsor a school event like the ball by providing a Pims tent or something similar. All reps reported that parents were in favour of organizing a ball but as a fun event for parents rather than a fund raising activity, there could be a raffle to try and help defray the costs of the event but nothing on a large scale that would involve approaching local businesses. Mrs. Drummond suggested that instead of a ball there could be a summer party or garden party held at the end of the year while the marquee is available. The headmaster confirmed that Open Day would be the 14th July, so the party could be held on Friday the 15th or Saturday the 16th, it was felt that the Saturday was the better day. Mrs. Atherton suggested a committee be formed to take over the party organization and Mrs. Vivian, Mrs. Drummond, Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Stone agreed to head up the committee.

Any Other Business

i. Praise in school assembly for achievements outside of school

Some parents were aware that pupils' achievements outside of school in sporting or leisure activities were celebrated in school assembly but were not sure how the school came to know of the awards. The Headmaster explained that the school praised children if they had won something, and it normally arose when the children had a medal or certificate to mark the achievement and the parents of the child told the school. If parents would like a prize or award recognized in assembly then they need to bring it to the school's attention.

ii. Maternity cover for Mrs. Wallace

The Headmaster said that Sheila Jenkins would be providing maternity cover for Mrs. Wallace. He will include all necessary information in the half-term newsletter.

iii. Facebook session in PSHE

Mrs. Beaumont explained that several parents had requested that the dangers of giving out too much personal information on Facebook be covered in the PSHE sessions. The Headmaster explained that the dangers of the Internet and personal information were already covered and a recent assembly had covered this exact topic. He will include a letter from CEOP on the subject with the half term newsletter

iv. Prize Giving

Mrs. Beaumont explained that some parents were concerned that the prizes awarded at Prize Giving are for progress rather than achievement and that parents of children in the lower forms were not sure what the prizes are for and more explanation should be given. The Headmaster felt that the prizes were awarded for the correct reasons and explained that if all the prizes were for achievement then it is

likely they would all be awarded to the same child or two children, which would upset parents and children who felt their effort had not been recognized.

v. Common Entrance

Mrs. Beaumont explained that parents of children in Form 6 had noticed that last year a couple of children gained places at schools requiring children to take and pass Common Entrance, without actually sitting the exam and that the children leaving to attend local secondary schools did not sit any exams at all. The Headmaster confirmed that pupils had been allocated places at their chosen school without taking Common Entrance but that these were rare exceptions; he accepted that it does undermine the importance of the Common Entrance Exam and that the school had been unhappy with the situation. The Headmaster also confirmed that all pupils in Form 6 will take exams at the end of the summer term if they are not sitting Common Entrance.

vi. AGM

The Headmaster asked that all reps make parents aware that the AGM will be held on Tuesday 12th October 2010, notices will be displayed around the school.

Date of next committee meeting: Tuesday 25th January 2011 at 8.00pm

The meeting closed at 9.12pm

Chairman