

St Christopher School

The Parents' Circle Committee

Draft Minutes of meeting held on 11 January, 2009

Present: Vernon McClure (Chairman of Governors) Richard Palmer (President of the PC, Head of St Christopher), Sue Rix (Head of Junior School), Emma-Kate Henry (Deputy Head of St Christopher School), Rouane Mendel (Chair), Alison Baigent (Secretary), Peter McMeekin (Treasurer), Allison Phelps, James Smyth, Peter Wesley, Ralph Wilce.

Apologies: Jenny Roe

Agenda

1. Welcome from the Chair
2. Introductory remarks from Richard
3. Election of new Treasurer and review of current finances
4. Matters arising from the Minutes of the last meeting
 - a) Parents' Directory
 - b) Nearly New Shop
 - c) Summer Ball
5. Interdenominational character of the School
6. School Development Plan
7. World Café event
8. PC Constitution
9. AOB

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed her gratitude to the Chairman of Governors and the newly appointed Deputy Head for taking the time to attend the meeting. The members of the Committee were thanked for approving the minutes of the last meeting in advance so that the final version could be promptly posted on the Parents' Circle section of the School website.

2. Richard reported that

- i) the trip to Rajasthan had recently returned and had been very successful. Close contact had been maintained with the Foreign Office until the date of departure in the light of understandable concerns after the events in Mumbai.

ii) changes to the management and governance of the School had taken effect since the last meeting. Vernon had become Chairman of Governors, Peter McMeekin had become the Parent Governor and Emma-Kate the Deputy Head.

iii) a new body, to be known as the Friends of St Christopher, was to be set up, it was hoped by 1 April. Anyone interested in the School would be able to become a Friend and receive updates on School activities by email. Friends would also have the opportunity to attend School events.

iv) The School had applied for the first time for an Arts Mark Gold Award, which is awarded by the Arts Council. Although applying for the award had been a huge administrative task, it had identified the range of arts activities taking place in School and clarified where improvements might be made. Richard was optimistic that the application would be successful. The result would be announced a couple of months after the inspection visit had taken place.

Richard reminded the meeting that the last hard copy mailing to parents had now been sent out and that the next mailing would be an electronic one in the form of a newsletter or e-zine, feedback on which would be welcomed. Only 7 families had opted for hard copy mailing only.

3. Rouane reported that as Peter McMeekin had been appointed the new Parent Governor he was vacating his role as Treasurer. Although she had invited expressions of interest from anyone interested in taking over the role, no one had as yet done so. The election of a new Treasurer would therefore be held over to the next meeting.

Peter McMeekin distributed accounts for the Parents' Circle drawn up to 31 July last, together with a breakdown of income and expenditure, a list of potential accruals and a summary of the present financial position compared with 2007-8. Peter thanked John Kwo for his input into the preparation of the accounts.

Peter confirmed that, as the PC's income was less than £10,000, no independent examination of the accounts was required by the Charity Commissioners.

Peter explained that if all the potential accruals were funded then, given the expenses of the 2008 Summer Ball, less than £1000 would be available in the PC account to fund projects or events. James pointed out that this left little room for manoeuvre if the PC put on an event which was not successful and that at least a £1000 buffer was desirable. Ralph reminded the meeting that the potential liability of the outdoor theatre also needed to be assigned. A discussion of the accounts followed with particular reference to the costs of the Summer Ball. It appeared that the overall financial position regarding the Ball was not entirely clear, as the monies received from the ticket receipts had not been included in income of the PC. However, the main expense which the PC had funded was the cost of the band, which had been agreed in advance. It was agreed that income from ticket

receipts had been lower than hoped because, as this was the first Summer Ball, not all the tickets had been sold. However, over £5000 had been donated to the NSPCC and Rouane suggested that in future perhaps the surplus only should be given to charity. Rouane added that the PC's current financial position indicated how important fundraising should be in the future.

Rouane thanked Peter for his work on the accounts.

4.

- a) The production of the new Parents' Directory was welcomed and Richard reminded the meeting that in the future it would be quicker to produce as only updating and amending would be needed.
- b) In Jenny's absence, Rouane reported that Jenny had arranged with the Bursar that the Nearly New Shop would be based next to Lost Property and that details of its opening times would be included in the School newsletter. It would ordinarily open twice a month between 3.30pm and 5.00pm and in addition would open once a month on a Sunday evening to help parents of boarders.
- c) It was agreed that the Summer Ball should be repeated. Richard explained that as there was going to be a 6th Form leavers' event on Thursday 2 July, holding the Summer Ball on Saturday, 4 July would mean the cost of the marquee could be split between the two events. Although having the two events so close together would be a burden on the catering staff, they were keen to help. It was agreed that Richard should make arrangements to book the marquee and that he should approach Polly, who had arranged the 2008 Ball with Lauren Hutton, to see if she would be prepared to lead a team to organise the Ball. Rouane agreed to do a note for the newsletter which would invite parents to get involved. Parents would also be asked to nominate charities which might benefit.

5. Ralph invited a discussion of the interdenominational character of the School in the light of a report in a local Church leaflet that a Christian "hub", which maintained links with groups at other schools, had been established at St Christopher. Richard explained that William Norris had initiated a lunchtime Christian discussion group which two or three staff and perhaps a dozen children had been attending. He pointed out that the Theosophical tradition of the School had been to draw inspiration from all religious faiths. There had in the past been a Jewish Group meeting in School and a Buddhist spiritual leader was also coming to spend some time in the School. Sue emphasised the openness of the Junior School to events reflecting a wide variety of cultural and religious experience. Ralph expressed concern at the possibility of external influences on the School through the "hub". Richard indicated that both staff and especially students would be very alert to that or to any form of discrimination or extremism.

6. Richard produced the outline of the School Development Plan and explained that PC input into the Parents' Section would be welcomed. It was agreed that this should be an agenda item at the next meeting. Parents views on the vision, values and aims section of the plan would also be welcomed.

7. Rouane reported that there had been no response from parents regarding topics to be discussed at a World Café event. Richard suggested the topic of "the road to independence", with two speakers looking at understanding adolescents and the development of independent learning. It was agreed that this would be a valuable and useful topic. After discussion, it was accepted that a World Café event format should be adopted with initial speakers followed by discussion groups based at small tables with a reporter to report back to the whole group at the close of discussion. The aim after the event would be to post its conclusions on the website. As Richard had recently heard a suitable speaker, he agreed to pursue this further, in conjunction with Emma-Kate, with a view to finding possible dates.

8. Alison distributed a short note on the constitution, together with a draft amended constitution. Sue pointed out that the position of the Junior School Parents Circle and its relationship to the wider Parents' Circle should be clarified. It was agreed that the next meeting would consider the draft constitution.

In the absence of any other business, the meeting was declared closed.

Date of Next Meeting: The next meeting will be on Sunday, 1March